

# Water Action Volunteers

## 2015 Total Phosphorus Monitoring Program

### Primrose Branch Upstream County U Bridge

Steve Gavin



#### Monitoring Site Quick Facts

SWIMS Station ID	10009633
WBIC	887000
County	Dane
Watershed	West Branch Sugar River - Mt. Vernon
Watershed Area	66.74 sq miles
Total Stream Miles	156.64
Downstream Waterbody	West Branch Sugar River

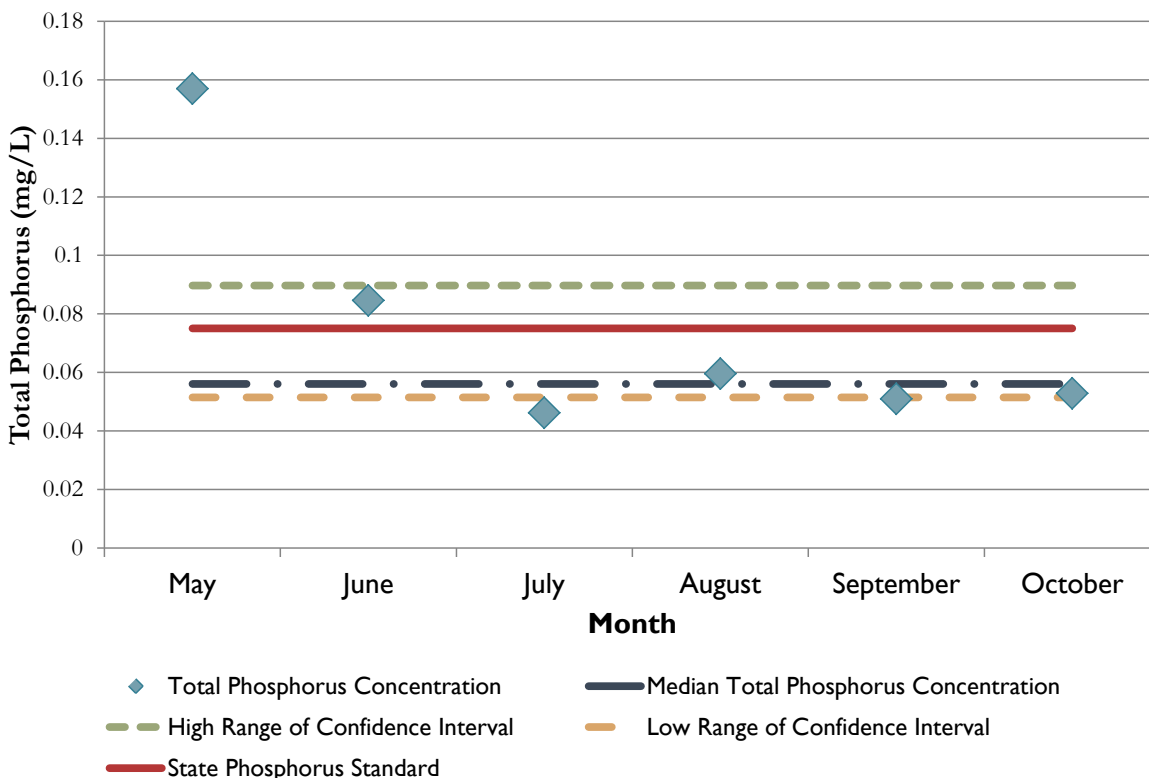
#### 2015 Monitoring Results

Minimum TP Value	0.0462 mg/L
Maximum TP Value	0.157 mg/l
Median TP Value	0.056 mg/L
No. Samples > 0.075mg/L	2



Map Legend ★ - Sampling Location for 2015

### Total Phosphorus Concentration per Month



In 2015, the WAV program opened funding to active volunteers that were concerned about elevated total phosphorus levels in their local streams. WAV staff screened volunteer applications requesting funding to monitor phosphorus to ensure that data had not already been collected, and to allow available funds to be shared as broadly as possible. In a partnership with the Office of the Great Lakes, the result is that 97 WAV sites are currently being monitored by volunteers through this fantastic effort!

# 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

