

Identifying Sources of Citizen Monitoring Activity in your Area

Trying to find a citizen monitoring group can be difficult depending on where you are located in the state. In an effort to make this endeavor easier we put together a check list that will hopefully help you get started.

1. Are any of the citizen monitoring efforts listed in the *Who's Who of Citizen-based Monitoring in Wisconsin* working in your area?

Who's Who of Citizen-based Monitoring in Wisconsin is available through publication and on-line at <http://cbm.wiatri.net>. It presents information concerning citizen-based monitoring programs, including a listing of more than 150 volunteer monitoring groups by counties they work in and the resources they monitor.

2. Does your local University of Wisconsin-Extension educator know of any citizen monitoring efforts?

University of Wisconsin-Extension educators throughout the state coordinate citizen monitoring efforts, provide technical support to local groups, and help inform the public of important monitoring results. These educators are "go to" people. Many lake and river water quality monitoring programs are supported by Extension educators. You can find out who your local basin educator is on the UW-Extension's basin education initiative web site: <http://basineducation.uwex.edu>

3. Does your community have a nature center, environmental center, natural history museum, or citizen science center?

Local nature centers and museums often coordinate volunteer monitoring programs, either on their own properties or throughout the surrounding area. Breeding bird and amphibian surveys are popular citizen science projects coordinated by these types of facilities. The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board maintains a listing of Wisconsin nature and environmental centers on the web at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/weeb/index.htm.

4. Does your community have a volunteer tree board?

Tree boards often undertake street tree inventories as part of their management efforts. They also conduct surveys of trees on public lands and monitor invasive species.

5. Does your community have a chapter of a national conservation organization (Audubon Society, Trout Unlimited, etc.) or a location conservation club?

These clubs often host field trips that bring large numbers of volunteer monitors, like bird watchers, into an area on a repeated basis. These organizations often coordinate local participation, in national efforts (Christmas Bird Count, 4th of July Butterfly Count, etc.) or host their own field trips and surveys (Chicago Herpetological Society forays).

6. Does your community have a watershed protection organization (lake association, lake district, river protection group)?

Many local watershed protection organizations involve citizens in monitoring programs as a means of fostering local stewardship as a way of measuring success. The Wisconsin Association of Lakes maintains Lake List, a comprehensive statewide directory of more than 700 lake associations, lake districts, and other organizations involved in lake management in the state. The directory is online at www.wisconsinlakes.org/.

7. Does your community have a community land trust?

Community land trusts often gather natural resources information pertaining to their community and surrounding areas as a means of identifying priority parcels to protect. They use citizen collected data to document the value of properties they are interested in protecting through easements and acquisitions. You can access a statewide directory of Wisconsin land trusts on the Gathering Waters Conservancy web site: www.gatheringwaters.org/

8. Does your high school include field studies in their classes?

Local academic programs that include field studies in their science or environmental classes often collect local resources data on a recurring basis.