



Starting a MiCorps Program: Lessons Learned

Kristin Thomas, Aquatic Ecologist

Michigan Trout Unlimited



Michigan Trout Unlimited

- **Mission:** To conserve, protect, and restore Michigan's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.
- **Volunteer Stream Monitoring**
 - Track stream health (MiCorps)
 - Identify restoration and protection needs
 - Track success of projects



MITU MiCorps Sampling

- **Kalamazoo River**
 - 5 sites 27 volunteers
- **Rogue River**
 - 5 sites 30 volunteers
- **Pilgrim River**
 - 8 sites 30 volunteers
- **Headwaters Au Sable**
 - 2 sites 12 volunteers



Sampling Day Procedures

- Divide volunteers into teams
- Assign team leaders and sites
- Sample and pick bugs
- Meet at indoor location
 - Eat Lunch
 - Identify samples



Things I Wish I had Known

1. Sampling dates should be chosen with care
2. You can never advertise an event too much
3. Provide as much training as you can
4. Reach out to partners early
5. Have plans for small and large volunteer groups
6. Thank your volunteers often

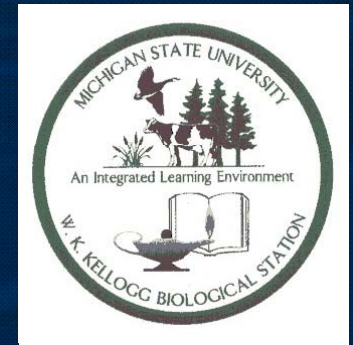
Planning for Sampling Success

- **Choose sampling date early**
 - Make sure they will work well on an annual basis
- **Prioritize your site list**
 - Which sites will you do if you only have a few volunteers?
 - Which sites will you add if you have a ton of volunteers?



Planning for Sampling Success

- **Advertise events early and often – ask volunteers to RSVP**
 - Use as many types of advertising as possible
 - Newspaper
 - Internet, Facebook
 - Partner organizations
 - Events and fairs
 - Volunteer RSVPs are super important for planning



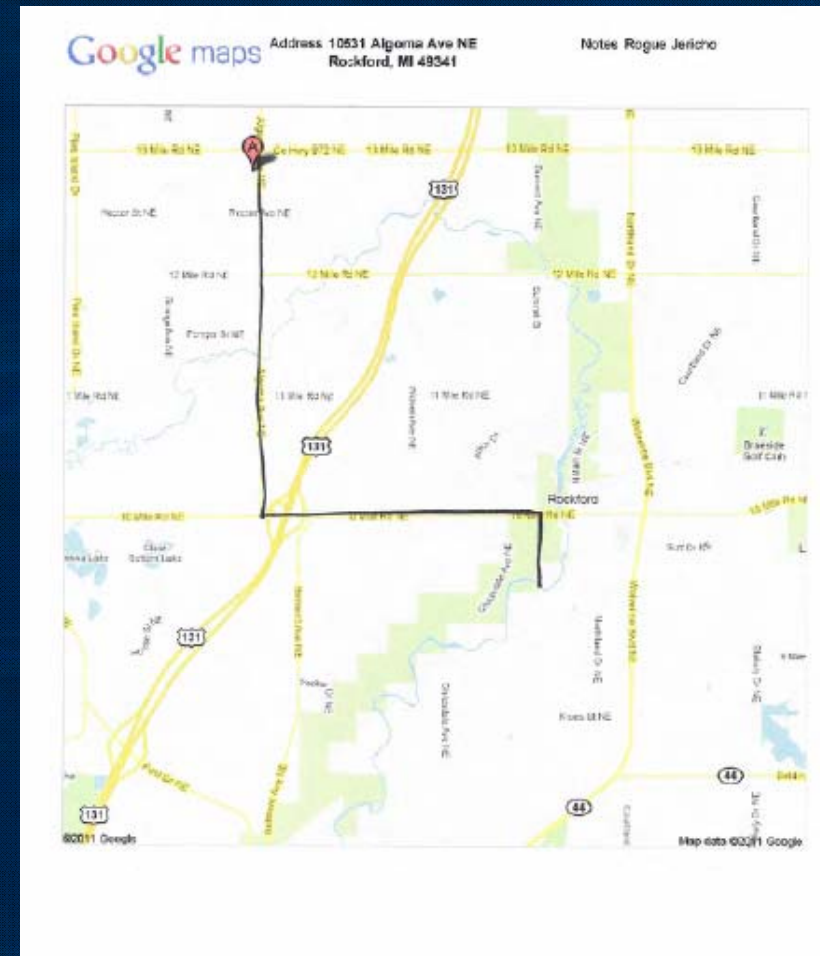
Provide as Much Training as You Can

- **Training for collection techniques, picking, and sorting**
 - Hard for volunteers to collect and pick well if they don't know how/where to sample or what they are looking for!
 - Sampling and picking/identification training is great
 - Only takes a couple of hours



Site Binders

- **Binder with**
 - Data sheets
 - Collection tips
 - Maps
- **Helpful to have it all in one place and easy for teams to keep track of**



Thank Your Volunteers

- **Send out thank you notes/email as often as you can**
- **Make sure volunteers know they are appreciated so they keep coming back!**
- **Keep volunteers updated on sampling results**
- **Providing food at events is a good thank you and incentive**