

## Monitoring Guidelines During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Infection during the on-going pandemic remains a risk, even when outdoors. Your personal safety and good public health practice come first! Volunteers are not obligated to monitor their stream monitoring stations during this time if you do not feel safe doing so. However, public health officials encourage outdoor activity, provided that it is safe. If you wish to monitor in 2021, read and fully adhere to the following guidelines to minimize personal risk.

### **RRC teams consisting of one person, or two or more people living in the same dwelling unit (apartment, home).**

These teams may monitor without restriction unless you work at a site that has high pedestrian traffic. Wearing a mask is optional if you are out in the sticks. If you are somewhere where there is high pedestrian traffic, please wear a mask. Should a person who is not part of your team approach you, politely tell them what you are doing and ask them to remain at least 10 feet back from you and the area in which you are working.

### **RRC teams consisting of two or more people who have been vaccinated.**

Provided that all team members are fully vaccinated (i.e. it has been at least two weeks since their final vaccination), these teams may follow the above guidance. Masks are optional unless you are approached by or working near people who are not part of your monitoring team.

### **RRC teams consisting of two or more people, only one of whom has not been vaccinated.**

Provided that all but one team members are fully vaccinated (i.e. it has been at least two weeks since their final vaccination), *and* the unvaccinated team member is at low risk for severe COVID-19, these teams may choose to follow the above guidance. Masks are optional unless you are approached by or working near people who are not part of your monitoring team. If the unvaccinated team member is at increased risk for severe COVID-19, these teams must follow the below guidelines developed for two or more unrelated, unvaccinated people.

### **RRC teams consisting of two or more unrelated people who have not been vaccinated.**

These teams may monitor provided you carefully adhere to the following guidelines.

#### **A. PREPARATORY TO MONITORING**

- You must travel to/from the monitoring site in separate vehicles if driving.
- A mask or respirator must be worn at all times while at the site. Gloves are also recommended if you have them.
- A guideline of 10' safe separation should be maintained at all times, since research has shown that virus particles are expelled in ordinary speech and can travel further outdoors than indoors.
- Upon arrival at the stream site, the monitoring equipment should be laid out so that either team member can access it without being less than 10 feet from the other. This could be in the open tailgate of a minivan or pickup truck, on the trunk of a car, or on a small tarp on the ground, etc.
- Agree who will be in charge of the paper data recording form, so it does not have to be passed back and forth.

## **B. COLLECTING DATA, MONITORING PARAMETERS**

**B-1. Data that can be collected by one person.** Agree who will do which step, and proceed with full social separation. Wear disposable gloves (e.g., nitrile) if you will be handling the same equipment.

Best Practice: Agree in advance on who will do (and handle) what and stick to that.

1. Record **station information and site observations** ("Station Info" and "Weather" sections on the WAV Data Recording Form). Also record any notes about COVID-19 related limitations on monitoring. These latter should be entered into SWIMS in the first notes section along with your monthly report.
2. **Temperature** (air and water).
3. **Transparency**—easier with two people, but perfectly feasible with one.
4. **Dissolved oxygen.** If you lay out the equipment in advance, this can be easily done by one person.

Best Practice: If using a Hach kit, preserve the sample promptly at the site, finish the analysis at home. To do this, complete the dissolved oxygen test as far as adding powder pillows #1-2-3 (through Step 6 on the inserted green instruction slip). That fixes (preserves) the sample, and you can finish the analysis alone at home upon your return.

**B-2. Parameters needing two or more people requiring planning to do safely.** Maintain 10' separation at all times. Plan who is going to do what before starting.

5. **Stream flow.** Make sure only one person touches each piece of equipment. For example, one person can measure depth and call off the readings to their partner standing 10' away.
6. **Biotic index** (June and September or October). The three stream samples can be taken by one person. Two people can do the examination and analysis, provided that each person steps well away while the other examines the sample. Wear disposable gloves since you will need to handle the same equipment. Having two people agree on identification of macroinvertebrates is helpful in maintaining accuracy.

**B-3. Habitat Assessment.** Suspended for 2021. It requires two or three people to work in close coordination for an extended time. In our judgment, alternative procedures like those above for teams of two unrelated people are not possible.

We will continue to update this document to stay aligned with current public health guidelines. With planning and conscientious care, it should be possible to monitor safely if you wish to do so. As always, please contact Addie (addie@rockrivercoalition.org) if you encounter any issues or have any concerns.