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Volunteers collect data to further unlock Wabash River's secrets

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Roberta Weiner uses a turbidity tube on Friday to check the turbidity of water in a ditch off the southwest corner of the White Horse Christian Center parking lot in West Lafayette. Weiner's mother, Brenda Weiner, records the information in a notebook as younger sister, Gabriela, looks on. / Photos by John Terhune/J&C

Written by [MaryJane Slaby](#)

Just steps from the edge of the [White Horse Christian Center](#) parking lot, mother and daughter looked around to see if they were in the right spot.

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Roberta Weiner studied the photo on her clipboard of the Wabash River tributary where they were supposed to be.

"There's that tree," she said to her mom, Brenda.

Now they knew they were in the right place.

So Roberta, her younger sister, Gabriela, and her mom, climbed over stones closer to the water. Roberta then eased in, the water almost as high as her rain boots.

After being postponed from April 19 because of heavy rainfall, about 75 volunteers fanned out Friday as part of the Wabash Water

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Quality Sampling Blitz. Each team collected water and data about tributaries that lead to the Wabash River in Tippecanoe and several surrounding counties.

Samples are tested for temperature, transparency, E. coli, nitrate/nitrite, phosphorus and acidity.

"It's part of a larger effort to clean the Wabash and know what's coming from where," said Linda Prokopy who trained the volunteers who met at [Cumberland Elementary School](#) in West Lafayette before going to their assigned sampling sites.

The number of volunteers was smaller than in the past, because many are usually Purdue University students. Because the blitz was postponed, many students already had left for the summer, Prokopy said.

The [Wabash River Enhancement Corp.](#) uses the biannual sampling to study the condition of local streams and the Wabash River. Samples can be compared from spring to fall or from year to year, Prokopy said. And the sites should be the same each time, that's why volunteers have photos of where they should be to help them along the way.

"The goal is to be as consistent as possible," Prokopy said.

For Weiner, of West Lafayette, the sampling was a way to be involved with her future career. A freshman at [University of Chicago](#), she's studying environmental science and political science.

"I think the environmental policy side is interesting," she said. "How the policies work and implementing them so people either don't notice or are excited about it."

Weiner said the best policies are the ones that not only help the environment, but don't feel like rules.

Once she was in the water, Weiner waited for it to settle before collecting her data. She collected a sample and took the water temperature.

She also used a turbidity tube to test how clear the water is. She filled it, and then looked down into the tube to see if she could see the bottom. It took several tries to find a water level low enough to see through.

Prokopy said the sampling event is educational for the volunteers. And that's why Brenda encouraged her daughter to come back to West Lafayette for the weekend to help.

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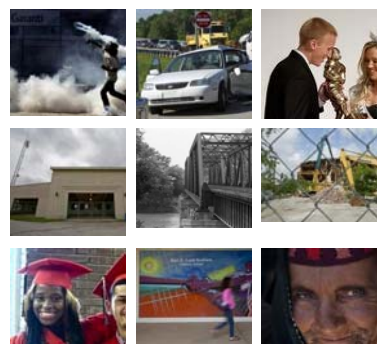
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