

## **Adopt-A-Stream Programs**

Adopt-A-Stream programs are volunteer programs in which participants "adopt" a stream to study, clean up, monitor, protect, or restore. Through these activities, the adopting group or organization becomes the primary caretaker of that stretch of stream in the watershed. Adoptions are as flexible and unique as the streams themselves. Adopting a stream is a great program for youth groups, including church, school and scout groups, and also for adult groups such as neighborhood associations, civic organizations, or businesses. Levels of involvement range from monthly testing to quarterly visual surveys and litter pick-ups to one-time habitat improvement projects. Participants of the program help make areas in their watershed more visually attractive and improve habitat for wildlife, thus saving and restoring natural resources. Collecting waste from stream banks and channels of one local waterbody could spur interest in maintaining and improving other local waterbodies.

### **Designate an Adopt-A-Stream leader**

Organization and record keeping are key components of Adopt-A-Stream programs. The municipal costs incurred from an Adopt-A-Stream program are primarily administrative. This person needs to work with many different groups, individually and together. In addition, this person is responsible for organizing the program, assigning stream reaches to groups, keeping tabs on the different groups, and organizing the information from the groups.

### **Develop a reporting plan**

Develop a monitoring and reporting plan to evaluate the stream conditions. Design the program so the responsibility falls upon the groups themselves to report things in a useful format. The more you require of the group itself, the less work should be required of you. Keep records consisting of group name, contact name and address, stream name and location, a description of the stream stretch with landmarks (e.g., "from High Bridge north to Route 58 overpass"), the length of the stream, and the anticipated number of participants, and the age of participants.

### **Mark potential stream reaches on a watershed map.**

Rough watershed maps can be obtained from EPA's Surf Your Watershed web site (USEPA, 2000) at <http://www.epa.gov/surf>, or more detailed maps can be ordered from the U.S. Geological Survey (2001) at <http://mapping.usgs.gov>. The watershed map can then be used to keep track of which stretches are available, what/who is adjacent, which are adopted and by whom.

### **Develop a contact list of people and organizations that can help you and the stream groups.**

Schools especially find it valuable to enlist a co-sponsor such as a civic group or private organization like a local business, to aid them in their efforts. Co-sponsors vary in their involvement with the students. Some activities that cosponsors can undertake include meeting with students to demonstrate community support for their efforts, helping to select an appropriate waterway, providing special information about the waterway, accompanying students on field trips, helping to prepare news releases and articles about the program, providing funds (if necessary), and helping to prepare a written report that compiles all of the data from schools in the watershed. Students and community members can then use this report as a focal point around which to plan strategies for involvement and actions for the coming year. Equipment for monitoring can be borrowed from universities and other research facilities, and activities such as stream cleanups might require only bags, gloves, clipboards, and pencils, which can be provided at low cost.

### **Partner with schools.**

Meet with school teachers/administrators. Determine if an Adopt-A-Stream program can be integrated into a school curriculum, ensuring commitment over time. Interdisciplinary classroom curricula and activities are available from many sources and can also be developed by teachers, both for youth and adult use. Student groups are especially helpful if a waterbody is located on school property. Students can

perform chemical, physical, and biological testing to determine water quality and can also perform habitat restoration. Teacher guides are available from many government sources.

### **Publicize the Program and Its Activities.**

The media should be involved whenever possible to spread the word about the Adopt-A-Stream program and the activities it sponsors. Advertisements or public service announcements (PSAs) can be placed in newspapers or broadcast on TV and radio. An internet site can also be developed. Target community groups and schools in the outreach campaign through presentations and assemblies, stressing that the program is educational, philanthropic, and fun.

### **Prepare "how to" packets**

Have a simple outlined plan for how to "Adopt-A-Stream." Interested parties can take this packet to their own groups. The more information you can put in the packet, the fewer questions may need to be answered later. The packet could contain of a general map of stream reaches that are available for adoption. Interested groups can then contact you for a more detailed map of a stream which interests them. More detailed packets may consist of:

- Instructions and information needed to conduct activities such as stream monitoring or storm drain stenciling
- Topographic map of the area (possibly with the stream of interest designated)
- Data sheets for recording observations
- Lists of necessary equipment (such as bags, gloves, monitoring devices, first aid kit)
- Comments on the stream's history
- Field guides
- Contact information
- A basic "do's and don'ts" list for what to do if hazardous materials like syringes are encountered
- Safety tips
- Hints for a successful cleanup
- Rewards for volunteers (such as stickers or certificates)

### **Possible activities sponsored through Adopt-A-Stream programs include:**

- Stream cleanups
- Streambank surveys
- Water quality monitoring
- streambank enhancement projects, such as tree planting, for stabilization and orosion control
- Storm drain stenciling
- Construction site surveys for proper storm water controls
- Stream walks, workshops, and other activities to promote watershed education

### **For more information:**

EPA's Adopt-A-Stream factsheet

[[http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/invol\\_1.cfm](http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/invol_1.cfm)]

National Adopt-A-Stream program website

[[www.adopt-a-stream.org](http://www.adopt-a-stream.org)]

NC Streamwatch Program

[[http://www.ncwater.org/Education\\_and\\_Technical\\_Assistance/Stream\\_Watch](http://www.ncwater.org/Education_and_Technical_Assistance/Stream_Watch)]

NC Project WET, Water Education for Teachers

[[http://www.ncwater.org/Education\\_and\\_Technical\\_Assistance/Project\\_WET](http://www.ncwater.org/Education_and_Technical_Assistance/Project_WET)]

