



PRESS RELEASE

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UGRA Recognizes Summer Study Volunteers

UGRA hosted an appreciation luncheon on October 25th to recognize the 2023 Volunteer Summer Study participants. This summer, UGRA was assisted by 27 volunteers who collected 330 samples at 40 locations throughout Kerr County during June - August. UGRA staff provided a summary presentation including *E. coli* bacteria test results for each of the sampling locations and an overview of the laboratory testing procedure. Overall, the test results from summer 2023 showed low *E. coli* bacteria concentrations. This summer our region experienced intense drought conditions which caused some creeks to go dry or only have pools with little to no flow. Areas along the river with abundant urban wildlife exhibited the highest bacteria levels.



Pictured left to right standing: Dee Elliot; Clinton Morse; John Elliot; Nellwyn Sadler; John Hornung; Deb Youngblood; Alice King; Clark Williams; Patricia Higgins; Palmore Baxter; Sherry Wilson; Bake Foster; Frances Lovett; Paz Lovett; Larry Hesketh; Reagan Boles, UGRA Lab Analyst. Left to right kneeling: Phil Youngblood; Maura Windlinger; Nancy Huffman; Trudy Eberhardt; and Matthew Wilkinson, UGRA Natural Resources Specialist.

E. coli bacteria is an indicator of water contamination and is used to assess the risk of contracting a waterborne illness while swimming. Therefore, each summer, UGRA tests *E. coli* bacteria levels at twenty-one popular swimming holes throughout Kerr County. UGRA began the Volunteer Summer Study in 2004 to expand the number of sites that are monitored routinely and to supplement water quality data collected by UGRA staff. The sites monitored by volunteers also help identify areas that may need further investigation.

“The data collected by our volunteers expands the number of sites we monitor in the summer and helps us identify areas that may need further investigation. The volunteers provide valuable context to their sites by recording their observations regarding recent rainfall, presence of wildlife, or other factors that might influence water quality. Some volunteers have sampled the same site for many years in a row, making it even easier for us to detect changes in the waterways,” said Matthew Wilkinson, UGRA Natural Resources Specialist.

If you are interested in becoming a Volunteer Summer Study participant, please send your contact information to UGRA (mwilkinson@ugra.org). For more information about the program, visit www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/volunteer-summer-study

Let's Keep *Our* River Clean