# Site Assessment Activity for Aquatic Science Classes

Site assessment and investigation is meant to identify issues and opportunities related to **water, people and plants/animals**. The site assessment is essential to developing feasible, functional projects.

Lots of information is collected at the site, but other useful information can be found though research online, at libraries or at municipal offices. Information that can be collected in advance of a site visit includes aerial imagery and other data; site history including past uses; and property ownership. *It’s important to note that permission must be secured from site owners before conducting a site visit.* In general, this will be taken care of for you by HVA for the sites you visit for Aquatic Science.

The assessment is broken up into three general themes. Each of these is listed below, along with some questions to help guide your investigation. ***For collecting information during the site visit, make notes and sketches on the aerial photo, describe the impact according to what each question asks below, and take photos of any important features that you see marking photo locations on your aerial photo.***

### Water:

The main goal of our Water site assessment is to identify opportunities to reduce polluted runoff entering the storm sewer or adjacent streams.

1. Are there areas of impervious cover (i.e. parking lots, roads, building roofs)? If so, where does water coming off of these areas go? Mark any stormdrains, and note areas that collect lots of water. You can often tell these areas by accumulated sediment and debris. Are there obvious sources of pollution that runoff could pick up and transport into the storm sewer? Some examples are pet or other animal waste, oil leaks or actively eroding areas.
2. Are there open areas (i.e. medians or lawn) where runoff could be routed to filter into the ground instead of going into the storm sewer system? Open areas adjacent to places where water is collecting are important to note.
3. Are there streams on the site? If so, is there a buffer between the stream and potential pollution sources? Are there places where the stream is actively eroding the banks, contributing to sedimentation? What other impacts do you notice in the stream corridor (filled in floodplain, dams, etc.)?

### People:

The main goal of our People site assessment is to identify opportunities for enhancing recreation opportunities and reducing any impacts people may be having on the site. We also want to accommodate existing uses with any project we propose. ***Make notes and sketches on the aerial photo, describe what you see after the questions asks below, and take photos of any important features that you see marking photo locations on your aerial photo.***

1. Are there obvious signs of human use (seating areas, trails, stream access, etc.)? If so, is use impacting the site in any way (erosion, garbage accumulation, etc.)?
2. Are there features of the site that are especially interesting (large trees, scenic vistas, water bodies, etc.)?

### Plants and Animals:

The main goal of the Plants and Animals site assessment is to identify opportunities for protecting and restoring habitat. ***Make notes and sketches on the aerial photo, describe what you see after the questions asks below, and take photos of any important features that you see marking photo locations on your aerial photo.***

1. Where is the site located on the landscape? Is it on a stream corridor? Adjacent to patches of forest?
2. Is there vegetation on the site? What’s it like (lawn, meadow, wetland, woods)? Are there invasive species that you recognize? Are there native species that you recognize?
3. Do you see any animals, or signs of animals (tracks, nests etc.)? Are there any barriers to fish and wildlife (stream crossings, dams, etc.)?