



Volunteers Needed for Wetland Health Evaluation Program

Learn how the bugs and plants living in a wetland are an indicator of its health.

Put on a pair of waders, jump in, and help monitor wetlands in your community. Dakota County is seeking volunteers for the Wetland Health Evaluation Program (WHEP). Volunteers work with a community-based team to monitor the biological health of wetlands. A science background or previous monitoring experience is not required. All training and equipment is provided.

Volunteers gather data on macroinvertebrates (beetles and bugs) and plants living in wetlands. Cities use the collected data to study wetland health trends and changes as well as to assist with natural resource management.

Volunteers receive training in field methods, macroinvertebrate collection and identification, and plant survey techniques and identification. Teams work under the direction of a team leader. Each city WHEP team takes samples from three to five wetlands between June and August. Volunteers commit between ten and 30 hours, including training, field work, and lab analysis.

For more information about volunteering, contact Dakota County Water Resources Department at 952-891-7000 or www.mnwhep.org. Participating in the Wetland Health Evaluation Program is an excellent educational opportunity for anyone who wants to learn more about the ecology of wetlands or anyone involved in wetland studies.

Paula Liepold
Dakota County Water Resources Department
952-891-7117
paula.liepold@co.dakota.mn.us

Frequently Asked Questions about WHEP

What does a WHEP volunteer do? As a WHEP volunteer you will work in a team to evaluate the biological health of four wetlands within your community as well as one in another community. You will study both the macro invertebrate (insects and other spineless creatures) and plant populations of each wetland. This will allow your team to determine the wetland's relative biological health.

Am I qualified to volunteer? Any adult can volunteer for the program. Since all training is provided you do not need to have a background in science. By working in a team with other members from your community, you share the responsibilities. No one person is expected to be an expert. WHEP is a joint venture.

Can teenagers volunteer with wetlands monitoring? Yes, teenagers can monitor wetlands, however, parental permission, parental participation, and county coordinator and team leader approval is required. The application includes a Parental/Guardian Consent form.

What does it take to volunteer? You have to be willing to commit your time to the program. The average WHEP volunteer spends about 20-30 hours of their time from May through July involved in the project. Volunteers are encouraged to attend each of the three trainings and to commit 2-3 hours a week for field monitoring during the months of June and July.

How do I know what to do? A team leader manages each team. The team leader is an experienced WHEP member who is in charge of coordinating the team, managing equipment and ensuring the monitoring is done correctly. Your team leader will make sure you know what to do.

What are the trainings like? The same scientists that have developed the WHEP monitoring protocols provide the volunteer training. These hands-on training sessions will teach you how to identify macro invertebrates, wetland vegetation, and how to perform the wetland monitoring.

Do I need special equipment? No. The program provides you with waders, nets and other necessary sampling equipment. You just need to wear clothes suitable for working out in the field.

How do I sign up?

Complete the volunteer registration form at www.mnwhep.org.