North Central Waterwatch Story of Change

Tess Williamson 2018

Tess Williamson is a Waterwatch volunteer who monitors two sites on Five Mile Creek in Woodend. In 2009, Tess was in grade four at Woodend Primary School and participated River Detectives program *"A Waterwatch Facilitator would visit the school and teach us about water quality and waterbugs. I've always been interested in the environment, but this helped prompt me to follow a path that would potentially lead to a career in environmental management".*

Tess initially joined the Waterwatch program because she thought Five Mile Creek was more polluted than it is. After testing two sites along the creek for a couple of years, Tess now understands why she thought it was polluted and appreciates differences between the two sites.

"It doesn't look natural when it flows through the urban setting, and with all the rubbish in the creek I just assumed the water quality would be poor. By monitoring the two sites, my perception of water quality has changed". Tess goes on to say, *"I have been collecting data over a couple of years now and although I can see the water quality isn't too bad, there are still other impacts I see including rubbish, shopping trolleys etc. However, I can see that the community care for the site as I often see people actively clean up the rubbish".*

In addition to her monitoring, Tess shares her knowledge and skills with little scout cubs in Woodend. *"Being involved in the program has given me more of an understanding of the impact people can have on waterways, for example how phosphate in water can react to detergents, and how most human activity will have an impact on a waterway in some way".*

Tess enjoys the instructiveness of entering data and seeing how the data may have changed from one site visit to the next. Getting out and about and visiting her local environment is something Tess

enjoys *"If I wasn't visiting these parts of the region as part of my monitoring activity, I wouldn't go there and I wouldn't get to experience the unique changes the environment goes through".*

"I have seen a couple of seasons now and am really getting to know my sites and how they respond, watching the creek going up and down and during the summer knowing that's ok, it will come back up again".

"I'm very happy with how the program is run and am happy to catch up once a year through the Quality Assurance and Quality Control program to check our skills and top up our equipment and solutions as needed".

Tess is now studying Biology and Environmental Science at University and continues to keep a watchful eye on Five Mile Creek.

Tess monitoring reactive phosphorous at her site