

Long Tom Watershed Council

BY PAUL REED

The Long Tom Watershed Council wants to commence bioassessment projects in the watershed but lacks trained volunteers. To meet this need, a volunteer training workshop will be held in Marcola on July 15 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The purpose of the workshop will be to teach interested volunteers how to monitor streams using macro invertebrates.

Participants will gain a new perspective on bugs and what say about the condition of the water. Dragonflies, Mosquito Hawks, Snake Doctors and Darning Needles are common names for a popular group of insects belonging to the scientific category of "macro invertebrates." What they

do for a living is essential to humans and the ecosystem. On land, insects pollinate about 75 percent of the flowering plants that provide food for human consumption, including many fruits and vegetables (such as apples, squash and tomatoes). The number and types of aquatic macro invertebrates (such as caddis flies, stone flies, mayflies and midges) in a body of water can signal whether the water is clean and also determine whether there is enough food and an adequate habitat for trout and other fish, since they are a major source of food for fish. Some macro invertebrates may tolerate the pollution if water quality is poor, but most will disappear.

The tolerance of each kind of macro invertebrate to pollution is different. Some require cold water, some require lots of oxygen, and some require clean water and clean rocks. Stone flies, for instance, can't breathe in water that is not oxygen rich and constantly flowing. Mayflies tend to disappear when the level of metals contamination in the water is high. Stone flies, mayflies and others are deprived of the space they depend on for hiding and feeding when smaller soil particles (silt) fill in the space between

gravel and cobble in the stream. The technique used to monitor these aquatic bugs is known as bioassessment, and it is now a well-established scientific process. It involves sampling the macro invertebrate population of a stream to help determine the quality of the water and biological integrity of the watershed. Ongoing bioassessment can accurately indicate changing conditions in watershed health. A major advantage of this technique is that its implementation by either scientists or trained volunteers results in high quality reliable data.

This free volunteer training workshop will be interesting and fun. Participants will need to bring their own lunches. For information and registration, please call the council office at 683-6578.

The July meeting of the Council will feature a tour of a forested stream near Noti, starting at 6:30 p.m. on July 25. As always, all area residents are invited to participate in the group's activities. Additional information is available by calling Long Tom Watershed Council, 541-683-6578 or e-mailing longtom@efn.org.

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