

**Nomination of Kent Johnson, Metropolitan Council, for
Dave Ford Award in 2017**

Kent Johnson has worked for the Metropolitan Council since 1980, when he was hired as an aquatic biologist to cultivate a nascent biological monitoring program. For most of his 37-year tenure, Kent managed the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment section that oversees and operates, with the help of volunteers and partners, a large network of river, stream, and lake monitoring stations in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. This is one of the most comprehensive surface water monitoring programs for a metropolitan area in the nation, if not the world. The program has grown and thrived under Kent's leadership and passion for good science and clean water.

In the late 1920s a predecessor agency began monitoring a few basic water-quality parameters of the Mississippi River. In the 1970s Helen Boyer managed a group that expanded and codified the river monitoring program for the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission, which was an unusual program at the time for an agency that treated wastewater. These agencies rarely did more than required effluent testing. Over time, however, the river monitoring program has proven instrumental for effective planning that has resulted in aligning infrastructure investments with environmental benefits.

Helen Boyer hired Kent Johnson who soon became assistant manager and later manager of the Water Quality Division. Helen spoke of Kent as the agency's "compass" when it came to decisions about water quality, and this was true throughout his career. Kent gave voice to the rivers and has been the faithful keeper of this historic network. The river monitoring program currently includes 22 sites that cover over 150 miles of the Mississippi, Minnesota, St. Croix, Vermillion, and Rum Rivers.

As manager of the river monitoring program, Kent has been very involved in many large watershed efforts and special projects, including the Lake Pepin Phosphorus Study, St. Croix Basin Water Resources Planning Team, and Lower Minnesota River Study. His section has conducted low flow surveys and other special studies to measure the effects of treatment plants and other sources of pollution on rivers in the Metro Area and downstream. Kent has been a member of the Mississippi River Research Consortium since 1985 and served on the executive board from 1990 to 1992. He has been a member of the Midwest Chapter of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry since 1990 and served on the executive board and membership committee from 1993 to 1995.

In 1987 Kent played an important role in adding stream monitoring to the Council's program to address nonpoint-source issues on tributaries to the lower Minnesota River. With the assistance of local partners, this program has grown to 22 monitoring stations on 20 streams in the Metro Area. The Council's lake monitoring program was also moved under Kent's umbrella. With the help of volunteers, the water quality of over 150 lakes in the Metro Area is carefully tracked year to year. Environmental Monitoring and Assessment also monitors effluent toxicity, effluent suspended sediment, groundwater, and air quality. Staff members appreciate Kent for his support, trust, and mentoring; colleagues universally respect Kent for his integrity, intelligence, and professionalism.

Kent earned his BA in biology and mathematics at St. Olaf College. He has returned to Northfield to speak to classes about water quality and advise a group working to restore Rice Creek, the only trout stream in Rice County. He obtained his MS in aquatic biology and limnology at Michigan Technological College, where he studied the ecological relationships of aquatic invertebrates of a river in Isle Royale for his thesis. Kent continues his academic connection as a visiting lecturer in water resources management and river ecology at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and University of Wisconsin, River Falls (2010-present). As a biologist and angler, he remains a life-long student of the morphology and behavior of aquatic insects; he even has a metric named after him (Johnson Mayfly Emergence Scale).

Beyond his contributions to water resources at the Metropolitan Council, Kent has devoted countless hours as a volunteer, especially for his favorite aquatic system: trout streams. He has served on the conservation committee of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust since 2006 and was a board member from 2006 to 2012. As a member of Trout Unlimited, Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter, he directed a river monitoring project for the “Kinni” since 1991 and served on the executive board from 1990 to 2010. On weekends Kent maintains his own water temperature network. Kent Johnson and Adam Lamberson completed a collaborative project of the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter of Trout Unlimited and Palisade Productions to create an award-winning video “A Storm on the Horizon,” which emphasizes stormwater impacts and management options for cold water streams. He has also served as a volunteer on stormwater and watershed management committees. Kent has been instrumental in the protection, restoration, and monitoring of the Kinnickinnic River, Pine Creek, and numerous other cold water streams in western Wisconsin and the Midwest.

In the spirit of Dave Ford, Kent Johnson has devoted his work life and a good portion of his personal life to monitoring and managing rivers, streams, and lakes. Honoring Kent would also give a shout-out to all the people—Council staff, local partners, and volunteers—who have worked so diligently to collect and assess an invaluable encyclopedia of information on water resources in the Twin Cities Metro Area.

The following people are nominating Kent Johnson for the Dave Ford Award:

Cathy Larson, Principal Research Scientist, Metropolitan Council (retired)

Rebecca Flood, Assistant Commissioner for Water Policy, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Brian Nerbonne, Stream Habitat Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Jim Stark, Director, Minnesota Water Science Center, U. S. Geological Survey

Leisa Thompson, General Manager, Metropolitan Council Environmental Services