

Ginninderra Waterwatch Volunteers



Monthly monitoring job description

About the Ginninderra Catchment Group

The Ginninderra Catchment Group (GCG) represents Landcare, Waterwatch and Frogwatch volunteers working in the water catchment of Ginninderra Creek. The Group receives funding from the Australian and ACT Governments for the employment of Landcare, Waterwatch and Frogwatch coordinators, through the Natural Heritage Trust. These coordinators support individual Landcare activity as well as implementing catchment scale environmental improvement and monitoring programs.

Background to the Ginninderra Waterwatch program

Waterwatch is a national community water monitoring network that encourages all Australians to become involved and active in the protection and management of their waterways and catchments. The network is made up of individuals, community and school groups who undertake a variety of biological and habitat assessments as well as physical and chemical tests to build up a picture of the health of their waterways and catchment.

Volunteers from the Ginninderra Catchment Group have been regularly monitoring water quality at 15 sites in the local area since 1999. The information collected is used to ensure that water quality is acceptable, to notify authorities when water quality standards are breached, and inform and prioritise the environmental education and restoration activities of the Ginninderra Catchment Group and its members.

Since 1999 the water quality and other information collected through the Waterwatch program has generated an important record of the state of base flows in the Ginninderra catchment. Our data highlights a number of environmental issues throughout the catchment and has been used to make recommendations for action to the Ginninderra Catchment Group, and to influence various government policies and programs.



Monthly Waterwatch Monitoring - What is involved?

Ginninderra Waterwatch volunteers are required to:

- Become a member of the Ginninderra Catchment Group. This ensures that you are covered under the Groups insurance while you are participating in Waterwatch activities. Membership to the Group is free.
- Participate in an initial training session with the Ginninderra Waterwatch Coordinator. The Coordinator will provide you with a Waterwatch Monitoring Kit, including all the equipment and documentation you will need to successfully undertake the water quality monitoring. The initial training session generally takes about 1 - 1.5 hours. This training also includes a safety assessment of your designated monitoring site.
- Ensure the safekeeping of the Waterwatch Monitoring Kit that is handed over to you on loan from the Ginninderra Catchment Group. This includes handling equipment in accordance with the instructions included in the Kit and informing the Waterwatch Coordinator of any problems with any of the equipment, or maintenance that may be required. If for any reason you are no longer able to continue monitoring, the Kit must be returned to the Ginninderra Catchment Group.
- Conduct water quality monitoring at your Waterwatch site every month. This can take up to an hour at a time at first, but with practice generally takes about 30 - 40 minutes. Our Waterwatch monitoring takes place on the third Sunday of every month, or during the 2-3 days either side of this. This is to ensure that our data is collected at about the same time at all of our sites each month, so that we can make comparisons.
- Inform the Waterwatch Coordinator if you will be unable to do your monitoring for a particular month. It is important that our sites are monitored on a regular, on-going basis, in order to ensure consistency of data and to be able to compare the data you collect with other sites around the catchment. It is also very important that the Waterwatch equipment is being utilised to its full potential.
- Record and submit the results of your water quality monitoring on the Field Data Sheets provided. Results can be submitted either by email, fax, post or dropping them in to our office in Kippax (Holt). (Soon you will also be able to enter your results online.) If possible, this should be done during the week following your monitoring, so that results can be collated and fed back to volunteers as quickly as possible. Timely submission of results also allows pollution events to be reported and investigated as necessary.
- Participate in bi-annual QAQC events. Every 6 months we organise an event to test the accuracy of our equipment and monitoring methods. This involves coming along and using your Waterwatch Kit to test some samples of known water quality. Our QAQC events are fun and are a chance for you to meet with other Waterwatch volunteers from around the Ginninderra catchment, and the ACT region. If you can't make it on the particular date, we will ask you to make alternative arrangements to test your equipment with the Waterwatch Coordinator.

What you will get out of it

- You will become part of an important Natural Resource Management Network operating in the ACT and region. Hundreds of volunteers contribute in different ways to improve our understanding, increase public awareness and enhance our natural environment. Becoming a member of the Ginninderra Catchment Group puts you in touch with the many activities happening in the local area and ways that you can make a difference.
- You will also get many opportunities to meet a range of new people who are also working to improve our local environment.
- You will receive training in testing a range of water quality parameters using professional equipment including pH, Electrical conductivity, Turbidity, Dissolved oxygen and Orthophosphates. We also teach you to take a number of other observations about the site and conditions that add value to the water quality information.
- You will learn about what these physical and chemical characteristics of water mean, what your results tell us about our water quality and the health of our catchment, and the implications for land management and the catchment community.
- You will be contributing to a wider body of knowledge about the health of the Ginninderra catchment. The information that we collect is important to ensure that water quality standards are enforced, and to enable the Ginninderra Catchment Group to operate strategically and make a real difference to our local environment.
- In addition to our monthly water quality monitoring program, Ginninderra Waterwatch also conducts regular macro-invertebrate (bug) snapshots, habitat assessments, Frogwatch monitoring and other activities. You will be most welcome to participate in these events, as they arise.

No previous experience or skills are necessary to become a Waterwatch volunteer. All training and support is provided free of charge. An interest in helping our environment and a willingness to participate is all that's required!