

What is the MWC Water Quality Monitoring Program?

In 1995, a watershed Water Quality Committee was established, consisting of a collaboration of federal, state and local organizations. Through this Committee a Water Quality Monitoring Program was developed and adopted by the MWC.

MWC Water Quality Monitoring Program objectives include:

- Monitor the overall health of the McKenzie River
- Determine if and how water quality in the McKenzie River is changing over time, accounting for natural and seasonal variation
- Provide credible data upon which management decisions can be made
- Provide an affordable and sustainable measurement tool to evaluate the effectiveness of steps taken to protect and enhance water quality in the basin
- Provide an early warning system to signal if any adverse trends are developing
- Use historical data to develop longer trends

The MWC is currently involved with three monitoring projects: ambient, tributaries, and macroinvertebrate. Information about who collects and stores data is summarized on the Council's website (www.mckenziewaterhedcouncil.org); general descriptions of the projects are listed below.

Ambient monitoring occurs watershed wide and focuses on the mainstem McKenzie River and intersections with major tributaries. To date, both baseline and trend information exists on the water quality of the McKenzie River. The Department of Environmental Quality produces annual reports for this effort that can be found on the MWC website.

Tributary water quality monitoring is a citizen-based effort that focuses on specific watershed tributaries. This grass roots effort is supported by the MWC with training support from EWEB. Monitoring is conducted on many tributaries of the McKenzie River (Elk Creek, Mohawk River, McGowan Creek, Parson Creek, Cedar Creek, Potter Creek, and Camp Creek). All of the data supports ground-based efforts to correct water quality concerns.

Since the mid 1990's the Council has worked in collaboration with a number of partnering organizations to generate a baseline macroinvertebrate assessment of stream health in order to more accurately verify McKenzie River ecosystem health. Reflecting the chemical, physical and biological conditions of a stream, the biological community is a powerful indicator of stream health.

Over the next few months the focus of this column will be descriptions of water quality parameters analyzed in the McKenzie River Watershed. Anyone interested in learning more or volunteering for water quality efforts is encouraged to contact the MWC at (541)687-9076.