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Most of us along the coast of Alabama are concerned with the quality of the water flowing in our creeks, streams, and in Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. You have the opportunity to be trained to monitor the quality of your local waterways through a statewide program called Alabama Water Watch.

Housed at the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures at Auburn University, the AWW program trains hundreds of volunteers a year all over the state of Alabama, and even in Georgia. The program, which celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2002, measures long-term trends in water quality through data turned in to the program by volunteers who monitor their waterbodies once a month. Data is posted on the AWW website: www.alabamawaterwatch.org

During a 1-day training workshop, you will be introduced to the importance of water quality, types of water pollution, and trained to monitor 6 parameters of water chemistry: pH, alkalinity, hardness, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity, or the cloudiness of water. Each of these simple tests can measure long-term changes in water quality. You may even borrow a monitoring kit if one is available. After your training, you are asked to monitor a waterway once a month, which takes about an hour. Other levels of certification include bacteria monitoring and bioassessment, counting the insects that

indicate the health of your waterway. You may even become a volunteer trainer or quality assurance officer!

We are lucky enough along the coast to have several groups who are monitoring our waterways, and trainers who offer water chemistry sessions often. To find out more about local training and monitoring opportunities, visit the Alabama Water Watch website at www.alabamawaterwatch.org.