

# Join a Stream Team!

## *Dive into a clean water project*



**C**lean your room! And take out the trash and the recycling! For many teens, these are among the most annoying sentences they hear. Why can't you do it yourself? Buffy is on! For many parents, these are among the most annoying sentences they hear.

Why don't parents do it themselves? Well, when everyone lends a hand, chores get done faster and everyone can spend more time relaxing in a cleaner, tidier home. Clean beats *filthy* and *relaxing* beats *working* just about every time.

Streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands need a break, too. Do you enjoy going to the beach, whitewater rafting, or fishing in your favorite lake? You and your friends can lend a hand to help keep the water resources we use and enjoy running clean and clear by volunteering your time and talents in a water project. *Will I really help the environment?* You bet! *Will it be fun?* Definitely! *Will this make the most popular kid at school?* Um... we'll get back to you on that one (but we know you'll be popular with some very cool fish).

### **Are There Many Programs to Get Involved In?**

The answer is a definite yes! Every year new volunteer programs are formed across the country. Some have thousands of volunteers; many, however, are small and often are linked with neighborhood associations, schools, or local environmental organizations. There are many different ways to get involved.

### **Become a Volunteer Monitor!**

Volunteer monitors are people who measure the water quality of lakes, streams, rivers, estuaries, and other bodies of water. In most programs they take water samples and either send them to a laboratory or analyze the water themselves using portable water quality test kits.

People who monitor streams also sometimes examine insect life living on the stream bottom. Using special nets, they count and sort the specimens they collect. Some aquatic insects cannot tolerate pollution. They will leave the area as fast as they can (or croak) when things turn bad. So, if stream monitors find an abundant amount of "clean water" insects, they feel pretty good about the water quality of their stream.

Today nearly 2,800 ponds, lakes, and wetlands and about 1,000 streams and rivers in the United States are

monitored by volunteers. Most monitoring programs welcome middle and high school students. Instructors show you how to use monitoring equipment and provide reporting forms and other supplies. Getting your feet wet is easy and fun, and the information you collect helps people understand water resources and what needs to be done to keep them clean.

### **Join a Beach, Stream, or Lake Clean-up Campaign!**

Another activity that can use the help of you and your friends is clean-up campaigns. Typically, teams are organized to pick up and remove trash and debris from a section of stream, beach, wetland, or lakeshore. The cleanup can be a onetime activity or, better yet, an ongoing project where the team "adopts" an area and visits it regularly.

PHOTO COURTESY USDA NRCS



***These volunteer monitors are collecting water samples from a small stream.***



## Let's Go Surfing Now!

**Learn what you can do for your watershed**

<http://water.epa.gov/action/adopt>

EPA has developed a list of things you can do to make a difference in your watershed. Check out the information on:

- *Adopting your watershed*
- *Volunteer monitoring*
- *Clean-up campaigns*
- *Building backyard habitat*



## Give water a hand

The University of Wisconsin can help you choose a great water project for you and your classmates. Check out their "Water Action Volunteers" web site (<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav>) for tips on how to

- \* *Investigate water problems*
- \* *Choose a great project*
- \* *Plan your activities*
- \* *Put your plans into action*
- \* *Celebrate your success*

Several national organizations can help students build a "dream team" of clean-up volunteers. Coordinating your efforts with recognized campaigns like the International Coastal Cleanup (sponsored by the Center for Marine Conservation on the third Saturday in September) or the National River Cleanup Week (sponsored by American Outdoors the second or third week in May) can help generate and maintain enthusiasm and team spirit. The first thing to do is to learn about the groups already active in your watershed and join in!

## Set Up Your Own Backyard Conservation Area!

You can do environmental wonders with just a little land and some imagination. A small neglected wetland can become a bird and butterfly paradise. A backyard corner can be transformed into a mulch factory. A muddy, trampled bare patch can be turned into a canvas of wildflowers. It's easy, and your efforts will help nature control soil erosion, reduce sediment in streams, conserve water, and improve water quality.

## Career Corner



A *volunteer monitoring coordinator* develops a monitoring program, gathers volunteers, and helps to monitor the health of streams.

A *biochemist* studies the chemistry of living organisms.

An *entomologist* studies insects and their environment.



**In 1998, 300,000 volunteers picked up more than 40,000 cigarette butts in coastal waterways (nearly 20 percent of all the trash picked up) in the annual International Coastal Cleanup.**

## What's Buggin' You?



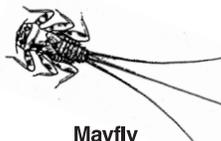
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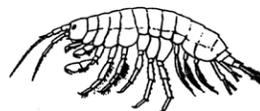
Beetle Larva



Aquatic Worm



Mayfly



Scud



Midge



Stonefly



Damselfly



Leech

**SENSITIVE**

**SOMEWHAT SENSITIVE**

**TOLERANT**