



Severn Sound Environmental Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SSEA expands Citizen Science Programs in the Severn Sound watershed area

PORT MCNICOLL, ON, July 29, 2021 – With support from three generous funders, Severn Sound Environmental Association (SSEA) will be expanding existing water quality citizen science programs, and implementing a new program focusing on invasive species.

Severn Sound is a collection of bays in the southeast portion of Georgian Bay. The watershed includes all the inland lakes and streams that flow to Severn Sound. Two of SSEA's existing citizen science programs, Shore Watch and Stream Watch, enable residents in the Severn Sound watershed area to get involved in environmental monitoring. The Shore Watch program focuses on water quality and observations of shorelines within the watershed, including inland lakes and the shores of Severn Sound. Volunteers collect information including water temperature, water clarity, wind and wave direction, and algae growth. The Stream Watch program focuses on water quality and observations in streams. Volunteers collect information including temperature, flow, and water depth. With these programs, the SSEA increases the number of "eyes on the ground" which helps to better understand environmental conditions within the watershed.

Starting this year, SSEA implemented a new citizen science program called Invasive Species Spotters. Through this program, volunteers identify invasive species in their local area. Two focus species for this year are Starry Stonewort, which is an invasive aquatic macro algae, and Ldd moths, which are currently in a population spike. For Starry Stonewort, volunteers use a weed rake to sample aquatic plants in the water and report on the presence or absence of the invasive macro algae. For Ldd moths, volunteers record the date of caterpillar emergence, tree defoliation, caterpillar mortality, and re-foliation of trees. These observations will allow for better documentation of invasive species across the watershed.

These citizen science programs would not be possible without the support of several generous funders. Funds will go towards purchasing equipment for volunteer citizen science kits, such as water testers, temperature logging devices and aquatic weed

rakes. This equipment helps volunteers take accurate measurements and observations of their shoreline or stream. With this funding, SSEA was able to expand programs this year, and now has over 30 volunteers participating across all three programs. Grants from TD Friends of Environment Foundation, the Lake Huron Georgian Bay Community Action Initiative, and the Invasive Species Center will be used to help implement these new and expanding citizen science programs in Severn Sound and enable more people to engage in monitoring to better understand and protect this important Great Lakes watershed. “TD Friends of the Environment Foundation is pleased to support the citizen science program delivered by SSEA. It is a great way to connect people to nature and allow them to get involved in their community and for the quality of their environment”, says Violaine Pronovost, Regional Manager, TD FEF.

“After great success in 2020, we are excited to be expanding the Shore and Stream Watch programs, and to be adding the new Invasive Species Spotters program,” says Aisha Chiandet, SSEA Water Scientist. “The more observations we gather from watchful volunteers, the better we will understand the state of and stresses on our local environment. It’s great for kids to get involved with too!”

Karen Rethoret is participating in Shore Watch for a second season. “This is a great program, as it is important to engage waterfront owners for the broader good, not just focused on their own property,” she says.

Also participating for the second season in Stream Watch, Keith Sherman has a unique perspective on the value of the program as SSEA’s former Executive Director. “Little details that are helpful in understanding what’s going on may be helpful in the long term,” he says. “The longer the program can be run, the more useful it will become.”

If you are interested in participating, please reach out to our Citizen Science Program Assistant (citizenscience@severnsound.ca) with your name, contact information, the program you are interested in, and the location you would like to monitor within the Severn Sound watershed. Check out <http://bit.ly/sseacit-sci> for more information, including results from 2020 and program coverage area.

For more information:

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About the SSEA

The Severn Sound Environmental Association is committed to ensuring exceptional environmental quality and exemplary stewardship of the Severn Sound area through sound science, collaboration and partnerships. For more information about the SSEA, visit www.severnsound.ca.

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Images included: Citizen Science program coverage map; monitoring kit; volunteers in action



Shore Watch volunteers Alli and Abby Kornlyo measuring water clarity with a Secchi disk.