

Habitat Assessment

Why do we measure this?

Land uses and stream physical characteristics can change in-stream processes. The amount of run-off from impervious surfaces into a stream can change temperature as well as introduce pollutants into the water. Agricultural land can contribute nutrients to a stream in the form of fertilizer run-off. The removal of trees or canopy from the stream can increase temperatures and eliminate a source of food from dropped leaves. The type of stream bottom can also determine the macroinvertebrate community. A riffle area with lots of cobble can provide attachment sites for macroinvertebrates. The amount of sedimentation in a stream can indicate the stability of a stream as well as suitability as fish habitat. Heavy sedimentation can bury fish eggs and adversely affect the fish community.

Equipment Needed:

- Pencil
- Rocky or Soft-bottom Habitat Check-List

Definition of Terms

Riparian Vegetation: The vegetation between the water's edge and the upper edge of the flood plain; transition zone between water and land.

Embeddedness: The extent to which rocks are buried by silt, sand or mud on the stream bottom.

Substrate: The stream bottom surface on which plants and animals attach or live.

Boulders: Rocks greater than 10 inches in diameter.

Cobbles: Rocks 2-10 inches in diameter

Gravel: Stones that are 0.1- 2 inches in diameter

