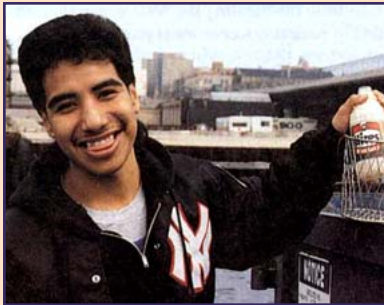


“It’s a good learning experience for people our age. If you let people learn this stuff when they’re young, they’ll practice some of the principles later on.”



Rufus King High School student, Milwaukee

Natural resources and environmental issues affect many parts of our lives: our enjoyment of the out-of-doors; our connection to past history and culture; our personal health and the health of area plant and animal communities; and the economic health of the basin.

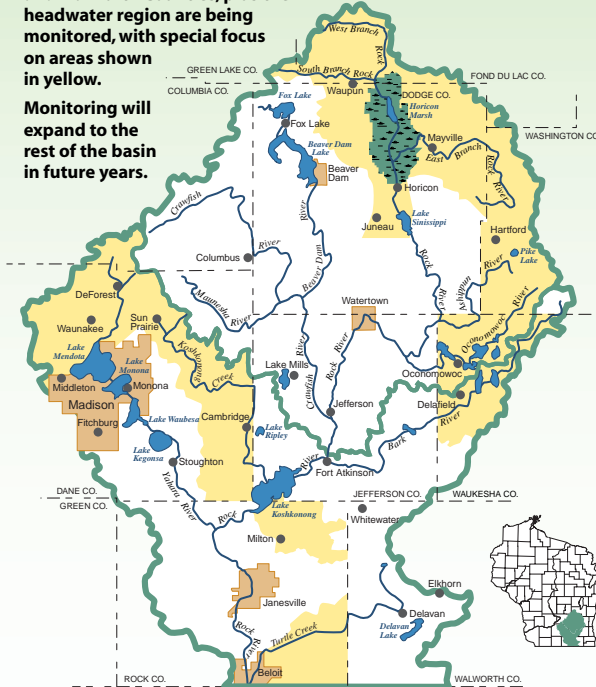
We believe that working together, we can make improvements in all of these areas.



Dedicated volunteers work on-site to protect our waterways.

In year 1, Rock, Dane, Washington and Walworth Counties, plus the headwater region are being monitored, with special focus on areas shown in yellow.

Monitoring will expand to the rest of the basin in future years.



The Rock River Basin is the land area that drains to the Rock River. The basin covers more than 3,700 square miles, and stretches from the Theresa and Horicon marshes in the north to Beloit in the south. On the western border the basin includes most of Madison and the Yahara lakes, and on the east is Oconomowoc with its own cluster of lakes. The basin is home to rich farmlands, thriving industries and flourishing communities, both large and small.

Rock River Coalition

The Rock River Coalition (RRC) is a private nonpro educational organization composed of citizens, agencies, businesses and organizations dedicated to preserving and promoting the economic, cultural and environmental resources of the basin.

In recent years the RRC has organized two basin forums, well abandonment demonstrations and conservation-minded subdivision workshops. In addition, the RRC has offered farmstead groundwater risk assessments to farmers, developed shoreline restoration projects in county parks and has developed educational displays and brochures.

Design by Brooke Wentland, UW-Extension Environmental Resources Center. Photos by Suzanne Wade and Sue Millin.

Citizen Monitoring

in the Rock River Basin

People involved in their community and the environment



Sponsored by the

- Rock River Coalition, Inc.
- Land Conservation Departments in Washington, Waukesha, Rock and Dane Counties
- Rock River Headwaters, Inc.
- University of Wisconsin-Extension
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Monitoring – a way to improve life in the Rock River Basin

Monitoring connects people to the natural world around them. It makes them part of the annual ebb and flow of life. Families and groups who look closely at one special area not only learn about that area, but make a deeper connection with the environment and with each other. Monitors can be families, groups, friends or business teams. Schools and youth groups can also become involved.

Monitors also provide valuable data for local resource agencies. Insufficient data represents a major hurdle to making informed decisions about local resources. Monitoring provides important baseline and trend data and is often the only data available.

Individuals are often unsure of their own impact on streams and rivers. The monitoring programs allows them to find out for themselves what the concerns are, what they are already doing that is positive for the environment and what they can do to further protect water quality.

Local decision-makers need the skills, knowledge and desire to help solve complex environmental problems. Monitoring helps develop those skills.

What does a stream monitor do?

Stream monitors work in teams of 2-5 at a location selected with the help of the local Land and Water Conservation Department (LCD) or DNR. Monitoring teams are trained in measuring 6 important elements of stream health:

- dissolved oxygen
- temperature
- water clarity
- water flow
- habitat
- stream invertebrate life (insects, worms, clams and crustaceans)

Each team agrees to measure the following:

- habitat – once a year
- animal life – twice a year
- dissolved oxygen, temperature, clarity and stream flow – once a month, April to November

Each team sends the data to their coordinator every month to be included on a web-accessible database. Monitors have the opportunity to attend a fall summit where they can receive awards, and share experiences with other monitoring groups.



Monitoring groups can check and re-check conditions periodically to see if water quality has changed.

Where does the money come from?

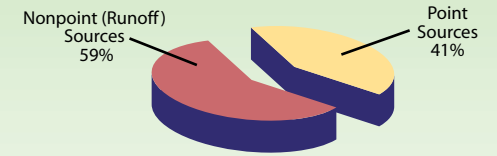
Initial funds for the monitoring programs have come from a DNR River Protection Grant, UW-Extension, and the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. However, additional funds are needed to make this program a success and the RRC is asking foundations, businesses and groups to contribute to the program.

Cost for each team is:
(No fees will be charged to individual monitors.)

- \$ 200 equipment
- \$ 140 training and summit
- \$ 700 local support – county coordinators
- \$ 700 overall support – project director

\$1,740 total cost per team

The RRC welcomes donations to support this program.



Phosphorus Sources in the Rock River Basin

What's polluting our waters?

Wastewater treatment plants and industry (so-called "point sources" of pollution) contribute roughly 40% of phosphorus found in our waters. Phosphorus is the nutrient most responsible for excess weeds and algae in our surface waters.

Nonpoint source or runoff pollutants include soil, nitrates, phosphorus, pesticides, organic matter, heavy metals, bacteria and other chemicals. Who contributes to runoff pollution? We all do.

In rural areas of the basin, some farming practices allow large amounts of soil to erode into lakes and streams. Farms and golf courses can add fertilizers and pesticides to our waters. In developing areas, soil from construction sites adds sediment and phosphorus to our water, while failing septic systems contribute nitrates and bacteria.

In the city, every rain washes a smorgasbord of chemicals, leaves, litter, pet waste and debris into storm drains that carry the pollutants directly into streams and lakes.



Stream monitors test and record water quality.

How about lake, wetland, prairie or forest monitoring?

People interested in lakes and lake monitoring can join the DNR Self-Help Lake Monitoring Program by calling 608/267-7694. Monitoring programs for wetlands, prairies and forests will be developed in the future. Everyone will be invited to the annual monitoring summit.

How do I get involved? Contact the Rock River Coalition by calling 920/674-7443 or e-mail rriver@excel.net for monitoring, membership or donor information.

You can contact local coordinators directly: Rock County, 608-754-6617 ext. 118
Dane County, 608-224-3733

Waukesha County, 262-896-8305