



Texas StreamTeam

Caring for Our Waters

The Basics of Becoming and Staying a Volunteer Water Quality Monitor

Texas Stream Team Certified Water Quality Monitors are volunteers that complete a monitoring plan and go through three phases of training using a test kit that measures physical and chemical parameters in water.

While not a requirement of participation, volunteers are asked for a two-year commitment to monitor their site. The information collected with a Texas Stream Team kit can be considered baseline data that provide an overall picture of water quality. The physical and chemical properties of water can vary dramatically over a year and from year to year. Two years of data is considered the minimum needed to capture baseline conditions and the natural variability at a site.

Volunteers are asked to monitor their sites monthly at the same time of day each month, for example, monitoring the first Saturday of the month at 10:00 am. Maintaining a consistent monitoring time is crucial because the physical and chemical parameters fluctuate over a 24-hour period. Monitoring takes approximately one to two hours.

In order to collect quality-assured data, volunteers are asked to attend one quality-control session per year after they have started monitoring. The Texas Stream Team protocols were developed under a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) approved by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The QAPP ensures volunteers collect information of the highest quality and that volunteers are collecting data that can augment professional data.

Phase I training is a hands-on instructional session covering monitoring methods in a classroom setting. The Certified Trainer explains how to handle the monitoring equipment and demonstrates the tests to the volunteers. The volunteers then perform the tests under the close supervision of the Trainer. Adherence to safety procedures is emphasized. This phase of training takes approximately 3 hours.

Phase II training provides the volunteers the opportunity to conduct the monitoring procedures in the field. Safety considerations in monitoring and site selection are emphasized. Whenever possible, the water body used for Phase II testing will be similar to the sites the volunteers will eventually monitor. The volunteers conduct the tests with limited assistance of the Trainer. The Trainer carefully observes the volunteers' procedures, answers any questions, and corrects obvious mistakes. Phase II training takes approximately 3 hours.

Phase I and II trainings usually happen on the same day.

Phase III training is conducted as a one-on-one session with a Trainer and each volunteer or group at their monitoring site. The Trainer ensures the sampling site is the same location indicated on the Monitoring Plan. The volunteer(s) conduct the tests and completes the monitoring form with little assistance from the Trainer.

This session usually takes approximately 3 hours. When the Trainer believes each volunteer has successfully completed the three training sessions and the training packets is completed and signed, the volunteer is then considered a Texas Stream Team Certified Water Quality Monitor.

Want to Know More?

Individuals or groups interesting in becoming involved in the Texas Stream Team Volunteer Monitoring Program should contact:

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