

SWIM DRINK FISH



Adopt a Site Program

Introduction to the Community-
lead water monitoring

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in monitoring your local water! This brochure outlines the steps involved in starting a community lead water monitoring program.

Whats a community site?



'Community sites' are water monitoring sites where local community groups carry out the collection of water quality data without regular Swim Drink Fish staff support during the monitoring work. Community sites exist in conjunction with local Swim Drink Fish hubs.



The community site program is suitable for:

- Groups wishing to monitor the water of a location that is not already monitored by public health units or other monitoring bodies
- Groups that can deliver samples to a Swim Drink Fish lab for processing and analyzing
- Groups that are willing to commit to at least 3 months of monitoring at the same location
- Groups interested in monitoring the water but have limited capacity to begin a program on their own



Understanding the program components

What's the commitment?

There are three components to setting up and executing a community monitoring program. To ensure your site is effectively monitored, time must be spent planning out your monitoring work, training, and carrying out the sampling.



Part 1: Planning

This is when you'll decide the who, what, where, when and why of our monitoring program. You'll work with Swim Drink Fish staff to choose a site, create a monitoring plan, and prepare the documents and tools you need for sampling!

Part 2: Training

To ensure water quality results are accurate, a mix of virtual and in-person training must be completed. You'll be trained using the Swim Drink Fish Protocol. Training takes 3 sessions and one 'test' to ensure you're comfortable with the protocol.

Part 3: Sampling

You're ready to go! You'll carry out your monitoring depending on what is decided during the planning phase. Monitoring at a site takes about 45 minutes to 1 hour. Your travel time should also be considered.

The amount of time spent on each component will vary. Overall, you should expect to commit a minimum of 1-2 hours per week. The planning phase should take between 2-4 days, there are three half-day sessions. Monitoring should happen at a minimum bi-weekly frequency over 16 weeks.



Section 1: Planning

Step 1: Choose a suitable site

Swim Drink Fish recreational water quality monitoring is conducted at sites that meet the following three criteria:

1. People are actively using the water (e.g., swimming, paddling, fishing)
2. There is no water quality testing taking place, or the testing is infrequent or covers too broad an area
3. There are questions or concerns about the water quality, and the site is vulnerable to pollution

If you're not sure if the site meets these criteria, you can use the 'how to choose a site' document to answer these questions.

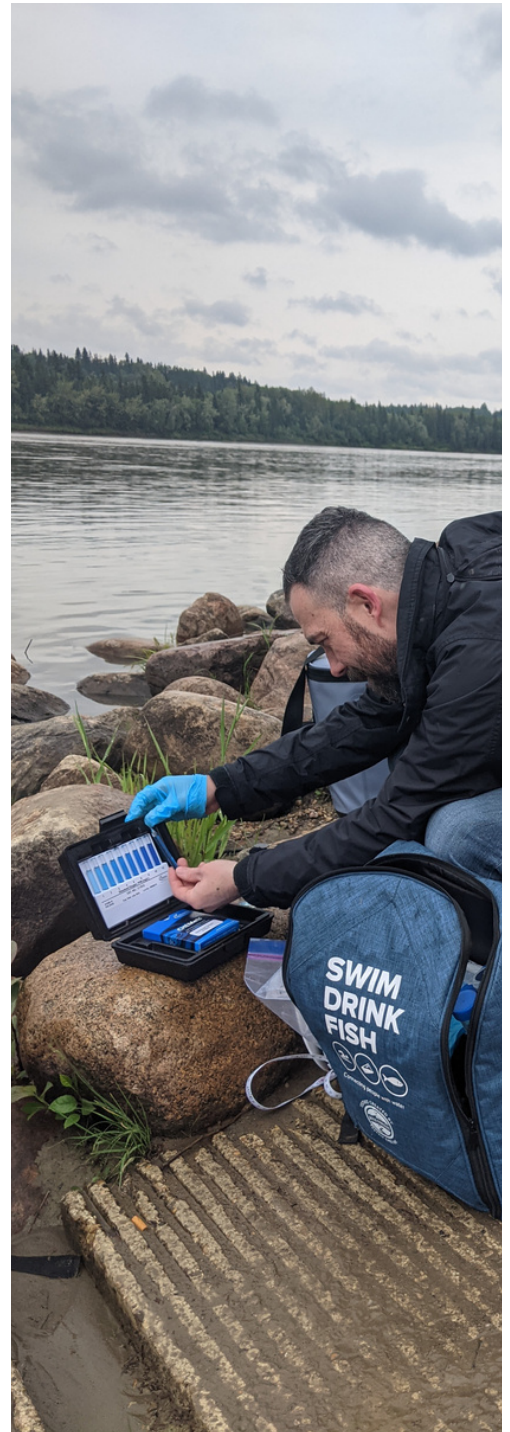
Step 2: Create a Monitoring Plan

Figure out the who, what, where, and why of your monitoring program. Review the monitoring plan document and set up a meeting with Swim Drink Fish staff to customize a copy of this document for your team. Swim Drink Fish staff will support you in many parts of the plan carry-out.

Step 3: Conduct a site visit with Swim Drink Fish

You'll head to your chosen site with Swim Drink Fish staff to:

1. Complete an Environmental Health and Safety Survey
2. Choose/confirm sampling locations at the site
3. Take preliminary water samples





Step 4: Create a Swim Guide Page

By creating a Swim Guide page, you're able to publicly share information about your monitoring work. Swim Drink Fish staff will work with you to create a page.

Step 5: Prepare your in-field documents

We'll work with you to make sure you have all the documents and tools you'll need to bring into the field. This includes customized field datasheets and data management sheets, and customized "field guide", including helpful tips to follow while out sampling, site maps, kit checklist, and a common local wildlife sightings index.



Section 2: Training

Each person takes a different amount of time to get comfortable with the sampling protocol. However, participation in at least two sampling sessions is required to complete your training.

A. Virtual Training

Virtual training is completed at home by joining one of our live training sessions at the beginning of the monitoring season or watching a pre-recorded version. After watching this training, you'll be required to complete a quiz.

B. Field Training

Option 1: Join our regular monitoring

If joining our existing monitoring program is feasible, this is the preferred option. You'll join Swim Drink Fish staff at an existing monitoring site to carry out sampling.

Option 2: Program-specific training

If you're unable to join our regular monitoring program, Swim Drink Fish staff can work with you to arrange an alternate training program.

Who needs to be trained?

At a minimum, one person from a community site team must be trained to this standard. This person must be present during sampling. We recommend having multiple people trained to ensure you're able to support each other.

C. Check out session

Once you're confident in your skills and you're ready to begin sampling at your new site, Swim Drink Fish staff will arrange a site visit with you where you'll go to the new site and carry out sampling.

D. Optional Training

If interested, you can also be trained in and participate in the following:

- Preparing samples for analysis in our office lab.
- If available, 24 hours after samples are prepared, assist with sample analysis to determine e-coli levels and data management and sharing.



Section 3: Monitoring

Congratulations! You're ready to get out in the field and start monitoring the waters that matter to you! During regular monitoring, you'll be responsible for:

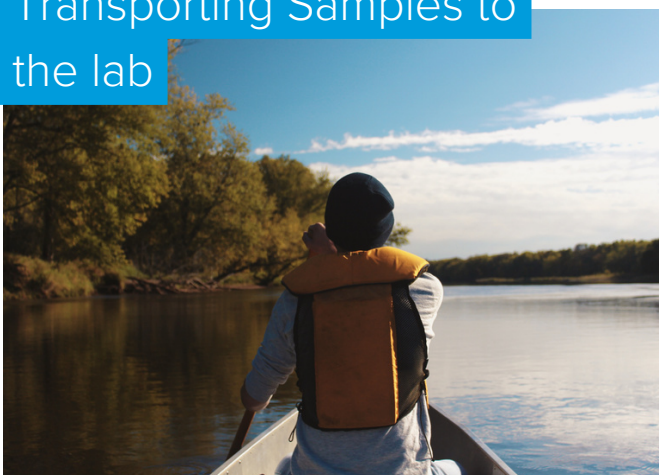
Collecting water samples



Recording environmental observations



Transporting Samples to the lab



Maintaining your equipment



By the time you reach this step, you'll be fully prepared to collect this information and carry out the monitoring work effectively. To help you in the field, you'll have your 'into the field guide,' which will be reviewed during training and planning.



FAQ

When's the best time to start the program? Because preparation can take some time depending on your capacity and previous knowledge about the site you're hoping to monitor, we recommend starting to prepare for a future monitoring site over the winter season (November-May). This way, it's easier to align training with our standard summer season training of community scientists that takes place during the summer months.

If you're working with a hub that does year-round monitoring, there is a bit more flexibility as to when training can begin, but keep in mind, our capacity to support is greater during the summer season.

Is there a cost associated with this work? Yes. The cost of sampling supplies, equipment maintenance, and staff time for training and lab work does have a direct cost to Swim Drink Fish. Where feasible, we do try to work with community groups to cover these costs through direct donations, fundraising, or grants. We want to ensure cost is not a barrier to access for the program, so regardless of financial capacity, please reach out if you're interested in this program.

