Stream Health Data Sheet

Record information on this sheet as you conduct assessments to determine the overall health of your stream. There are three stream assessments for this investigation: (1) **physical**, rating the condition of the stream habitat based on observed characteristics; (2) **biological**, using living animals present to indicate stream health; and (3) **chemical**, testing the water quality based on the chemical content of the stream. Use all three to get a more thorough rating of your stream's health. You may share your findings and compare your data with others on maryland.fieldscope.org.

Stream Site and Stream Investigator(s) Information		
Name (Teacher or Observer)	**Date**	**Time of Day**
School or Organization Name	**Group Members**	
Stream Study Site Name (used for stream study permit, example: ERMS15 East HS ScienceTeam)		
Name of Stream	**River or body of water into which this stream flows**	
Latitude_____ degrees NORTH	**Longitude**_____ degrees WEST	

Weather	
Today's Air Temperature _____ ° C or ° F	**Today's Humidity** _____
Today's Cloud Cover clear____ partly cloudy ____ cloudy ____	**Yesterday's Precipitation (amount)** _____
How could yesterday's weather affect today's field study?	
PREDICTION: Do you think this stream is healthy? Explain why you think so.	

Stream Health Assessment: Instructions

Next, use the three stream assessments in this data sheet to guide your investigations. At the end of each section, you will use your tests and observations to give your stream a rating for that individual assessment. Then, at the end, use the results from all three assessments to determine an overall stream health rating. How does this rating compare with the prediction you made above?

Physical Assessment: Stream Corridor Assessment

Based on Stream Corridor Assessment protocols developed by Kenneth Yetman, adapted by Amanda Sullivan and Alison Armocida, Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Instructions: Observe the stream habitat in and around the water, and use the accompanying Stream Corridor Assessment photographs to rank each characteristic. Based on your findings, you will give your stream habitat a rating.

Characteristic	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Marginal (2)	Poor (1)	Score
Floodplain Vegetation	Lots of plants, bushes, and trees along banks and floodplain.	Some plants, bushes and trees along banks and floodplain.	Most trees and bushes are gone.	Very little plant life at all along banks and floodplain.	
Channel alteration	Channel formed by natural processes and allowed to bend often around rocks and wood.	Channel straightened in some places but some natural bends still present.	Channel mostly straightened but vegetation still present and no cement.	Channel straightened and flowing along a paved channel.	
Embeddedness – Are there rocks on the bottom and are they covered by silt?	Rocks and cobbles cover almost all of the stream bed. Very little sand or silt between rocks.	Rocks and cobbles cover most of stream bed. Some sand/silt between and on rocks.	Rocks and cobbles more than halfway buried (embedded) into sand/silt.	Rocks and cobbles entirely buried by sand and silt.	
Erosion	Banks only slightly above the level of the water.	Banks somewhat higher above the level of the water.	Banks significantly above the level of the water.	Banks extremely high compared to water level.	
Attachment sites for Macroinvertebrates	Lots of different sized rocks, wood, and plenty of leaf litter.	Only small, gravel sized rocks, some wood and leaf litter present.	No rocks or wood but some leaf litter present.	No rocks, wood, or leaf litter present.	
Shelter for Fish	Lots of pools, wood, and undercut banks present in the water.	Some pools, wood, and undercut banks present in the water.	Few pools, wood, and undercut banks present in the water.	No pools, wood, and undercut banks present in the water.	
Riparian Buffer Width (estimation)	More than 50 feet of trees and brushy vegetation extending out from EACH bank of the stream.	20 - 50 feet of trees and brushy vegetation extending out from EACH bank of the stream.	5 - 20 feet of trees and brushy vegetation extending out from EACH bank of stream.	0 - 5 feet of trees and brushy vegetation extending out from EACH bank of the stream.	

[continued, next page]

Characteristic	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Marginal (2)	Poor (1)	Score
Bank stability – Are the banks of the stream eroding, or could they erode easily?	Lots of roots and vegetation or large rocks on the vertical portion of the bank all the way down to the level of the water.	Roots and vegetation or large rocks covering the vertical part of the bank 2/3 of the way down to the level of the water.	Roots, vegetation and/or large rocks going only 1/3 of the way down the vertical part of bank towards the level of the water.	Steep banks of bare soil with no plants or roots or large rocks.	
Velocity and Depth combinations - Within 30 feet upstream and 30 feet downstream from where you are standing *There are no pictures for this category.*	Stream has areas of (1) fast/ deep water, (2) fast/shallow water, (3) slow/ shallow areas, and (4) slow/ deep areas.	Stream has 3 of the four types of speed and depth combinations.	Stream has 2 of the four types of speed and depth combinations.	Stream has only one type of velocity and depth combination.	

Add all scores to get a total.

Total Score for Stream _____

Analysis:

If the total score is: then the Overall Stream Rating is:

30 – 36 Good

This stream has excellent habitat with a wide variety of traits. If the water quality is good, this stream can support many different species of insects and fish, including those sensitive to pollution and habitat changes. The stream is stable; habitat quality will not get worse unless people make changes to the area.

23 – 29 Fair

This stream has good habitat for many different species of insects and fish, including some sensitive to pollution and habitat changes. The stream is most likely stable. Minor changes can increase the habitat quality, such as stabilizing erosion or planting vegetation.

16 – 22 Marginal

This stream can support some species of insects and fish that are tolerant to pollution. The stream is not stable, and will get worse without restoration. Habitat can be improved by planting vegetation near the stream, stabilizing erosion, or reducing water from paved areas.

9 – 15 Poor

This stream may only support a few species of insects that are very tolerant of pollution. The stream is not stable, and will get worse without restoration. Habitat can be improved by planting vegetation near the stream, stabilizing erosion, or reducing water from paved areas.

Stream Corridor Habitat Rating _____

Biological Assessment: Macroinvertebrate Survey

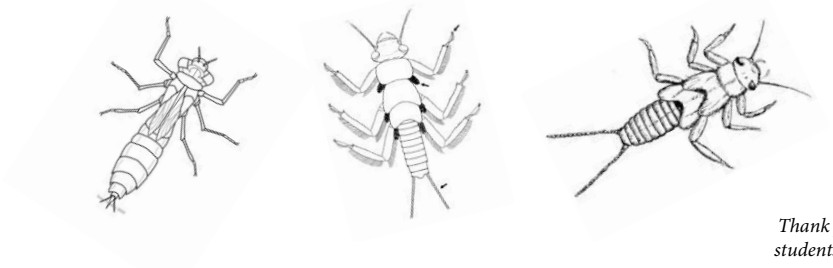
Collection method:

Kick-Seine or D-Net (circle method used).

If using a kick-seine, collect samples 3 times.

If using a D-net, collect 20 scoops and record the number of scoops taken from each of the habitat areas in the table →

Benthic Habitat Sampled	
Habitat	**# scoops**
Riffle	
Rootwads/ woody debris/ leaf pack	
Submerged Vegetation	
Undercut Banks	
Other (specify):	
TOTAL	**20**



Thank you to Howard County Public Schools System biology students for their contribution to the development of this tool.

Howard County Conservancy
connecting people to nature

Check all of the macroinvertebrates that you find in your stream and calculate the stream's water quality rating *[you may also record the number of each captured, but to calculate the rating at the bottom, only count each kind of animal once, regardless of the quantity found]*.

✓	**Sensitive** to pollution	✓	**Less Sensitive** to pollution	✓	**Somewhat Tolerant** to pollution	✓	**Tolerant** to pollution
	Casemaker caddisflies		Net spinning caddisflies		Clams		Aquatic sowbugs
	Mayflies		Crane flies		Mussels		Black flies
	Stoneflies		Dragonflies		Planaria		Midge flies
	Water pennies		Riffle beetles		Gilled snails		Leeches
	Hellgrammites				Crayfish		Lunged snails
					Scuds		Damselflies
							Aquatic worms
# of check marks _____		# of check marks _____		# of check marks _____		# of check marks _____	
# above x 3 = ____		# above x 2 = ____		# above x 1 = ____		# above x 0 = ____	

Biological Water Quality Rating:

Add up the numbers you calculated for all three categories, above. Write the total # here: _____

Circle the rating that corresponds to the total of your columns.

Good: > 22 **Fair: 17 - 22** **Marginal: 11 – 16** **Poor: < 11**

Explore and Restore Maryland Stream ratings correspond with the Maryland Biological Stream Survey and Maryland Stream Waders ratings of streams found on the Stream Health website. Stream sites rated **Good** are shown there in green, **Fair** sites are yellow, and **Marginal/Poor** sites are red.

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Sizes shown are for mature larvae/nymphs or adult animals, but individuals in earlier stages of development may be significantly smaller

Explore & Restore Maryland Streams Key to Stream Macroinvertebrates

Companion to the Explore & Restore Stream Health Data Sheet

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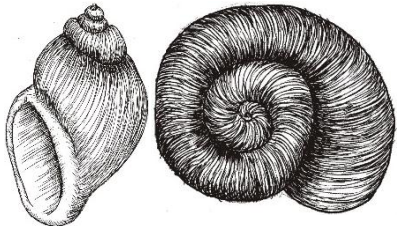
NO LEGS

Shell

Single

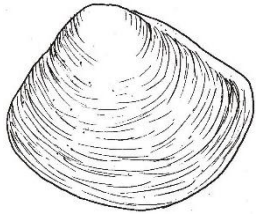
Gilled snail
Spiral, open on right

Lunged snail
Spiral with opening on left or coiled

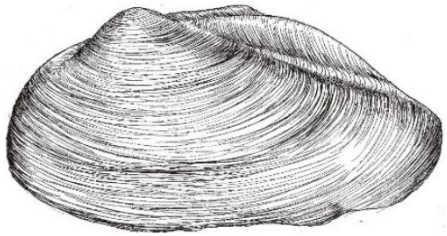


Double

Clam
Small, whitish tan or brown



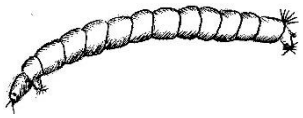
Mussel
Large (up to 5”), elongate, dark in color



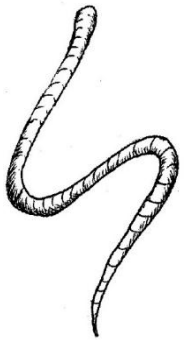
No shell

Leech
Suckers, expands and contracts, soft, slimy body

Midge
Dark head, body white, gray or reddish

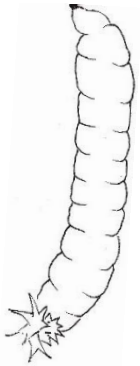


Aquatic worm
Small, hair-like or thicker like earthworm, can reach 2 ½“ long



Black fly
Black head, shaped like a bowling pin

Crane fly
Plump, grub-like, often can see guts



Planaria
Flat, triangular head, soft, unsegmented body

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Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Resource Assessment Service and Chesapeake & Coastal Services
580 Taylor Avenue; Annapolis, Maryland 21401; http://dnr2.maryland.gov/education/Pages/Biological_Assessment.aspx

Sizes shown are for mature larvae/nymphs or adult animals, but individuals in earlier stages of development may be significantly smaller

Explore & Restore Maryland Streams Key to Stream Macroinvertebrates

Companion to the Explore & Restore Stream Health Data Sheet

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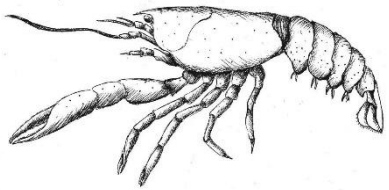
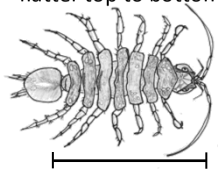
LEGS

10+ legs

Crayfish
Lobster-like, can reach 6" long



Aquatic sowbug
Two long antennae, flatter top to bottom

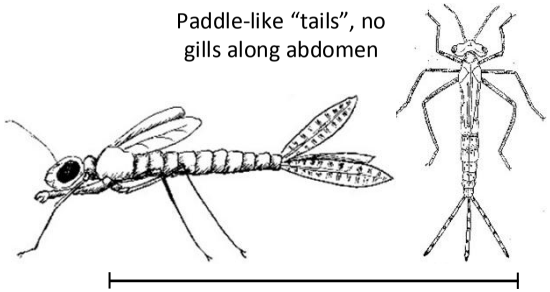


Scud
Shrimp-like, swims on side

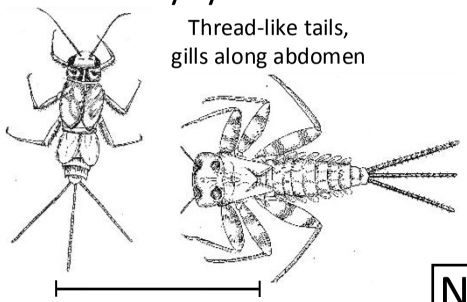
3 pairs of legs

3 tails

Damselfly
Paddle-like "tails", no gills along abdomen

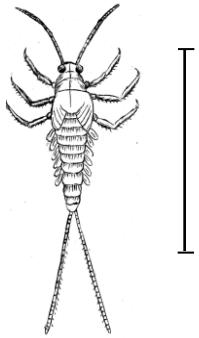


Mayfly
Thread-like tails, gills along abdomen

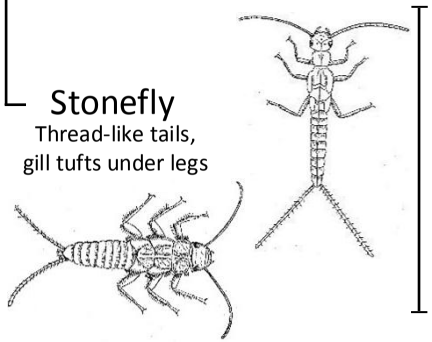


2 tails

Mayfly
Thread-like tails, gills along abdomen



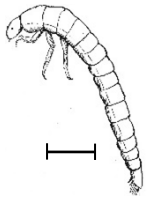
Stonefly
Thread-like tails, gill tufts under legs



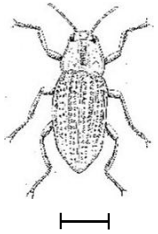
No obvious tails

Riffle beetle

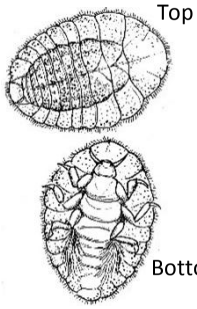
Larva- Brown, hardened body, no gills on abdomen



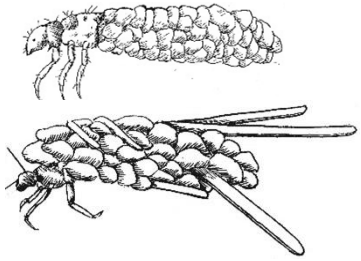
Adult- small, dark, crawls on bottom



Water penny
Flat, oval disk

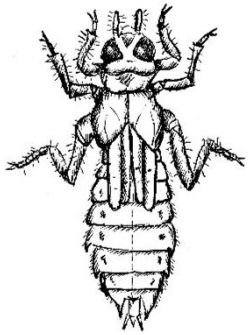


Casemaker caddisfly
May be housed in a case of sticks, stones, sand or leaves

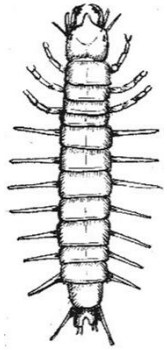


Net spinning caddisfly
Dark head, tan, green or orangish body, gill tufts may be present on abdomen, 1 or 3 armored plates behind head

Dragonfly
Large eyes, bullet shaped or leaf-like body



Hellgrammite
Large pinching jaws, feelers down sides, can reach 4" long



Chemical Assessment: Water Quality Testing

(1) Follow instructions provided with each test kit to test different parameters.

(2) Record your data here:

DATA	**Water Temperature** (°C)	**Dissolved Oxygen (DO)** (mg/L)	**Dissolved Oxygen (DO) % Saturation** *See conversion chart*	**pH**	**Phosphate** (mg/L)	**Nitrate** (mg/L)	**Transparency** (cm)	**Turbidity** (JTU ~= NTU)	**Chloride** (mg/L)	**Conductivity** (µs/cm)	**Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)** (ppm = mg/L)
Trial 1											
Trial 2											
Trial 3											

(3) Circle the corresponding value here:

Water Quality Summation for Chemical Tests				
	GOOD	**FAIR**	**MARGINAL**	**POOR**
Dissolved Oxygen (DO) % Saturation *(see conversion chart)*	80 – 120	70 – 80 120 – 140	50 – 70 > 140	< 50
pH (units)	7.0 – 7.5	6.5 – 7.0 7.5 – 8.5	5.5 – 6.5 8.5 – 9.0	< 5.5 > 9.0
Reactive Phosphate (PO_4X^3) (mg/L)	0 – 0.2	0.2 – 0.5	0.5 – 2.0	> 2.0
Nitrate (NO^3) (mg/L)	0 – 3	3 – 5	5 – 10	> 10
Chloride (Cl) (mg/L)	0 – 20	20 – 50	50 – 250	> 250
Transparency (cm)	> 65.0	65.0 – 35.0	35.0 – 15.5	< 15.5
Turbidity (JTU ~= NTU)	0 – 10	10 – 20	20 – 30	> 30
Total Dissolved Solids (ppm = mg/L)	0 – 150	150 – 250	250 – 350	> 350
Conductivity (µs/cm)	0 – 171	172 – 247	248 – 500	> 500

Based on your tests and observations, how would you rate water quality overall? For example, if you had some excellent, some fair, mostly good, you might give an overall of good. Circle your answer:

Chemical Water Quality Rating: Good Fair Marginal Poor

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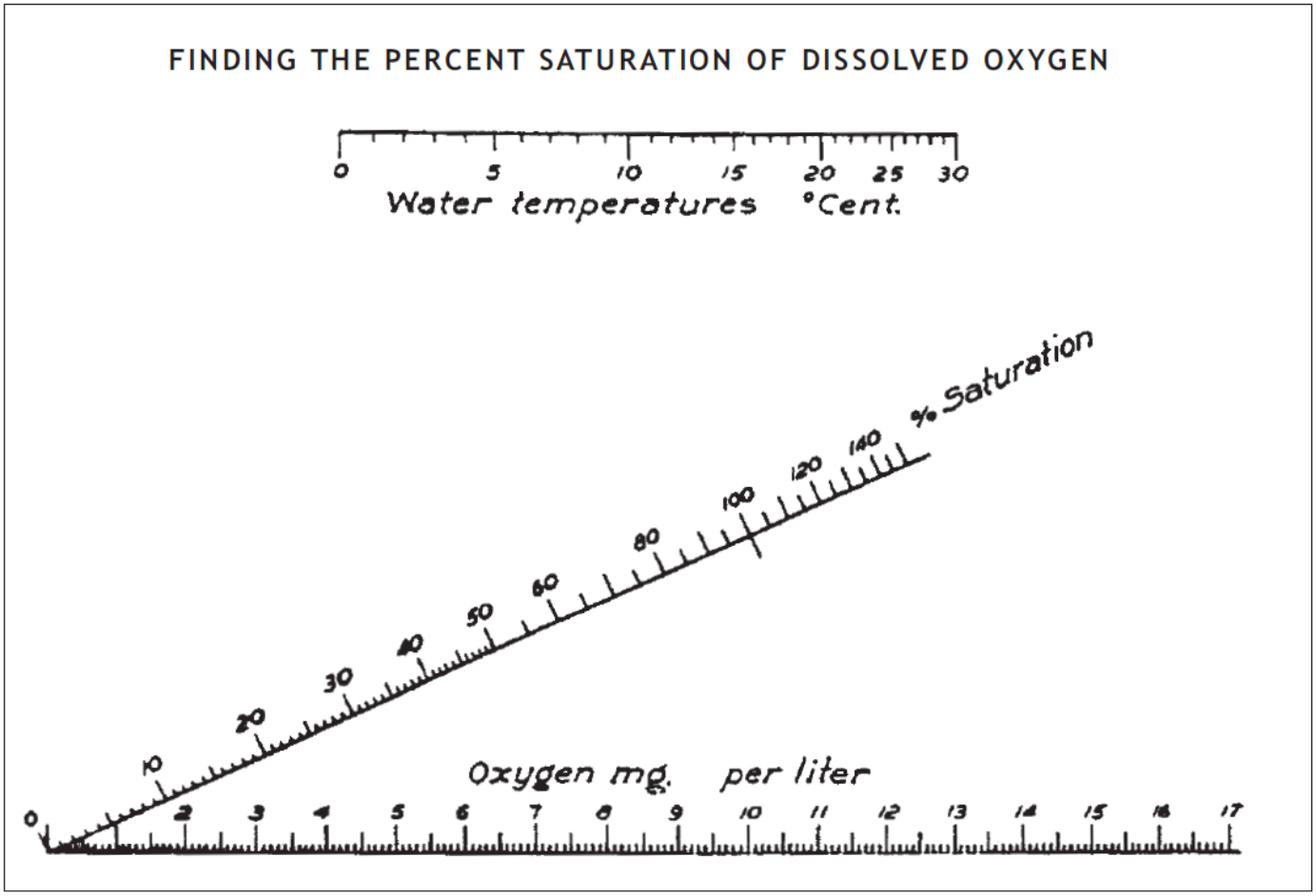

To read this chart, use a straight edge. Place the straight edge on the mg/L of oxygen you have determined for your site, then place the other end of the straight edge on the water temperature you have measured. The point where the straight line passes through the line labeled "% Saturation" is your percent saturation.

Diagram reprinted from M.K. Mitchell and W.B. Stapp, *Field Manual for Water Quality Monitoring*

Overall Stream Health Assessment

Write your ratings from all three of the above tests, here:

Based on your tests and observations, how would you rate the health of your stream overall?

	Good	Fair	Marginal	Poor
Stream Corridor Assessment				
Macroinvertebrate Survey				
Water Quality Tests				

Overall Stream Health:

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