

News

Bad River Watershed Association to accept award



A CLOSE EYE - Thomas Wyse examines a water quality sample on behalf of the Bad River Watershed Association which is set to receive the 2008 Volunteer Stream Monitoring Award at its annual "Spring for the Water" event Saturday, March 29 at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center.

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Thomas Wyse loves being outdoors. And, being new to the area, he is eager to get involved in the community. So he volunteered to take water samples for the Bad River Watershed Association (BRWA).

Thomas joined veteran water quality monitor Matt Hudson on the Brunsweller River earlier this month for training on how to test water quality. Thomas will join 17 other local residents in observing physical, chemical and biological characteristics of his sampling site once a month.

Such work earned the Association the 2008 Volunteer Stream Monitoring Award, announced last week. The award, for group effort in the statewide Water Action Volunteer program, will be presented by University of Wisconsin Extension at the group's annual "Spring for the Water" event on March 29 at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center at 5:30 p.m.

While many people monitor water quality in lakes and streams around the state, the BRWA program is more extensive than most. BRWA monitors an entire watershed — in this case, an area that extends from Iron River in the west nearly to Hurley in the east. Within this area, several major streams all flow into the Bad River and then into Lake Superior, including the White, Marengo, Potato, Tylers Forks and of course, the Bad River, which begins in Caroline Lake, southeast of Mellen.

"A watershed is a landscape where all water, from many different points, journeys to a common place," says Matt Hudson, a BRWA board member. "And a watershed association also brings together people from many different backgrounds to work to a common purpose."

The purpose in this case is to study and care for the land they call "home."

The group formed because very little information existed about the area they call home.

"State and federal agencies, with limited budgets, often get pulled to work in areas with more people and more pollution," explained Michele Wheeler, the group's executive director. "So area's like ours receive little attention or funding. So, we fill in the gaps by collaborating with local partners to provide data that can be used for management or decision making."

The group is known for very careful data collection. Volunteers receive training for the water tests they conduct. But BRWA goes even further to be sure data is accurate by asking volunteers to test a "mystery sample" and get the correct results.

Monthly, the group samples 18 sites throughout the watershed. Some volunteers are five-year veterans.

"Local people have a lot of knowledge about their surroundings, and we want to help gather that information and make it useful for decision makers," says Jack Wichita, the group's president, and resident of the town of Lincoln.

For more information about the Bad River Watershed Association or to sign up for their free quarterly newsletter, call Michele at 682-2003.