



Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

426 Bay Street • Petoskey, MI 49770 • phone: (231) 347-1181 • fax: (231) 347-5928
email: info@watershedcouncil.org website: www.watershedcouncil.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2006

contact: Kevin Cronk

(231)347-1181 ext. 109

kevin@watershedcouncil.org

Dedicated Volunteers "Dive In" to Protect Northern Michigan Waters.

PETOSKEY, MI - A dedicated group of volunteers are diving into the amazing world of aquatic macroinvertebrates to protect and serve the waters of northern Michigan. Aquatic macroinvertebrates are large invertebrates, such as insect larvae and crustaceans, which are found in great numbers in healthy waters. If the water becomes polluted, then some groups, such as mayflies, suffer and may disappear altogether.

Aquatic biologists have come to depend on aquatic macroinvertebrates as a natural tool for monitoring stream water quality. Specimens collected from streams are identified to look for the presence or absence of sensitive families as well as overall diversity.

"If only a few types of macroinvertebrates are found and sensitive families are not present, then there is probably a water quality problem in the stream," said Kevin Cronk, Monitoring and Research Coordinator at Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council.

In 2005, the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council started a program to monitor stream water quality by collecting these aquatic "critters". Although volunteer response for collecting macroinvertebrates was good, the program suffered from a lack of experts to aid in identification. This winter, a group of interested individuals was brought together by the Watershed Council to receive a winter-long aquatic macroinvertebrate identification training course.

Volunteer expert trainees have met on a biweekly basis since early December, 2005 and will continue meeting through the end of April. During 3-4 hours sessions, their brains are deluged with information as they learn to identify dozens upon dozens of macroinvertebrate families. Training is coordinated by the Watershed Staff through slide presentations and by explaining the intricacies of identifying each family. Then, volunteers are engaged in hands-on exercises where they examine and identify actual specimens.

Our volunteers' unwavering commitment to protecting the waters of northern Michigan was further demonstrated during a cold, sunny Saturday in February. Volunteers braved the elements and spent several hours outdoors collecting specimens from local streams so that they could practice their newfound skills.

"I am continually impressed by the enthusiasm of our volunteer experts," Kevin said. "We are so lucky to have such dedicated and skilled people in our area!"

If you would like more information about the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council Volunteer Stream Monitoring program or about how to get involved, please contact Kevin at 231-347-1181, ext. 109 or kevin@watershedcouncil.org.

About Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council: *Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council speaks for our members including full-time and seasonal residents, lake associations, and businesses. We work to maintain the environmental integrity and economic and aesthetic values of lakes, streams, wetlands, and ground water in Northern Michigan, as well as statewide and throughout the Great Lakes Basin. As the lead organization for water resources protection in Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, and Emmet Counties, the Watershed Council is working to preserve the heritage of Northern Michigan – a tradition built around our magnificent waters.*