

## J. SCOTT CHRISTIANSON

### Volunteers can monitor quality of water in Missouri



The Missouri departments of Conservation and Natural Resources are working on a new program to involve citizens in a very important task — monitoring the quality of Missouri's rivers, lakes and streams. The Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring program trains and supports volunteers willing to devote a little of their time to learn about water quality.

The program is designed to establish an extensive monitoring network; to educate citizens about aquatic resources; to create a proactive constituency dedicated to improving water quality; and ultimately, to stop the degradation of Missouri's water resources.

The program is an outgrowth of the conservation department's highly successful Stream Team program in which volunteers adopt and care for a stream. "We knew Stream Team volunteers wanted to get more involved in water quality testing," said Jim Czarnezki, the water quality programs coordinator for the conservation department, MCD.

The Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring program, however, is open to any interested individual or group, regardless of involvement in the Stream Team program.

Participants in the program attend a one-day workshop that includes five hours of classroom instruction and three hours of hands-on experience on a stream. At the workshop, the volunteers learn how to analyze samples for dissolved oxygen, nitrate and ammonia content and other factors. They also learn how to judge water quality by observing aquatic invertebrates, such as crayfish, mussels, snails and mayflies.

"Right now, the one-day workshops are providing the first level of training, but we want the program to grow with volunteers' interests," Czarnezki said. "In future years, we will provide more advanced training and training for volunteer trainers."

After completing the workshop, volunteers measure water quality in a nearby lake or stream regularly — either weekly, monthly or quarterly. The DNR works with volunteers to select a site.

The data collected by the volunteers are compiled by the DNR's Water Pollution Control Program and used by both DNR and the conservation department to monitor trends in water quality over time, to locate problem areas and, in some situations, to enforce pollution control laws.

Because data collected by volunteers are of high quality, the program helps to continue and expand Missouri's water monitoring efforts, which have suffered with recent budget cuts.

"It would be difficult to overstate the potential significance of this pro-

gram," Czarnezki said. "Involving Missourians from all walks of life in the stewardship of their local waters will do more than just increase our work force. By creating grass-roots awareness and concern for streams and lakes, we will give people the means to, 'Think globally, act locally.' "

If you are interested in attending a volunteer water quality monitoring workshop, call Jim Czarnezki at 1-751-4115, or write to the Missouri Department of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, Mo., 65102.

If you have a suggestion for a column, a gripe, a success story or whatever, write it down and send it to me, care of the Columbia Daily Tribune, PO Box 798, Columbia, Mo., 65205.