

Water WoRDs

Updates from the Water Resources Division



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Ready to Get Out on the Water? Join Our Citizen Monitoring Brigade

Did you know that Michigan has the second-oldest volunteer lakes monitoring program in the Nation? The Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program, established in 1974 and its sister program, the Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program of 1998, formed the foundation for the Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps).

Created by a 2003 Executive Order, MiCorps was formed to assist interested people and organizations in collecting and sharing water quality data for the purpose of thoughtful water resource management and protection. In Michigan, there are a lot of people and organizations interested in protecting our Pure Michigan ideal of clean and abundant water resources. If you're one of those people, read on!



A CLMP volunteer conducting "rake tosses" to collect aquatic plants.

The mission of MiCorps is to expand volunteer water quality monitoring efforts statewide and build organizational capacity for the purpose of:

- collecting, sharing and using reliable data;
- educating and informing the public about water quality issues; and
- fostering water resources stewardship to facilitate the preservation and protection of Michigan's water resources.

MiCorps partners with anyone interested in Michigan lake and stream water quality, this includes individual homeowners to watershed associations, and city and county governments, and provides networking opportunities to share insights and resources. As the administrator of MiCorps, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Water Resources Division (WRD), relies on volunteers' "boots on the ground" knowledge of local water quality issues to expand and enhance our understanding of surface water quality. WRD staff simply cannot reach every water body themselves, so volunteers' efforts are essential to our water quality protection efforts. Whether a person has a lot of time to invest, or only a little, there is probably a good-fitting opportunity within the wealth of MiCorps monitoring programs.

If you're particularly interested in protecting Michigan's waters from the threat of aquatic invasive species (AIS), MiCorps is a great way to lend a hand. Carp may get all the headlines, but Michiganders can help by looking out for other aquatic invaders. In fact, MiCorps volunteers are already scouring local lakes for invasive plants.

The Exotic Aquatic Plant Watch was officially added as a component of the Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program in 2011. The intention is to raise awareness of problematic aquatic invasive plants and facilitate early detection at the local level. Volunteers are trained to identify key species and to use a structured field survey and reporting protocol. Data are stored in the freely available MiCorps online Data Exchange (www.micorps.net) and provided to WRD staff. The WRD is currently working with Michigan State University (MSU) to increase enrollment in Exotic Plant Watch, increase reporting of invasive species, and improve technical support for volunteers. While MiCorps provides invasive aquatic plant identification training as well as training for other lake and stream monitoring techniques, other resources are also available to help volunteers identify aquatic invasive species including DEQ's "AIS of the Week" and MSU's "A Michigan's Boater's Guide to Selected Invasive Aquatic Plants." And of course, if you see a plant or animal that seems out of the ordinary and you think it might be an invasive species, refer to Michigan's "AIS Watch List" and reporting information for priority AIS found at www.michigan.gov/invasives.



Dr. Jo Latimore, Michigan State University, provides annual training (classroom sessions include taking a close look at live plants!) and support for volunteers.

Finally, WRD staff are excited to be participating in a first-of-its-kind "convention" on inland lakes. In fact, the next MiCorps training event will be held during the May 1-3, 2014 Michigan Inland Lakes Convention at Boyne Falls, Michigan. Volunteers will receive training in lake and stream monitoring methods. If you can't join us for the convention, but would like to learn more about MiCorps and how you can get involved in protecting Michigan's water resources by monitoring your local lakes and streams, check out www.MiCorps.net. They are accepting applications now!

Meet a WRD Partner, Jo Latimore

Dr. Jo Latimore has been active with MiCorps throughout its ten year history, providing training and technical support to both the Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program and the Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program. She is an Aquatic Ecologist and Outreach Specialist with MSU's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. She regularly travels to lakes around Michigan to help volunteers launch their aquatic plant survey efforts and is passionate about engaging people with their local water resources by getting their hands wet! Her other activities include directing the Michigan Lake and Stream Leaders Institute, teaching classes in aquatic ecosystem management, entomology, and leadership, and collaborating on research and education to reduce the spread of AIS in Michigan waters.



Dr. Jo Latimore (left) assists volunteers on Gull Lake (Kalamazoo County) with their CLMP aquatic plant survey. (Photo credit: Angela De Palma-Dow)