BENCHMARK PHOTOGRAPHY

WHY

One easy way to track changes in environmental conditions over time is through photography. However, in order to make these photos meaningful it's important to first establish a benchmark, or standard point of reference, so that the photos can be compared to one another and effectively show change over time.

Photo: The Nigmatic (Unsplash)

HOW

Step 1: Monitoring Site and Stable Features

Once you have determined your monitoring site (e.g. the location where you have observed an algal bloom; crop of invasive vegetation, etc.) take a look around for some stable features. These can include things like:

- Nearby buildings
- Large rocks/boulders
- Trees
- Fence posts

Step 2: Reference Photo

Once you have picked your stable feature(s) take a photo of your monitoring site/occurrence you are reporting; This will be your reference photo going forward so be sure to save it!

Bad reference photo

Bad reference photo

Good reference photo

Ottawa RIVERKEEPER®
GARDE-RIVIÈRE *des Outaouais*
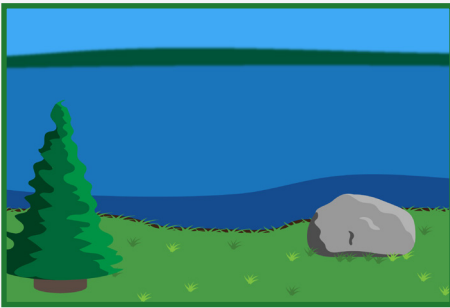
BENCHMARK PHOTOGRAPHY

HOW (cont'd)

Step 3: Observations

When you return for follow up monitoring at your site, you will take a photo that will provide as good overlap with your reference photo as possible. See following page for examples and tips
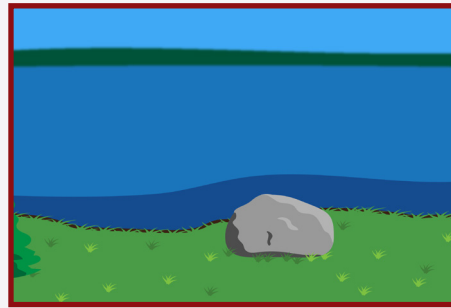
- Make sure to include the same stable features
- Use the same focus
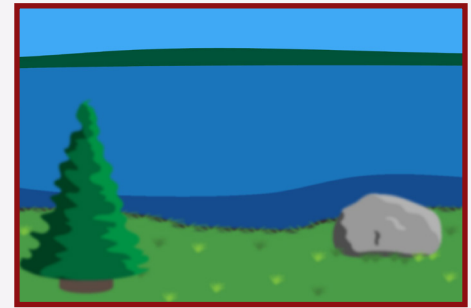- Face the same direction

Reference photo

Good overlap

Bad overlap (missing stable features)

Bad overlap (out of focus)

TIPS

- Make sure the photos taken with your benchmark will be able to fully capture the data you are looking to report, while avoiding any distracting features (e.g., overhanging branches). In other words, make sure you will be able to fully capture a growing bloom or patch of invasives while still maintaining good overlap with your reference photo.
- Count the number of steps between your stable feature and where you take your reference photo to help you remember your position when you return. The fewer steps the better. If possible, try and mark the spot where you are standing to take the photo, or ideally, take the photo while standing next to another stable landscape feature.
- Before taking the photo make sure you are in a comfortable position that you will be able to easily repeat. If you crouch, lean or bend, it may make it difficult to get the same angle photo when you return.
- If possible, avoid using the zoom function when taking photos.
- Don't forget to record the GPS coordinates for your monitoring site!

CONTACT

cbm@ottawariverkeeper.ca; include "Photography" in the email subject line