

MiSustainable Holland

About this series

The MiSustainable Holland column is a collection of community voices sharing updates about local sustainability initiatives.

This Week's Sustainability Framework Theme:

Environmental Awareness/Action: Environmental education and integrating environmental practices into our planning will change negative outcomes of the past and improve our future.

Earth-friendly volunteer opportunities continue beyond Earth Week

By Sarah Washabaugh
ODC Network

Earth Week is here, with Earth Day on Monday, and many around the nation are taking advantage of this spotlight to increase awareness and positive action to benefit our natural world! Some local ways to join in can be found in the [Earth Day Toolkit](#), created by the City of Holland in partnership with the ODC Network.

While the ideas and events listed in the Toolkit, found on the City of Holland website, are helpful for intervening this April, there are even more events this spring that equip volunteers to improve these beloved environments while spending time immersed in them! Below are three activities open to volunteers; registration is required for all events, which can be found under “Calendar” at [ourdoordiscovery.org](#).

- First, in order to know where interventions are most needed in the watershed, we need to know where the problem areas are located. One of the ways we measure the health of our area streams is by monitoring the populations of various macroinvertebrates, or small aquatic insects.

Many have sensitivities to pollution or changing environmental factors, so their presence or absence can be used to infer information about the state of that area. Join a crew of naturalists at [Macroinvertebrate Monitoring](#) on May 2, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. as we head out to local streams to collect insect samples before regrouping for identification. Lunch will be provided to those that stay for identification.

- Second, within our watershed, we have to manage stormwater that falls during rain events to prevent flooding and to ensure that our underground aquifers are being replenished. A way to assist this endeavor involves the use of rainscaping practices.

Rainscaping is a method of watershed restoration that uses green infrastructure practices to manage rainwater where it falls, such as rain barrels, rain gardens, using trees or other native plants, and riparian buffers. Normally, those interested in implementing these practices at their house could contact ODC Network, who then visits their location, completes a free site assessment, and provides resources and recommendations for site-appropriate rainscaping practices.

While we are excited that there has been an increase in homeowners looking to use these techniques for better water and land management, we are approaching the limit of free site assessments that our staff are capable of completing in a given time frame!

Join us for the [Volunteer Rainscaping Training](#) on May 7 and 21, 10 to 11:30 a.m., for a two-part training that will inform and prepare participants to complete site assessments for others, increasing the access for residents!

- Third, all of the organisms that rely on both Lake Macatawa, as well as the wetland areas near the lake, are affected by trash that finds its way into Lake Mac.

Join us at the [Lake Macatawa Cleanup](#) at Window on the Waterfront on May 18, 10 a.m. to noon. All necessary trash-collecting materials such as bags, gloves, and grabbers will be provided.

In Holland, residents and visitors both share the benefits of, and a responsibility to our extensive waterfront access. Help us care for these environments in the here and now so they may be enjoyed for years to come!

■ *Sarah Washabaugh is a conservation educator with the ODC Network.*