

Thursday, Jun. 13, 2013

## Utah Water Watch Program Seeks Volunteers



A volunteer monitors water quality near the Utah Botanical Center.

With 2,085 lakes in Utah and more than 89,000 miles of streams and rivers, water is an essential natural resource in the state that must be preserved and protected.

The *Utah Water Watch* program was created to promote stewardship over Utah's aquatic resources through monitoring the condition of water quality so this precious resource can be managed and Utahns can continue enjoying the benefits of healthy drinking water, irrigation water and water used for recreation.

According to Brian Greene, Utah State University Water Quality Extension program coordinator, *Utah Water Watch* (UWW) is a partnership between USU Extension and the Utah Division of Water Quality that uses assistance from the public to monitor Utah's lakes and streams.

UWW builds on past volunteer monitoring efforts in Utah. For more than 10 years, volunteers have monitored water quality through programs such as Utah Lake Watch, Utah Stream Team and Stream Side Science.

“The new UWW program seeks to increase the public's awareness of water quality and its importance through education and outreach and to collect credible data that can be used in making decisions regarding water health,” Greene said. “Our program now has two tiers. Tier one is for beginners who will collect entry-level data on a fairly broad level. Tier two is for volunteers who feel comfortable doing more advanced monitoring with more involved equipment.”

Greene said both groups are asked to monitor a specific location at least once a month for a minimum of seven months out of the year, with the

hope that they can continue doing it for years to come. He told of one volunteer, Scott Tolentino, who has been monitoring Bear Lake for 10 years and the benefit of his long-term efforts.

“Sometimes people make comments that the water used to be more clear, but this person’s monitoring made it possible for us to know that in 2012, the water was as clear as it has ever been in the last 10 years,” Greene said. “His continuous volunteer work over the years gives us the ability to see the changes that occur in nature, and if you don’t monitor, you don’t know.”

Greene said volunteers are invaluable to the program and are what makes it all happen, and the program is always in need of more participants.

“Our youngest volunteer is 9 and our oldest is 85,” he said. “They come from all walks of life. We have farmers, police, interested citizens, teachers and whole families participating. No experience is necessary, and we provide all the equipment and training. Volunteers can monitor the lake or stream of their choice, and hopefully it will be a location that has meaning to them. The program is flexible, and participants can choose a day and time that works best for their schedule. Each monitoring event takes about 30 minutes.”

The project is aligned with the Utah Core Curriculum, and there are many teachers who involve their students.

“This is real science where students can see real results from their work,” Greene said. “There is no better STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) opportunity as they learn about water quality while hopefully having fun too.”

Training is offered for volunteers, and a session will be held Saturday, June 15, at the USU Botanical Center Wetlands Discovery Point in Kaysville, and Saturday, June 29, at USU in Logan with additional trainings upcoming.

Those interested in volunteering can do so at the [website](#) and learn about the program and watch instructional videos or, they can contact Greene at [brian.greene@usu.edu](mailto:brian.greene@usu.edu) or 435-797-2580.

***Related links:***

[Utah Water Watch](#)

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