

J. SCOTT CHRISTIANSON**Missouri's stream teams
clean up our waterways**

Although we regularly hear about environmental tragedies, we rarely hear of the successes. Let me tell you about an exciting and continuing environmental success story. It's the story of the Missouri Stream Team program.

The stream team program is similar to the Adopt a Highway program. Organizations and individuals volunteer to adopt a section of a stream or river and take care of it. Support in the form of information and advice is provided by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and the Conservation Federation of Missouri.

Before any projects begin, an adopted stream is first inventoried. This documents the stream's condition and uncovers current problems. After inventorying the stream, the stream team decides what projects to undertake. Many teams conduct trash pickups, while others plant willow trees and other plants to stabilize the stream bank. Some teams monitor their stream's water chemistry, while others write letters to support legislation that will benefit streams and rivers.

Students from West Junior High School and Hickman High School recently formed a stream team and adopted a section of the Hinkson Creek. Last spring, these students filled two dumpsters with the trash they collected during a cleanup of a 4-mile stretch of the creek.

The students have recently started to monitor the stream's water quality. By taking measurements of dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature and ammonia — all important water quality characteristics — the students hope to learn how nearby road construction will affect the aquatic wildlife in the stream.

Hickman science teacher Dan Miller says that the team is trying "to get several years worth of data in order to get an idea of what the Hinkson creek's profile has been and how it changes." After the students have a better understanding of the creek's water chemistry, they will be able to detect when the chemical balance of the stream is threatened.

Besides improving the Hinkson creek, this project is also an educational tool. Kory Kaufman, a science teacher at West Junior High explains: "Kids care a lot about their environment. If they can do something with the environment in their

own community, it gives them an added incentive to keep track of it, monitor it, and take stewardship over it." Dan Miller agrees: "Here is a chance for the kids, who often hear the phrases 'get involved,' 'save the Earth' and 'think globally and act locally' to put it to work."

More and more stream teams are becoming involved in water quality monitoring projects. MDC is developing water quality workshops for the teams and has recently assigned a full-time water quality expert to advise stream team members.

Water quality projects conducted by the stream teams will also help state agencies keep track of Missouri's 56,000 miles of rivers and streams. Both the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Conservation are working to standardize a method for the teams to collect chemical and biological water quality data. This data will then be entered into a database that state officials and researchers can use.

There are currently more than 300 stream teams in Missouri, and MDC hopes to have 750 teams and 75 percent of Missouri's streams adopted by the year 2000.

This environmental success story started in Missouri. No one knows where it will end. Already nationally known and recognized, the Missouri Stream Team program was recently listed in the Environmental Success Index, a clearinghouse for solutions to environmental problems.

"This is an extremely exciting time to be involved with stream conservation in Missouri," says Joe Bachant, coordinator of the stream team program. "The stream team concept is an idea whose time has come. The positive effects on Missouri streams in the future could be enormous." For information on forming a stream team, write: Stream Team, Missouri Department of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, Mo., 65102-0180.

Also, the Third Missouri Rivers and Streams Conference will be held February 5 and 6 at the Lodge of the Four Seasons in Lake Ozark. For information, call 1-634-2322.

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.