
Field Behavior

Volunteer water quality monitoring is a great tool for building appreciation and respect for our natural resources. Consider whether the actions of the entire group – teachers, students, volunteers – work towards this goal. Give careful thought to the following:

How can we help the wildlife and resources of our site?

Groups of people, both small and large, have the potential to impact the aquatic and terrestrial environment in a short amount of time. Follow these guidelines to lessen your impact.

- Choose a site with well-vegetated banks. Avoid bare or unstable banks to minimize erosion.
- Avoid monitoring during particularly wet weather. Wet soils and plants are easily disturbed.
- In the summer, if the water is low, the stream bed may be the best route for walking. The vegetation on the banks will thank you for it!
- Replace rocks and logs that have been overturned – these are homes for many critters.
- Handle organisms gently. They'll appreciate being returned quickly to their homes.
- Place aquatic organisms directly into water-filled containers for study. Keep the containers shaded so the sun doesn't heat the water to harmful levels.
- Look for fish spawning areas – **redds**. Redds are round or elliptical areas of clean gravel about 1-3 feet long. They provide great opportunities for discussion but avoid walking near them.

What should we know about collecting live samples?

Consider the impact of collecting (permanently removing) macroinvertebrates or other animals and plants from the site. Removal of a few items may have a minimal effect on the environment. However, students learn from the respect leaders show for each individual creature. Discuss the following aspects of collecting with students.

- Disturb animals as little as possible. The best place to learn about them is in their natural environments.
- Encourage your students to investigate freely but collect only with a purpose. Collecting should support instruction or other meaningful activities.
- Ask students to help decide whether and what to collect.
- Collect only specimens that are abundant. Talk with your local Utah Division of Wildlife Resources office (contact information in "Resources" Appendix) to find out if there are any rare or endangered species in or near your stream.

