



Monica Christopher looks in her net for aquatic insects. She was training to become a member of Hoosier Riverwatch on Tuesday in Burnett Creek in Battle Ground. (BY JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER)

Riverwatch students check out Burnett Creek

Water quality issues are one focus of program

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BATTLE GROUND — As the Hoosier Riverwatch students waded in Burnett Creek on Tuesday, they searched for bugs and other creatures.

A dozen adults and one teenager took the seven-hour course on volunteer stream monitoring. Hoosier Riverwatch is a state-sponsored water quality monitoring initiative.

After completing the course, the adults earned certification from Hoosier Riverwatch, a program of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife.

"I'm not afraid of crawfish, but they should be left alone," said a smiling Keely Campbell, 13. She is a Tennessean who is visiting her aunt, Mary Strawsma of Lafayette.

A former teacher, Strawsma thought it was important to have her niece take the Riverwatch course.

"This is about being a volunteer and getting kids out of the

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Check out future Riverwatch training sessions at www.in.gov/dnr/nrec/3033.htm

house," she said.

Tippecanoe County naturalist Mary Cutler used a classroom and the creek to teach the students about fauna and flora in the creek, water quality and other environmental issues.

At creekside, Cutler uses a qualitative habitat evaluation index chart. In other words, she and the students assessed Burnett Creek. They evaluated fish cover, stream shape, substrata, stream forests, wetlands, erosion, depth and velocity and riffles/runs.

After totaling the points, Burnett Creek had an above-average score of 82. The students not only collected samples of bugs and fish, they also measured the

depth and speed of the creek.

"When holding training sessions, we have new people and some people coming back to see what revisions have been made," Cutler said.

"It is up to the people as to how they use it."

The students came from Tippecanoe, Marion, Monroe and Pulaski counties.

Tippecanoe County Partnership for Water Quality also supported the Hoosier Riverwatch training session.

The Hoosier Riverwatch program began in Indiana to increase public awareness of water quality issues and concerns by training volunteers to monitor stream water quality.

The group's goal is to involve the citizens as active stewards of Indiana's water resources through watershed education, water monitoring and cleanup activities.

Hoosier Riverwatch also supports volunteer efforts through technical assistance, monitoring equipment and educational materials.