

Appalachian Watershed & Stream Monitors Program Continues to Grow with Assistance from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Kevin Stitzinger

Watershed Education Coordinator

The Mountain Institute

The classroom is the outdoors, the texts are a stream and its surrounding landscape, and the instructor is Mother Nature. The students are 175 sixth – twelfth graders from the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia who, thanks to TMI and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), have been engaging in hands-on learning, involving the impact upstream waters have on their local water quality and the quality of water downstream.

A generous \$75,000 grant from NFWF's Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants program was awarded to TMI in the fall of 2010 to continue offering the Appalachian Watershed & Stream Monitors program (AWSM). During the 2010 Small Watershed Grants competition, 116 applications were received by NFWF. TMI's proposal was one of only thirty-four grants awarded. Matching funding will be provided by Energy Corporation of America, Toyota USA Foundation, WV Department of Environmental Protection and the Schoenbaum Family Foundation.

AWSM is a watershed education program that teaches local youth to understand a watershed as a complete system. As in the past seven years of the program, this year's teachers attended a summer professional development workshop for detailed instruction on the project's unique multi-tier curriculum. During September and October students from each participating classroom visited the high quality "reference" streams around the Spruce Knob Mountain Center. During this two-day training session they learned the intricacies of the biological, physical, and chemical regimes of the stream and how they are affected by the stream's surrounding landscape. Students then assessed landscape use in the watershed and planted trees to restore streamside "riparian buffer" habitat inside a cattle enclosure in nearby Allegheny Meadow, the highest elevation riparian buffer restoration site in the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed.

To read more about the past accomplishments and current progress of TMI's AWSM program, please see the Spring 2011 edition of the Spruce Knob News at www.mountain.org/publications.