

Final Project Report

Friends of the Rouge Benthic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Program

Volunteer Stream Monitoring Grant # 3003-VSM2007-01

The goal of Friends of the Rouge's (FOTR) Benthic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Program is to collect information on benthic macroinvertebrate communities in Rouge headwater streams to screen for problems and track the effect of streambank stabilization projects over time. Additionally, FOTR seeks to increase public awareness of Rouge water quality issues to build support for corrective actions. Through this grant period, FOTR sought to increase the number of trained team leaders and to improve sampling methods

Objectives:

- Organize sampling events
- Training
- Lab identification and quality check
- Data input, interpretation, reporting and distribution
- Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)

The goals and objectives of the project were met. Information on benthic macroinvertebrate communities was collected at 23 sites on January 26, 2008 (stoneflies only) with 71 volunteers and at 49 sites on April 26, 2008 with 118 volunteers. Ten new team leaders were trained on April 13, 2008 and given identification practice on May 15, 2008. FOTR encountered no major problems. New team leaders were trained, volunteer participation increased, and sampling methods were improved through the updating of the QAPP and subsequent side-by-side with MiCorps.

Benefits

The project benefited the environment in raising public awareness about people's impacts on their local streams as volunteers learned first hand what lived in the creek and discussed what affects the types of insects that can survive there. Part of the Spring Bug Hunt involved a slideshow that included a small segment on illegal discharges and what to look for and how to report problems. Participants filled out evaluations and one of the questions asked is what might affect whether stoneflies are found at a site. Responses ranged from oxygenation to water quality, temperature, pollution, etc. showing that participants developed a good understanding. The project also benefited the local communities in providing data to them that is being used to measure progress in restoring the river.

Partners

Partners in the project included: University of Michigan-Dearborn (provided students, facilities, and use of GIS mapping software), Wayne County Department of the Environment (team leaders, also sampled additional sites with their staff), Schoolcraft College (students), Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (team leader and advisors), and Eastern Michigan University (students and professors). EMU was a new partner who had participated in the past but this year renewed their interest and involved a large number of students and four professors.

Products

Products completed include: flyers, press releases, Powerpoint presentation, event evaluation summaries, one training evaluation summary and reports on results.

Sustainability

The project has secured funding for the next event (Fall Bug Hunt 2008) from the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project Grant (RPO) Round VIII. FOTR is in the process of securing funding for the next two and possibly five years of the program starting in January 2009. The funding could possibly come from the RPO Round IX but more likely will be funded by a completely new source. The Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC) is considering funding the

program for the next five years through their monitoring budget. ARC is a voluntary public watershed entity comprised of 40 municipal governments, three counties and the Wayne County Airport Authority created to address watershed-wide water quality and water quantity issues. The high standards maintained by the program and enforced through MiCorps certification, changing requirements for monitoring in the new stormwater permit, and the wide acceptance of biological monitoring has worked to convince the ARC's Technical Committee to recommend allocating a large portion of ARC's monitoring budget to FOTR's volunteer benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring for the first time. The decision will be made at the end of the year. FOTR is very excited and the MiCorps funding and certification were instrumental in convincing skeptics that volunteers can collect reliable data.