



MEDIA RELEASE

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Winter water quality monitoring a priority in the Mount Lofty Ranges watershed

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While winter encourages most of us to hide indoors next to a roaring fire, it is a signal for the Environment Protection Authority's (EPA) Mount Lofty Ranges Watershed Protection Office (WPO) to spring into action.

The WPO is charged with protecting water quality in the Mount Lofty Ranges watershed, which provides an average of 60 per cent of Adelaide's water supply, and winter is one of its busiest periods.

According to WPO Environmental Scientist Michael Manou, about 90 per cent of rainfall runoff occurs during July to September causing anything on the ground or in people's backyards and farms to end up in the creeks.

"Although winter rain brings hope that our reservoirs will be filled for the coming year, it can have an impact on water quality as pollutants from gardens, pavements and roofs are washed into our waterways," Mr Manou said.

"Close monitoring of the quality of water before it enters reservoirs enables us to assess the quality of water in the watershed and gain a better understanding of the causes of water pollution."

The WPO has maintained several monitoring programs since 2000, generating information to assist in making decisions and setting up programs to reduce the likelihood of pollution ending up in our creeks and rivers.

There are four officers out in the field each month taking samples at 22 sites in the Myponga, Onkaparinga, Torrens and Barossa catchments within the watershed.

The officers collect water samples taken on the same day each month during periods of sufficient rainfall and runoff, and water samples taken after heavy rainfalls following a dry period.

To make this job more efficient and easier, from July 2006 the WPO will be testing a computer based catchment model called E2, to simulate the impact of land changes and land management on the quality of water in the watershed.

According to WPO Environmental Scientist Michael Manou, changes in land management and ownership have a major impact on water quality and until now, this has been extremely difficult to measure.

Mr Manou said the E2 model being tested between July and September this year should assist in simulating water quality expectations in the whole watershed region during high rainfall.

"This high rainfall is likely to affect the catchment's water quality, as a result of pollutants being washed into waterways, so it is the perfect time to test the program," Mr Manou said.

"This is the second generation of this model, which has been significantly adjusted to improve its accuracy.

“The original model, EMSS, was developed by CSIRO and the Cooperative Research Centre for Catchment Hydrology in 2004.”

Mr Manou said E2 should help assess the impact of activities such as fencing, stock crossings, revegetation and planting on water quality and that many WPO projects, such as the Myponga Watercourse Restoration Project, would benefit from the model.

For more information about the Mount Lofty Ranges Watershed and water quality issues in the region visit www.epa.sa.gov.au/watershed or contact the WPO on 08 8139 9900.