

Fact Sheet

Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program

The Volunteer Stream Monitoring Partnership (VSMP) program originated at the Water Resources Center, University of Minnesota, in 2000. This program was designed to “support, strengthen and coordinate volunteer stream monitoring in the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area” by involving student and citizen volunteers in monitoring benthic macroinvertebrates (benthic=bottom-dwelling organisms; macro=large enough to see without a microscope; and invertebrates=without a backbone). Benthic macro-invertebrates include organisms such as aquatic insects, snails, leeches, clams and crayfish. A few of the many benefits gained from volunteer citizen monitoring include hands-on environmental education, a better understanding of the relationship between land use and water quality and river stewardship.



Grants from the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services, the McKnight Foundation and the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization funded the program through 2004. Although the program is no longer staffed by the University of Minnesota or funded by grants, the VSMP program name remains active.



Funding for the program in Scott County is provided by the Scott Watershed Management Organization (WMO), with technical and administrative support from Scott Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Partners of VSMP include local government staff, educators and non-profit organizations such as the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services, the University of Minnesota, Anoka Conservation District, Carver County Environmental Services and Extension Service, Hennepin County Environmental Service, Scott SWCD, Scott WMO, the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization and Washington Conservation District.

Volunteers (mostly schools) sample streams for a variety of reasons: awareness and education, continuous record or problem investigation (depending on the reason for monitoring and the skill level of the volunteers). Current volunteers in Scott County include students from Jordan High School and St. Michael’s Middle School. Samples are collected twice a year (spring and fall). Volunteers collect information on water conditions, stream bank and channel traits and local watershed characteristics (The Habitat Assessment).

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