



Aquatic ecologists study how forests and other environmental factors influence the plants, animals, and ecological processes in aquatic ecosystems. This knowledge helps resource managers better manage land and aquatic habitats so they provide clean water for people and wildlife.

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Dr. Sue Eggert Aquatic Ecologist



Important Scientist Characteristics: Along with curiosity and a passion for understanding nature, an aquatic scientist should be detail-oriented, be able to think outside the box, and be persistent in the face of obstacles.

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer: Water quality and quantity has become a critical issue globally. My research addresses the questions: How does land management and global change affect the functioning of rivers, lakes, and ponds? What management practices work best to protect water quality and quantity?

Technology or equipment used in research: We use several samplers, including Surber, Hess, and core, to collect invertebrates, like insects, from a known area of a stream bottom. The invertebrates are identified and counted in the laboratory before entering the data into a computer. This process helps us understand the response of stream invertebrates to local and global disturbances, like pollution or climate change.

Most Exciting Project or Discovery
Small streams are tightly linked to forests and the larger river network through the inputs of leaves and wood from trees on river banks. Unexpectedly, I found that the slimy, biofilm layer on submerged wood in aquatic ecosystems can be an important food source for some invertebrates.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist? As a kid, I spent a lot of time in streams and lakes catching aquatic animals and identifying them with books borrowed from the library and a homemade microscope. I learned much about aquatic animal identification, behavior, and life history which led to a career in science.