

Lea catchment project – Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative [CaSTCo.]

Aim

- Development of citizen science, connecting local communities to their local river, open data, stimulating innovation and collaboration.

Objectives

- Inspire and support local customers to engage with their local river and become involved in citizen science.
- Inform development of national model for citizen science and pilot an approach in Affinity Water catchments to inform our model for delivery in AMP8 incorporating citizen science monitoring and community collaboration to meet local and catchment-scale environmental challenges.

Outcomes and Benefits

- A benefits evaluation report has been developed and can be viewed via: StoryMap
- 14 initial volunteers recruited was extended over 40 volunteers in the 16 months of this WP.
- It has already been extended to several other rivers with plans to incorporate the whole River Lea catchment.
- Citizen Science monitoring has identified several pollution sources and building a robust dataset of evidence of key issues impacting the River.

Challenge

- There is no nationally consistent monitoring regime, that would help optimise data quality, be easy and cost effective to use and enable communities to contribute to healthier rivers and more resilient catchments.
- Citizen Science data is not shared effectively and used to inform decision making to help design interventions to improve river catchments

A survey carried out of the benefits identified benefits for volunteers including:

- Being outside more
- Meeting new people
- Feeling valued and as part of a team
- Making a difference
- Improved mental health

Solution

- Ofwat Innovation Fund (Water Breakthrough Challenge) project co-funded by Affinity Water to develop a structured and standardised national framework for a catchment monitoring cooperative, applied for River Beane (in Lea catchment) as a demo catchment.
- A full time Volunteer Coordinator was recruited to lead on the pilot.
- Work in partnership with Rivers Trust; HMWT (CaBA partnership host); River Beane Restoration Association, Environment Agency; Natural History Museum (Riverfly) and local volunteers.
- Funding for the River Restoration Centre (RRC) to undertake a reach-by-reach ecological assessment of the Beane and surrounding catchment.
- Training provided to local volunteers to use the Mudspotter citizen science monitoring approach.
- A monitoring plan for the pilot agreed with key stakeholders.
- Deployment of monitoring sondes in the river to assess the water quality impact of the Stevenage Brook.
- Engagement with community and workshops to share lessons learned will support future roll out across all AW chalk stream catchments.