Get hooked on volunteering. Help Minnesota's waters.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is seeking volunteers for its Citizen Stream and Citizen Lake Monitoring Programs. Program volunteers track water clarity, which helps the MPCA learn more about a lake or stream's water quality. "Thirty years ago when I started monitoring Long Lost Lake I thought it would be an interesting thing to do for a summer. Little did I know that I would still be at it three decades later, I guess you could say I'm hooked," says Jim Svobodny, volunteer. Data collected by Jim and other volunteers can be used by the MPCA to determine if a trend toward improving or declining water quality exists. Identifying these trends is one of the first steps in protecting or improving water quality throughout the state.

More than 1,200 Minnesotans participate in the Citizen Monitoring Programs, but in order to reach all water bodies across Minnesota, more volunteers are needed. "69,000 miles of rivers and over 12,000 lakes is a lot of water to cover," says Laurie Sovell, coordinator of the MPCA's Citizen Stream Monitoring Program. "We are looking for people curious about local water bodies and passionate about protecting our state's water resources."

As part of the program, volunteers are asked to perform a short and simple water clarity test at their favorite lake or stream, once per week throughout the summer. Equipment and training are provided by the MPCA and no prior experience is necessary. For some lakes and streams, volunteer-collected data is the only data available, making citizen involvement critical to ensuring the lasting health of Minnesota's waters.

Find out if your favorite lake or stream needs monitoring by using the MPCA's interactive map at http://www.pca.state.mn.us/d4awwwd.

To become a volunteer or learn more about the program, visit the program's website at www.pca.state.mn.us/cmp, or call 651-296-6300 (Twin Cities) or 800-657-3864 (Greater Minnesota).