

FAQ about Benthic Macroinvertebrate Water Quality Monitoring

Fancy title, what is it?

Volunteers collect insects that live as larvae in the river. They count how many individuals of different species are present. Some species of insects can tolerate polluted waters or waters with heavier sediment. Other insect species cannot survive in poor conditions. The insects we find in the Middle River tell us what the water quality is at that particular site and time.

How long has FOMR been doing benthic monitoring?

This is our 7th year! We are starting to build a really robust set of data that can produce information about the longerterm trends of water quality in the Middle River.

How many different places in the river are tested, and how often?

We have been testing 9 different sites. With more volunteers we could add more sites or start to test new waters such as some tributaries. We monitor all 9 sites in spring and again in fall.

What happens to the data you collect?

We analyze the data for our own purposes, but our data is also submitted to Save Our Streams which compiles similar data from other rivers across the country creating a comprehensive picture of waters across the USA.

How many volunteers participate in this program?

Over 50 people have trained and participated at some level over the years in our benthic program.

How does this benthic monitoring fit in with other FOMR activities?

Stewardship and recreation are the basis of our Mission. Water can be monitored for a variety of water quality indicators. Water temperature, presence of E.coli bacteria and benthic macroinvertebrate are the 3 types of monitoring FOMR currently does.

Do you have to be a biologist, entomologist or some other -ologist to volunteer?

No! You just have to be interested and curious! Few of our monitors have any kind of professional background that led to this work. In fact, we have some teens that regularly participate in our monitoring program. It just takes time to build your insect ID skills. At any given monitoring event, there are more experienced monitors mixed in with some new folks. So we are used to helping people try it out and see if they “catch the monitoring bug”, so to speak!

And if it turns out not to “be your thing” we have loads of other ways to get involved with FOMR.