

Water Action Volunteers

2015 Total Phosphorus Monitoring Program

East Branch Pecatonica River at Cisserville Road

Katherine Lehto



Monitoring Site Quick Facts

SWIMS Station ID	10030499
WBIC	897800
County	Lafayette
Watershed	Lower East Branch Pecatonica Rivers
Watershed Area	144.8 sq miles
Total Stream Miles	370.96
Downstream Waterbody	Pecatonica River

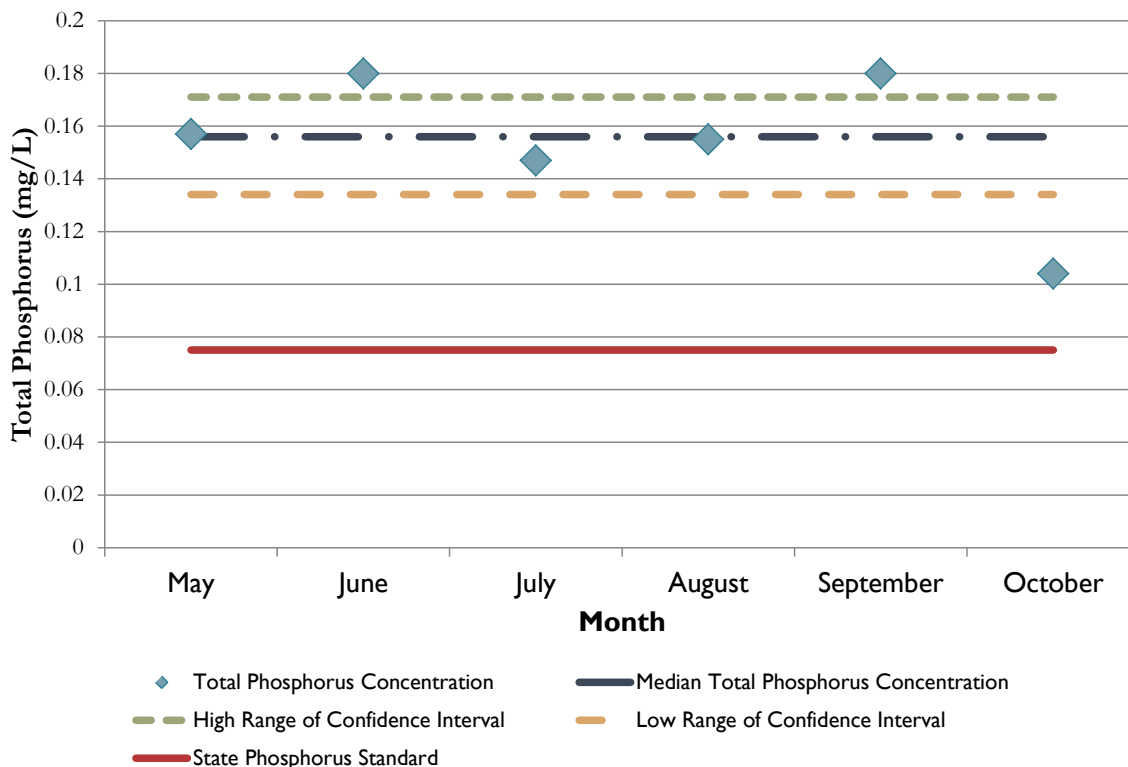
2015 Monitoring Results

Minimum TP Value	0.104 mg/L
Maximum TP Value	0.18 mg/L
Median TP Value	0.16 mg/L
No. Samples > 0.075mg/L	6



Map Legend ★ - Sampling Location for 2015

Total Phosphorus Concentration per Month



As part of this project, Water Action Volunteers stream monitors collected water samples at monitoring locations along the east, west, and mainstem of the Pecatonica River. These systems, while making up a large part of our water resources, are virtually unmonitored. It will be used to determine a protocol for developing biocriteria for river systems and will be used for updating the status of the state's water quality in accordance with section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act. The data gathered will be used as an indicator of overall water quality and watershed health on a HUC 8 scale.

Why Phosphorus?

Phosphorus is an essential nutrient responsible for plant growth, but it is also the most visible, widespread water pollutant in Wisconsin lakes. Small increases in phosphorus levels can bring about substantial increases in aquatic plant and algae growth, which in turn can reduce the recreational use and aquatic biodiversity. When the excess plants die and are decomposed, oxygen levels in the water drop dramatically which can lead to fish kills.

Additionally, one of the most common impairments in Wisconsin's streams is excess sediments that cover stream bottoms. Since phosphorus moves attached to sediments, it is intimately connected with this source of pollution in our streams. Phosphorus originates naturally from rocks, but its major sources in streams and lakes today are usually associated with human activities: soil erosion, human and animal wastes, septic systems, and runoff from farmland or lawns. Phosphorus-containing contaminants from urban streets and parking lots such as food waste, detergents, and paper products are also potential sources of phosphorus pollution from the surrounding landscape. The impact that phosphorus can have in streams is less apparent than in lakes due to the overall movement of water, but in areas with slow velocity, where sediment can settle and deposit along the bottom substrate, algae blooms can result.



Photo credits to Matt Berg, David Seligman, Linda Warren, Adrian Konell, and Lindsey Albright (front)

Volunteer Monitoring Protocol

To assess in stream phosphorus levels, WAV volunteers collected water samples that were analyzed for total phosphorus (TP) at the State Lab of Hygiene during the growing season (May through October). Following Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) methods, six phosphorus water samples were collected at each monitoring site - one per month for each of the six months during the growing season. The water samples were collected approximately 30 days apart and no samples were collected within 15 days of one another.

A stream site is considered "impaired" if: 1) the lower 90% confidence limit of the sample median exceeds the state TP criterion of 0.075 mg/L or 0.1 mg/L or 2) there is corroborating WDNR biological data to support an adverse response in the fish or macroinvertebrate communities. If there is insufficient data for either of these requirements, more data will need to be collected in subsequent years before an impairment decision can be made. A site is designated as a "watch water" if the median total phosphorus concentration falls within the confidence limit and a site is considered to have "met criteria" if the upper limit of the confidence interval does not exceed the criterion.



PROJECT PARTNERS

