



Current Events



The Newsletter of the Arkansas Stream Team

Volume 17, Number 2

April – June 2013

**News from Region II (Delta)
Stream Team Coordinator,
Stephen O'Neal...**

The past few months has seen Region II Stream Team activity go primarily from school group events, including water quality testing and litter pickups, and transitioned into the heat of summer...which is the time for stream habitat projects and numerous requests for assistance and advice on “what can we do” to restore eroded streamside property.

*Before getting into the stream, we train on the shoreline exactly **HOW** to perform a proper macroinvertebrate sample— work in pairs, walk into the current, keep the kick net on the streambed, and kick as hard as you can to stir-up the stream material, so it will float downstream into the net. The net operators serve double duty—catch the bugs, and save the kicker from tripping and falling down! ►*

The Batesville Elementary School is amassing an impressive set of data spanning the past three years with regular site visits to Poke Bayou, northwest of town. The group has made it a priority in their quest for knowledge to make at least three trips per school year to the bayou to accomplish three main tasks: 1) perform a litter pickup to get acquainted with the bayou’s riparian area, the zone of vegetation that surrounds the waterbody, and to get familiarized with the topography, surroundings, wildlife



and visual attributes of the aquatic system they are studying; 2) the students will conduct a biological sample of the aquatic macroinvertebrates that are living within the gravels of the bayou itself—this is a very eye-opening experience, and the group thoroughly enjoys seeing the multitude of organisms and types that are clinging to the sands and gravels on the stream bottom; and finally, 3) the group will conduct a water chemistry analysis via a high-end laser-based colorimeter testing system which has the ability to test for over 50 different parameters. The chemistry analysis brings the biological and physical attributes all together into a verifiable format which helps to assess the overall health of the water body. The Batesville West Magnet Elementary group composed of 4th graders is diligent and methodical—these are some extremely detail-conscious students, and they always do a fantastic job in their outings.



The participants each received a “STREAM TEAM” ball cap for their work and contributions to collecting valuable data, a memento of the day, and a “thank you” from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

Getting up close and personal with some of the critters that live in our creeks, bayous, streams and rivers! ►



The Ahlf Junior High School students did similarly in Searcy this quarter as they continue to increase their knowledge of Gin Creek in White County. They, too, are putting together a long-term data trend analysis based on the past several years of efforts. The class has been spearheaded by Mrs. Cook, a veteran science teacher, and her leadership will be missed, as she retired at the end of the most recent school year. Participation in the program will be dependent upon another teacher picking up the baton and running with it, as is the key in most long-term projects—a dedicated leader. The Stream Team wishes Mrs. Cook the best, and truly appreciates her commitment to her students for so many years, in addition to her involvement and enthusiasm for the Stream Team Program.



◀ *The Ahlf Jr. High School students "get their feet wet" in Gin Creek as they perform a macroinvertebrate sample.*

These Batesville 4th graders are performing a macroinvertebrate sample on Poke Bayou. The results of their effort showed the water quality was very high on the biological scale... as many different species which are not tolerant of poor water quality were found. This is a good sign for Poke Bayou. ►



The time is NOW for streambank stabilization work and riverine habitat projects as the water is low and the immediate threat of spring thunderstorms is over. When a project is permitted via the United States Corps of Engineers, we generally state within the application process that work will be completed “during the low-flow period.” Although no one has a 100% reliable weather prediction method, it can usually be said that July-September will be fairly dry, and that is the time to perform stream work. It is also the time when many landowners are taking full account of their erosion problems, because the water levels are low, vegetation is drying up --- so the banks may be more visible, and they are canoeing, kayaking, swimming, etc. and simply notice their bank conditions more readily from the water than they do from the land. If you are a landowner experiencing river erosion, or you know of a landowner who is, let them know about "the Program," or call if you have questions about what can be done. There is no cost to the landowner for a site visit, and to kick some ideas around regarding a particular stream/river situation. We are all interested in "Keeping Our Streams in a Natural State!"



◀ *Debbie Martin receives “seed money” to get a project started on the South Fork Spring River. The work should begin in the next month or two to stop erosion that is occurring along a 1000 foot stretch of the river.*

**News from Region IV
(Ouachita Mountains and Arkansas River Valley)
Stream Team Coordinator, Matthew Irvin...**

From dogwoods blooming, crappie biting, turkeys gobbling, and 36° frosty mornings in April to picking green beans, bream fishing, swimming, and 101° with a heat index of 108° in the afternoons of June. Summer is ON and the fishing and water recreation activities in our rivers and streams are great!

This quarter I had the pleasure of working with the *Hector High School Stream Team (#633)* in April before school let out. The picture below is the 7th grade class (52 students, 2 job shadowers, plus teachers). They chose to collect macroinvertebrates and test the water quality on the Illinois Bayou at the U.S. Forest Service Bayou Bluff Recreation Area. ▼



One of the cool critters we found was a stream (vs. pond type) salamander in its larval stage. ▼



The 8th graders found a few very pregnant crayfish. ▼



The students were thrilled, and so was I. There were 43 students, plus a couple of teachers in the 8th grade class (not pictured). Both classes found the water chemistry to be within safe levels for fish and humans. The results from our biological data inventories were excellent for both classes.

I completed several streambank erosion surveys this quarter. One on Cadron Creek in Cleburne County (252 linear feet), a second one on the Caddo River in Norman (192 linear feet), a third survey on Caney Creek in Pike County (305 linear feet), a fourth on the Little Maumelle River in Pulaski County (170 linear feet), and a fifth one on the South Fork Caddo River in Montgomery County (658 linear feet), for a total of 1,577 linear feet that I am restoring and reducing sediment from entering our streams.

The Stream Team Program is a *TEAM* for a reason, because we help each other. Sometimes we get called upon to review other projects. Jennifer Sheehan, our Federal Regulatory Program Specialist, has had to reach out for our help recently because of double-stacked meetings and personal medical issues. I reviewed the Caney Creek Mitigation Bank in Faulkner County, the Lower Saline River Mitigation Bank in Cleveland County, and the Mulberry River Highway 23 Bridge replacement proposals for her. I also helped my colleague to the northeast, Stephen O'Neal (Region 2 Stream Team Coordinator), plant some trees on the Current River in Randolph County.

This quarter I hired an intern, Ethan Quick a student at Arkansas Tech University, to assist me with stream surveys. He will also help the district fisheries biologists with spring black bass sampling and building fish structure for renovations on Horsehead Lake. Ethan is handy with a measuring rod and laser level. ►



As most of you are well aware, we recently lost the life of one of our AGFC family members. On May 31, Wildlife Officer Joel Campora gave his life to save another during the rising flood waters at “Y” City in Scott County. The National Weather Service reported 8 inches of rain fell in a 12-hour period on the Mill Creek and Fourche LaFave Rivers watershed. Not only did this flood take the lives of five people, but also much property was damaged and/or lost.

One such property owner on the Fourche LaFave River in Scott County lost his cabin, 20-30 additional feet of streambank, and flood waters scattered about five dump truck loads of large boulders that were staged for streambank repairs. ►



Dave Evans, Region 1 Stream Team Coordinator, warned me a long time ago that streambank restoration projects seem to attract floods!

Monday evening of this week I attended a disaster relief meeting in Mt. Ida with 60-plus attendees to discuss damages from the recent floods in Montgomery and Scott Counties. The main purpose of the meeting was to inform landowners and farmers to document damages to their property, now that the flood waters have receded. There is potential funding for landowners in these counties through the Emergency Conservation Program administered by the Farm Service Agency. As of this writing, on Tuesday of this week, 11 Arkansas counties were declared federal disaster areas. This means relief from financial burdens from flood and tornado damages is on its way for those owning land in those 11 counties with federal disaster designations.

I don't like leaving anyone out, but there isn't always enough space in the newsletter for a picture to be included of everyone. This quarter, I met with the *Oark High School Stream Team (#664)* to do a river cleanup on Easter Creek. We removed 2,720 pounds of scrap metal and garbage from Easter Creek in Johnson County. I met with two 4th grade classes at Pottsville (*Pottsville Middle Grades Stream Team - #886*) to do water quality checks on a tributary to Galla Creek in Pope County. Ethan, my intern, went with me to Hot Springs to work with Mrs. McDaniel and Sister Carol Anne Corley and the *St. John's Catholic School Stream Team (#493)*. It always amazes me how good the water quality is in Bull Bayou, below the landfill at Cedar Glades Park. On a Saturday in May, I met with the *Friends of the Mulberry Watershed Stream Team (#866)* to do water quality checks on the Little Mulberry Creek. They are becoming old pros at collecting water quality data, nowadays. I feel that it is necessary to recognize and encourage all of my Stream Teams for their continued hard work.

Also, during this busy time of year, I gave a presentation to our Commissioners, updating and informing them of the great things the Arkansas Stream Team does throughout the state. I thought the presentation was very well received, and I garnered some great questions from the Commissioners. Later on, I attended the annual U.S. Forest Service/Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Cooperative meeting at Lake DeGray State Park near Bismarck, and the Arkansas State Water Plan meeting at Arkansas Tech University Lake Point Convention Center in Russellville.

I would like to remind everyone that during our busy lives let's not forget the upcoming anniversary celebration of *Independence Day*! Please be safe on the water, spend time with your family, and don't forget the freedom God has given us in our beautiful and wonderful country!

**News from Region I
(Ozark Highlands and Boston Mountains)
Stream Team Coordinator, Dave Evans...**

Last month I got the chance to participate in a new program that the folks at the Buffalo National River hope will become an ongoing event. This summer school class consisted of nine high school AP (advanced placement) biology students and six adult leaders. Most of the students were from area schools, and a couple of them were from as far away as Little Rock. Three of the instructors were members of the Buffalo National River staff, two were science professors from North Arkansas Community College, and I was the sixth member.

The object of the intense four-day class was the development of a deeper understanding of stream ecology and hydrology. The first three days would be spent collecting samples for analysis on the last day. The class took place on three of the Ozarks more beautiful streams: Crooked Creek, Buffalo National River and Cave Creek. Each morning we met at the Boone County Educational Cooperative Office before heading out to the field.

Day-one took place at the Fred Berry Conservation Education Center on Crooked Creek in Marion County, near Yellville. The first half of the day involved an introductory lecture that presented the course objectives and an over view of stream ecology and hydrology. After lunch we headed down to the water to learn how to use the HACH water test kit, a little about stream hydrology, and aquatic bug identification. As with each of the following days, the kids divided into four groups to conduct the surveys. One group collected and analyzed the water chemistry, one collected fish by electrofishing the riffles, the third group conducted "bug kickin' and name takin'," and the fourth group gathered stream hydrology data — flow, width/depth ratios, area, habitat analysis and other information. At the completion of this portion of the day, the kids spent the rest of the afternoon floating down Crooked Creek in canoes provided by the folks at the Fred Berry C.E.C.



Day-two was spent on the upper Buffalo National River immediately downstream of the wilderness area in Boxley Valley. As we were heading to this site, I was beginning to wonder if there would be any water in the river. If you're familiar with this part of the Buffalo, then you'll know where Arkansas Highway 21 crosses it...this is the turnoff to Hawksbill Crag. As we drove across the bridge, my wife commented that the river was totally dry at that point, and we continued heading farther upstream. When we got to the site, there was plenty of water to conduct our sample. However, there wasn't enough for a float trip. "Yay" for karst geology! (**Karst** is a landscape formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks including limestone, dolomite and gypsum.)



On day-three we traveled deep into the Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area to Cave Creek. I've been to some remote places in this job, but I must admit that this was one of the most remote. I'm sure some of these kids were wondering where the heck we were going...was that banjo music I just heard? (Well, maybe they're too young to have seen the movie *Deliverance*!) This site provided us with another teaching opportunity, snakes of the Ozarks. During an initial recon (reconnaissance) of the site, a cottonmouth was spotted near where we would be collecting samples. Having been duly warned, the kids and instructors headed out to collect the samples. Glad to say no one saw that critter, guess a wad of rowdy kids and adults kickin'-up and shocking the creek chased it away!

I had to leave just before lunch for another obligation I had in the Springdale area, and was unable to attend the final day. From everything I heard though, things went well and plans are being laid to do it again next summer. Not a bad way to spend a few days of your summer vacation...right kids?

**News from Region III (Gulf Coastal Plain)
Stream Team Coordinator, Ben Thesing...**

These first few months as a new Arkansas Stream Team Coordinator have surely flown by! It seems like only yesterday I was settling into my office down here in Camden. South Arkansas has offered all kinds of new adventures...from big rivers, such as the Ouachita and Red, to the small creeks of Poison Springs State Park. Springtime was great, with pleasant weather and all the much needed rains. I only hope that I can last through the *blistering Arkansas summer*.



Desmognathus (dusky) salamander from near Poison Springs in a spring-fed creek. What a find!



Banded pygmy sunfish caught during a sampling trip...one of my favorite fishes.

Besides all the great new places to explore outside, the people all around are some of the nicest I've ever met. AGFC has also offered a multitude of volunteer opportunities. I have worked with the district fisheries biologists collecting and sampling fish for hatchery programs and population growth studies, helped out in the Arkansas Youth Shooting Sports Program competition, and assisted with State Wildlife Grant stargazing darter fish surveys, just to name a few things. There have been so many great programs AGFC has going on that I could easily have spent all my time volunteering for all the great programs.

Me with a couple of largemouth bass sampled from Lake Columbia (while helping out the district biologist with an age growth study). ►





◀ *Ken Shirley
(District 2
Fisheries
Supervisor)
and a big ol'
female striped
bass ready to
head to the
hatchery for
spawning on
Lake Ouachita.*

Nonetheless, with all the new-to-the-job duties to which I must acclimate myself, I have been eager to dive into Stream Team activities here in my region, and was pleasantly surprised to find out people have been proactive in keeping their Stream Teams going. I have also made great new contacts with universities, high schools, and landowners, all of whom have given warm welcomes and ambitious attitudes.

Right off the bat, Foreman High School contacted me requesting that I sample/show them aquatic macroinvertebrates (*Bugs & Crawdads!*) and fishes in the local creek. We went out to Flat Creek, a tributary to the Little River just north of Foreman, Arkansas with a group of approximately 20 students. Before we got into the river, I explained to them how these little critters can be an indicator of stream health, and also how they are an important part of the food web. For the most part, how we like to eat big fish (i.e. bass, crappie, and catfish), and how those big fish eat little fish (the minnows), minnows eat the bugs in the creek, and the bugs eat leaves, algae, and such that fall in. Those bugs are crucial to the food chain and, if absent, we wouldn't have fish to catch and eat! After the short lecture, they were really excited to start catching critters in the stream, *Go Figure!*



Foreman High School students seining a pond.



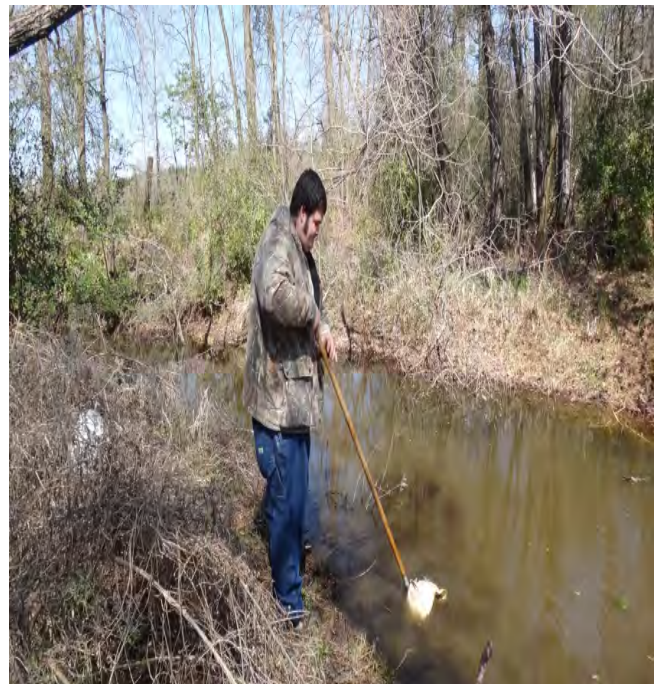
Watch out the water is about to fill those waders...Oops, too late!

After Flat Creek, we went to a small pond to “seine” (think volleyball net with small mesh to sweep through the water) up some fishes. Everyone really enjoyed this, even though the water went above some of their waders, and ended with soaked clothes! Still in good spirits, we discussed a little more about the ecology of aquatic systems and how land and water are connected. I am looking forward to working with them again.

Next up, the *Haskell Mayor Youth Council* took initiative and organized a cleanup of Trace Creek, a tributary to the Saline River in Saline County. The starting point was behind the baseball fields in Haskell, and folks walked up and down to cover a large area. In addition to floatable litter, a culvert, barbed wire, and other scrap metal was removed from a popular area where folks wade and play during the summer. In the works is a plan to improve this access of the creek by incorporating rock structures into the banks to prevent future erosion, and to allow easier access to the creek.



The Haskell Mayor Youth Council after a hard day's work in Trace Creek. I'm wearing camouflage, but I think you can see me on the end, next to Mayor Jeff Arey.



Student dip-netting for bugs in Trace Creek.

Closer towards the center of the state, the Little Rock Kickball Association (LRKA) was eager to help out Swaggerty Creek, a small tributary to Fourche Creek running through the middle of Interstate Park in Little Rock. Swaggerty Creek is a very urbanized creek which, unfortunately, is chock-full of litter from all the street storm drains making up a majority of the watershed. This being said, two separate cleanups were conducted! The first was a big success, and was hosted by the *Repeat Offenders* team who, along with other teams, voluntarily picked up a pile of litter. Second, a litter pickup competition was held on the last day of games to see which team could pickup the most litter in a given period of time. Both events yielded tremendous amounts of litter that, otherwise, would have been washed down to the Fourche Creek, and eventually the Arkansas River. The league is eager to expand their efforts and tackle larger scale cleanups in the near future, possibly on Fourche Creek.



▲ The "Repeat Offenders" after the Swaggerty Creek cleanup – Round One.



▲ After the Little Rock Kickball Association Swaggerty Creek cleanup – Round Two...The Competition!



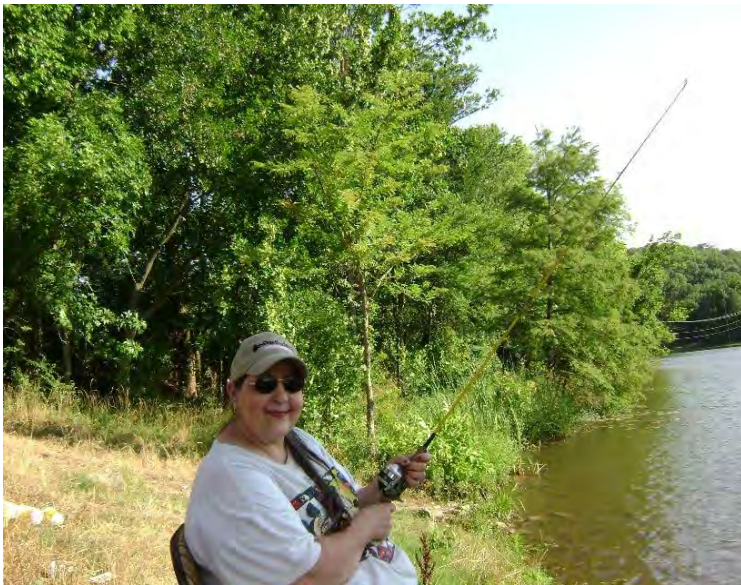
◀ Little Rock Kickball Association "Pitching Ain't Easy" team posing with their pile of garbage out of Swaggerty Creek.



Last, but not least, I've surveyed a few landowners properties to draft restoration plans which are coming along very well. I've been to a plethora of meetings around the state learning about water issues, and have been meeting with other state and federal agencies to better serve the public. I can't wait to meet more people in the area and get more projects going.

Until next time, find a nice cool swimming hole somewhere and have a great summer!

ARKANSAS STREAM TEAM NEWS CO-EDITOR RETIRING!



After twenty years working for the State of Arkansas, and eleven-plus years with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (over six and one-half of those years in the Fisheries Division), Debra Dickson is retiring in October of this year. Debra is an Administrative Assistant and has served as co-editor of the "Current Events" Arkansas Stream Team newsletter since coming to the Fisheries Division in October 2007. She also co-edits two other newsletters in the Fisheries Division: "Life in the Rocks" (the AGFC newsletter of the Nongame Aquatics Program), and "Streams and Rivers" (the AGFC newsletter of the Stream Fisheries Program). Debra previously edited and submitted articles for the former AGFC newsletter - "The Wild Life Newsletter" for the Wildlife Management Division (when first coming to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission), and for the Fisheries Division. Debra reports when in school she always loved English as a subject.

Another love of Debra's is poetry. She has won several awards for her poetry, along with having some of her works published. Debra enjoys

fishing and hunting with her husband, Robert, and says her post-retirement plans are to take more time for these activities. She and Robert have four grandchildren who live in Ohio, and they really look forward to getting to spend more time with them, too!

"I've really enjoyed working for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and will miss my family there," Debra conveyed. "I've enjoyed co-editing the newsletters, and so appreciate the dedication and 'team spirit' I see in our Stream Teams, and in the key role they play in helping keep Arkansas *the Natural State*."

In parting, Debra stated, "Maybe I'll see y'all on the lake or river...I'll be the one with the big smile on my face!" ☺

The Process of Becoming a STREAM TEAM...

1. Express an interest and request more information.

Send your name, address, and phone number to:

ARKANSAS STREAM TEAM PROGRAM COORDINATOR
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205

2. Sign up. You will receive the newsletter and be counted among Arkansas' *STREAM TEAM* members. This will also get you in the network of those wanting to help out Arkansas' waterways.

3. Adopt a stream. To become more involved in the program you can adopt a stream. Select a stream that you and/or your group are particularly concerned about. For example - the creek on your land, your favorite fishing hole, or the stream you drive over everyday going to work or school.

A. Inventory your stream with help from the *STREAM TEAM* coordinators.

B. Decide what you want to do---trash pickup, habitat improvement, water quality monitoring, and/or whatever is of interest to you or your group!



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