

The Missouri Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program: Balancing the Demand for Data and Education

Tim Rielly and Chris Riggert

Missouri Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180 Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180

Biographical Sketches of Authors

Tim Rielly is a streams biologist with Missouri Department of Conservation. For the past two years he has been the coordinator of the Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring (VWQM) Program, which is part of the Missouri Stream Team Program. Previously, Tim was employed with Missouri Department of Natural Resources and coordinated Quality/Assurance Quality Control for the VWQM Program. In addition, he conducted special water quality monitoring projects for the state unconnected to volunteer monitoring. Tim has over 10 years experience in water quality monitoring and is experienced in all monitoring and sampling for surface water, specializing in streams. Tim is an experienced trainer, speaker, and technical writer, and has worked with agencies of all levels to improve water quality conditions.

Chris Riggert is a streams biologist with Missouri Department of Conservation. He has been working in water quality issues for seven years with a varied background in fisheries, crayfish studies, and Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring. Chris works with all facets of the VWQM Program such as training, database management, and development of new education materials. He also coordinates the Stash Your Trash Program for the Stream Team Program which provides over 300,000 bags to canoe liveries per year. He is very energetic and will do anything for a fishing trip.

Abstract

The Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program (VWQM Program) is a part of the Missouri STREAM TEAM Program which, is a multi-agency sponsored water quality monitoring program formed for citizens in Missouri with an interest in water quality. The VWQM Program is a free training program open to anyone and teaches volunteers to monitor the water of Missouri's rivers and streams. Program priorities are education and data collection. The VWQM Program has evolved to currently offer four levels of training, an Introductory (Intro) course, Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. Classes must be taken in sequence. The sponsoring state agencies benefit directly not only from the data collected by volunteers but they also benefit directly and indirectly from a public educated on water quality and water quality issues. While many volunteer programs focus on either data or education, the VWQM Program's challenge has been to address the need for both education and data. This creates many challenges such as; how to separate education and data workshops with limited staff, data QA/QC, volunteer recruitment, how to address stream stewardship and advocacy, among many other issues. The need for both data and education has forced the VWQM Program to balance program needs by combining both components into workshops. While all workshops teach water quality education and data collection, workshops have been tailored to meet both objectives. Introductory and Level 1 workshops focus on education while the primary emphasis in the Level 2 and 3 workshops is on data.

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