



CLEAN WATER CORNER



The Power of Partnerships

BY DANIELLE DONKERSLOOT
IWLA Clean Water Program Director

The Clean Water Challenge is off to a great start thanks to volunteers like you. As we move into 2018, it's clear now more than ever: we are stronger and better conservationists when we work together with partners.

In our work with new partners at the local, regional, and national levels, several common themes have emerged:

1. **Great people are doing good work in every community.** We should join forces when it makes sense and support each other's efforts. Collectively, we are stronger, our voices are louder, and our actions are greater.

2. **We don't need to reinvent the wheel.** The last survey of the volunteer community identified more than 1,700 active volunteer stream monitoring programs nationwide. We can all share resources and best practices.

3. **As the saying goes, "Many hands make light work."** If we don't foster new partnerships, we are not going to be as impactful as we could (and should) be.

The Clean Water Challenge is more than a single event — it is a campaign to connect with community partners, cultivate new relationships, and strengthen our national network of citizen scientists.

One of the League's new national partners is the Waterkeeper Alliance — the parent organization for roughly 200 Waterkeepers across the country. Just like League chapters, each Waterkeeper group is unique and

diverse. It's great to be partnering with and learning from these folks. We have a common goal: clean water. Together, we are working to increase the number of streams monitored nationwide and share the collected data between our organizations.

Katherine Luscher, training director for the Waterkeeper Alliance, says they are "excited to be working with IWLA to grow and strengthen the efforts of citizen scientists across the country. Though our organizations may employ different strategies, science is an objective unifier. The more reliable data we can collect about our water resources, the better able we each will be to carry out our missions."

Last year, IWLA staff supported development of new water monitoring programs with the Anacostia Riverkeeper and Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper — both of which are located in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We trained and certified



WINTER SALT WATCH

For decades, road salt has provided a quick, inexpensive way to reduce traffic accidents and pedestrian falls. But that salt eventually ends up in our streams and rivers, where it can cause serious problems, including:

- Toxic conditions for fish and aquatic life, which has a ripple effect down the food chain
- Corroded pipes in drinking water systems, which can leach lead and other dangerous metals into our water
- Increased salt levels in drinking water — a danger for people with high blood pressure and other health conditions that require a low-sodium diet

We all need to travel safely during the winter months. However, public works departments and property managers need to move away from the “more is better” approach to road salts.

How are road salts (chloride) affecting your local streams? For a limited time, the League is offering FREE chloride test kits so you can find out! Post your results to our Winter Salt Watch map to help identify hot spots and use the outreach tools and tips to take action locally.

Visit iwla.org/saltwatch to get started today!



volunteers and staff from these groups using the League’s Save Our Streams monitoring protocols, and we look forward to helping them get started with their 2018 monitoring seasons.

I also participated in the Gulf of Mexico/Southeast Waterkeeper Retreat to discuss the Clean Water Challenge and share best practices in volunteer monitoring and data collection. It was inspiring to meet these folks and hear about the on-the-ground advocacy work they are doing every day for rivers, bays, lakes, and wetlands. Many Waterkeepers are looking to get started in water monitoring. Others are already up and running with monitoring program. One of the programs I was most impressed with was the Coosa Riverkeeper’s Swim Guide program in Alabama. Not only does the Riverkeeper conduct extensive water quality monitoring, the public can receive email or text



message alerts on current bacteria levels at community swimming locations. With these protocols and guidance from the Coosa Riverkeeper, the League is working to develop a

bacteria monitoring component for the Save Our Streams program.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for developing new community partners. But we can work together to establish best practices for sharing ideas and findings. Take a look around your community. What other groups are engaged in water quality monitoring or stream protection? Reach out and let them know about the Clean Water Challenge. Discuss ways you can work together. Some League chapters are hosting stream monitoring trainings for their community partners. Others have asked partner groups to speak at a chapter meeting about what they do locally.

If you would like more information on partnership development, contact the League’s Clean Water Program at sos@iwla.org.