



FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Project Name: Expanding Volunteer Monitoring to the Maple and Sturgeon Rivers

Project Code: # VSM2011-06

Grantee: Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
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Goals:

The goal of this project is to protect the water quality and aquatic ecosystem integrity of the Maple and Sturgeon Rivers through biological monitoring of aquatic macroinvertebrate populations. The Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council Volunteer Stream Monitoring program will be expanded to include both of these rivers, which will result in the collection of baseline water quality data to assess impacts from known stressors, as well as continued monitoring to detect additional problems that emerge in these river systems.

Objectives:

1. Review and make amendments to Quality Assurance Project Plan.
2. Training and sampling evaluation
3. Attend and participate in annual MiCorps conferences.
4. Promote volunteer stream monitoring activities and solicit volunteers and stream access permissions from local community.
5. Research and purchase necessary equipment for expanding stream monitoring activities.
6. Coordinate and conduct volunteer stream monitoring training sessions
7. Coordinate volunteer stream monitoring field data collection sessions
8. Coordinate and implement macroinvertebrate sorting and identification sessions
9. Database entry, scoring, and data analysis
10. Disseminate data and results.
11. Development and submission of status quarterly reports
12. Development and submission of final report at the end of the project

13. Submission of a release of claims statement at the end of the project
14. Provision of products and deliverables.
15. Project evaluation

Objectives met:

The Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council (TOMWC) was able to meet all project objectives, though we are still in the process of entering and analyzing data from our spring 2012 sampling event.

Problems encountered:

1. It was difficult recruiting enough volunteers to monitor new sites, as well as maintain old sites. Plan to start alternating between sites and not covering all each time.
2. Some equipment ordered did not arrive before event, but able to get by with equipment on hand. Other unforeseen equipment needs required additional expenditures.
3. Aquatic macroinvertebrate "expert" taxonomists limited.
4. Some mix-ups/errors with data entry, but fixed when reviewed for QA/QC purposes and reporting. We utilized most of our funding by the 3rd quarter of the two year project
5. Some of the new sites difficult to sample due to depths/flow or do not possess a large variety of habitat types.
6. Data entry and report writing not completed on schedule.
7. We continue to be concerned about long-term sustainability due to inadequate funding to cover the amount of staff time necessary for maintaining the program

Summary of training and monitoring events:

Volunteers monitored 37 sample sites on 14 streams within six watersheds of the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan, including eight new sites on the Sturgeon and Maple Rivers. During the grant period, over 20 new volunteers were recruited to help with the new sites. Events held:

1. Comprehensive half-day trainings with both indoor and outdoor sessions were conducted on two occasions during the grant period.
2. TOMWC staff accompanied two volunteer teams per event into the field to oversee monitoring activities during the grant period.
3. Two indoor macroinvertebrate sorting sessions were held during course of the grant, where volunteer monitors sorted samples to the order level.
4. Four indoor macroinvertebrate identification sessions were held during course of the grant, where volunteer taxonomic experts identified all collected specimens to the family level.

Environmental and other benefits of the project, including lessons learned:

The information collected by volunteers is invaluable for gauging the health of the streams and identifying problem areas. TOMWC staff now have a better understanding of the variability present in the Maple and Sturgeon River systems. Perhaps the greatest benefit derived from the program is the connection established between people and water; fostering a sense of stewardship and creating greater awareness of and thus, improving protection of our streams.

During the course of the grant, TOMWC staff improved program management. The program managers continually improve their abilities to effectively manage and therefore, retain volunteers. Volunteer recruitment was improved by developing and implementing a communications plan. In addition, staff learned to more efficiently coordinate events to save time and resources.

Significant information/education or outreach activities

TOMWC provided information and education to the public about the stream monitoring project through a variety of means. Press releases about the project were sent to local newspapers, monitoring activities were discussed on radio programs, the project was publicized through the TOMWC website and Facebook page, and articles about the project were included in the Watershed Council's newsletter. Additionally, Watershed Council staff conducted numerous presentations about the project, which included an educational component to raise the public's awareness about Northern Michigan streams and the need to monitor and protect them.

Evaluation done as part of the project

Evaluation forms were updated and distributed to volunteers to provide an opportunity to comment upon and potentially improve the stream monitoring program. All evaluations submitted by volunteers were reviewed by TOMWC program management staff. Adjustments were made to the stream monitoring program and improvements made based on the comments and suggestions provided by volunteers on evaluation forms.

Project Partners & their contributions:

1. North Central Michigan College - provided facilities for indoor ID sessions and expert taxonomic help.
2. The University of Michigan Biological Station - provided expert taxonomic help.
3. Trout Unlimited, Miller VanWinkle Chapter - provided volunteers and expert taxonomic help.
4. Riparian owners – allowed permission to access monitoring sites.

Products that were completed:

Monitoring data collected during the grant period has been provided to the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) for inclusion in the statewide MiCorps database.

Project sustainability:

TOMWC staff members will continue coordinating and implementing volunteer stream monitoring events after the grant period has ended. The program will be expanded where feasible, which is in large part dependent upon funding to cover staff time and equipment. The Watershed Council will continue providing data to GLC or the appropriate organization for inclusion in the MiCorps database. The program will be regularly evaluated and alterations made as necessary to ensure sustainability and quality control. TOMWC remains concerned about long-term sustainability due to inadequate funding to cover the amount of staff time necessary for maintaining the program.

Photos of activities and copies of products like brochures, flyers etc that were used to promote or report on monitoring:

These items are enclosed with the final report:

1. Poster produced and distributed to recruit volunteers.
2. Photographs taken during training, field day, and indoor identification sessions
3. Press releases to local media – (7)
4. Newspaper articles printed – (2)
5. Radio interviews to promote program (no copies available)
6. Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program Report 2012
7. Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program – Web pages
8. Volunteer Opportunities – Web pages
9. Field sheet data (only on electronic copy)
10. Macroinvertebrate data (only on electronic copy)

Required attachments include:

1. Final Project Report (this document)
2. Narrative Reports for each of eight quarters of the grant period
3. FSR Reports for each of eight quarters of the grant period
4. Itemization of project costs
5. Project Fact Sheet
6. Copy of contract and (1) notice of change NOC of increased funding
7. Copy of approved Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs)
8. Release of Claims
9. Electronic copy of project elements (CD)