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LWF wraps up another water sampling season!

News

LWF

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With the changing weather comes the end of another sampling season for the [Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network](#) (LWCBMN).

Coordinated by LWF with the help of watershed partners and the guidance of LWF science advisors, LWCBMN mobilizes citizens to collect water samples from rural areas located within the Red and Assiniboine River watersheds. These samples are then analyzed in a lab to measure phosphorus concentration, which enables LWF to calculate the amount of phosphorus being exported off the landscape and into the waterways that flow into Lake Winnipeg.

By identifying phosphorus hotspots – localized areas that contribute higher amounts of phosphorus to waterways than other areas – LWCBMN is generating vital water-quality data to inform policy, direct research and help us focus action where it will have the greatest impact.

A huge thanks to the 70 dedicated volunteer citizen scientists who participated in the 2021 field season, collecting samples from 130 sites in Manitoba, northwestern Ontario and North Dakota. Because of their efforts, LWCBMN has been able to maintain activities throughout the pandemic. Data continuity is a critical aspect to any long-term monitoring program, and LWCBMN data generated during the past two years will be an important contribution to the growing phosphorus dataset.

LWCBMN also continues to play an important role in an ongoing research project on freshwater salinity led by Braedon Humeniuk from the University of Manitoba.

A variety of human activities – from agricultural practices to the road salt used to de-ice streets during winter – are increasing salt concentrations in freshwater ecosystems. This can pose a risk to aquatic organisms and lead to other negative ecological and socio-economic consequences.

Launched in 2020 and originally planned as a two-year study, the project's duration and scope has been expanded, and research will now continue until 2024. LWCBMN's volunteer capacity, equipment and protocols are being leveraged for this work – an exciting partnership that demonstrates how community-based monitoring can be strategically deployed in the search for evidence-based answers to other environmental challenges relevant to freshwater health.

Labs that have remained closed for much of the pandemic are finally re-opening, and LWF staff are eager to begin analyzing LWCBMN water samples collected in 2020 and 2021. Analyzed data will be shared to all network partners in 2022 and posted to [Lake Winnipeg DataStream](#), an open-access online platform created to share water-quality data with those who can put it to use.

Interested in volunteering with LWCBMN?

The 2022 field season will start in early spring, with LWF staff providing training and equipment to all citizen scientists in advance of the snow melt. We are currently recruiting volunteers to collect samples in the Souris River watershed, the Pembina Valley and in southeast Manitoba along the Roseau River. To learn more about LWCBMN volunteer opportunities, contact [LWF Programs Director Chelsea Lobson](#).

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