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Ohio EPA Reports Results of Ohio Brush Creek Watershed Study: High Quality Streams Impacted By Natural Phenomenon, Drought

Ohio Brush Creek is one of the state's better streams and a wide variety of healthy fish have been documented throughout this high quality Southern Ohio watershed during the past 20 years, according to Ohio EPA's latest water quality [study](#) of the area (located primarily in Highland and Adams counties). However, a severe drought in 2007 adversely affected aquatic insect populations in the area because there wasn't enough stream flow to dilute pollutants. Fish communities were not adversely affected.

Ohio EPA's report explains the drought largely as a unique natural phenomenon. Streams in the Ohio Brush Creek area are more prone to drought-related damage because the bedrock has many fractures. The fractures along stream beds allow water to percolate down into ground water faster than streams in other parts of the state. This phenomenon has been observed elsewhere in Ohio, but it is considered uncommon. It is uniquely exaggerated within the Ohio Brush Creek basin because water drains through the porous rocks of the stream beds into the subsurface ground water.

In 2007, Ohio EPA evaluated 57 sites in 27 streams along 152 miles in the Ohio Brush Creek watershed. The study was used to determine aquatic life use potential. More than 90 stream miles, or 60 percent of the study area, met the goals of the Clean Water Act for aquatic life; about 38 percent of sites studied partially met these goals; and about two percent did not meet the goals.

As part of Ohio EPA's continuous effort to monitor and report on the quality of streams throughout Ohio, Ohio EPA employees collect chemical, physical and biological samples from dozens of sites in each study area. Ohio EPA analyzes information about the abundance and variety of fish and aquatic insects, especially those species sensitive to pollution, and the presence of bacteria, metals and nutrients. The Agency has one of the most advanced water quality monitoring programs in the nation, determining the health of rivers and streams by sampling stream biology and habitat in addition to water chemistry.

The Agency shares this information with local governments, landowners and citizens so they can develop plans to maintain and/or restore waterways impacted by identified sources of pollution. Sources could range from sewage treatment plants, industrial facilities and coal mines to low-head dams and urban and rural runoff. Stakeholders also can use the information to request assistance from Ohio EPA and other funding sources for projects that alleviate water quality problems and protect the resource for drinking water and recreational enjoyment. More information is online about Ohio EPA's [Total Maximum Daily Load Program](#).