Making Rivers Better

BROADHEMBURY, EAST DEVON

8th SEPTEMBER 2022

...a fun networking event for CITIZEN SCIENTISTS...

Event co-ordinated by the BLACKDOWN HILLS Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

"we all have rivers, catchments, & wildlife" (Jo Hockin)

what does all this DATA ACTUALLY MEAN?

EAST DEVON CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP

strategic projects | landscape restoration | wildlife-rich habitats

our VISION | learning from BEST PRACTICE | encouraging long term COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

engage · educate · empower

value lies in bringing people together

citizen science improves & enriches all our lives

the VALUE of CITIZEN SCIENCE DATA

Helen Dobbs, Environment Agency

the Environment Agency uses citizen science data to inform its work

invaluable

early warning of potential change

better local knowledge

agile approach to gathering EVIDENCE

valid alongside scientific data

can drive behaviour change

helps to TARGET solutions

CHALLENGES...

[CAPACITY & FUNDING] increase & sustain

Aim to create trusted, shared resources? (Environment Agency & Partners)

"a Solid NETWORK of people who CARE"

"river science WALKS & TALKS"

testing on the River Tale

IMPORTANT for volunteer to understand how their DATA is used.

some lessons learned:

- the extent of BEAVERS
- about RIVERFLY testing
- non-native crayfish...leads!
- learning from the EXPERTS
- feedback on shifting barriers

demos & talks!

- ✓ monitoring techniques
- water quality
- wildlife ID
- river health

the GOAL of Citizen Science Investigations: to EMPOWER people to CHANGE behaviour

£1500+ (average cost) KITS

CITIZEN SCIENCE MONITORING – what it tells us...

- we test for
  - PHOSPHATES
  - AMMONIA
  - SUSPENDED SOLIDS

Jane Hale, Rivers Association (RAGS) & Blackdowns Rivers Trust (BRT)

'riverfly'

- a GREAT indicator of river health

government monitoring (mandated)

LANDOWNER PARTNERSHIP MODELLING

(other-based investigations)

general REPORTING

focused investment (other areas & non-partnership landowners)

"the Kit Brook is a Special Place"

NO ONE is going to make RIVERS better unless we do this OURSELVES!

citizen science for CITIZEN ACTION!

Lesley Wilsherth, Chardstock Eco Group

a community group's journey

- involve the people, the politicians, the little ones... build relationships
- co-created by the PEOPLE of the PLACE

B–

ACTION PLAN

Kit Brook

- all EA test sites visible on map!

EA MONITORING

- national-scale decisions
- national government with local limits
- locally depleted - (devon & Cornwall)

- all data is open data: accessible to all

doing the RIGHT thing

- need to make enough money to pay for environmental schemes...

invest → better grass → PROFIT

(remember to go easy... never forget lost hard it all before, when 'best practice' was taken to do the opposite...)

FARMING in SENSITIVE water catchments

-Sam Norris, Dairy farmer, Farlacombe, East Devon.

managing OUR SOILS is key

- important for all of us to work together

"citizen science in conjunction with other data is an excellent early warning system"

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY monitoring

- Michael Thomas, EA, Monitoring & Reporting

Programmed Surveillance [patterns over time]

Investigation Monitoring [find cause for an issue]

Field Survey & Lab Work [reporting on how systems respond to pressures]

CASE STUDY: how to tackle himalayan balsam?

- not proper ADVICE
- survey & write a PLAN
- educate & engage locally

(remove non-native species)

- can we get ACCESS to it?
- learn from others' MISTAKES

CASE STUDY: what to do with a fallen tree in river?

conflicting views...

- WE ARE A NATURAL FLOOD DEFENCE
- misunderstanding about: CLEARING the river "to improve the flow"

how to INCREASE our IMPACT?

fill GAPS on MAPS – approach existing groups?

approach SCHOOLS near water courses

ask CSI volunteers to take on additional tasks

an ENVIRONMENT GROUP mapping exercise for new catchments?

establish new groups where there is motivation over current issues [flooding, beavers etc]

we'd WELCOME new volunteers!

Recommendations: engaging with the Public about river monitoring

- show, explain, be FACTUAL
- engage & EMPOWER
- LISTEN!
- signpost them direct
- tell the TRUTH
- well-trained staff

"most people are REALLY focused"

East Devon Catchment Partnership

www.blackdownhills.org.uk/makingriversbetter

chrisbaigent.co.uk