



Class Menu

*All classes are aligned with MN & WI
Academic Content Standards*

Classroom Connections

Grades K – 2

Let's Go Snowshoeing (Jan – March)

Essential Understanding

Let's find out why people have been using snowshoes for over 6,000 years by putting on and practicing using snowshoes. Students will be introduced to snowshoeing through experiential learning, exploration and snow fun.

My River Community

Essential Understanding

Rivers Are Alive! They are home to many amazing animals and plants. We will introduce students to the animals that are part of the river community in their community and offer the opportunity for observation of animal parts, activity station collaboration and discovery.

Grades 3 – 5

Rivers Connections in the Classroom

Essential Understanding

We can learn a lot by observing the animals that live near us, even if we are only observing animal objects. In this class, we will bring the river to your classroom. Students will step into the shoes of scientists and participate in observation, collaboration, and team teaching. Finally, they will discover the interconnectedness of a river ecosystem, in which humans are part of, by creating an ecosystem model.

Out of Place?

Essential Understanding

Have you ever been the new kid and felt a little out of place? Sometimes in nature, animals and plants are introduced to an ecosystem where they are considered out of place, and they have to figure out a way to thrive and survive. And sometimes, those out of place animals and plants figure out a survival strategy that works too well and they make it hard for the animals and plants that have always lived in that ecosystem to survive. Students will participate in an interactive game to explore this idea.

What is a Watershed?

Essential Understanding

The ponds, streams, creeks, rivers and lakes in our communities are full of life, and they are all connected to each other. Students will be introduced to watersheds by constructing their own watershed and experimenting with a watershed model. They will understand that we all live in a watershed and are connected by them, and how we care for the water in our communities can positively or negatively impact our downstream neighbors and the quality of water within a watershed.

Grades 6 - 12

Conservation Careers

Essential Understanding

There are many opportunities to pursue a career in natural resource conservation and protection. Students will explore conservation career paths during this brief, half hour presentation.

Into the Weeds

Essential Understanding

Invasive species may forever change the way we live our lives. From gardeners to hikers, farmers to landowners, humans are impacted by these fast-spreading species. Students will identify how terrestrial invasive species affect our economies and ecosystems, and the role we all can play to prevent their further spread through plant ID and problem solving activities.

Snowshoe Sleuths (Jan - March)

Essential Understanding

Winter is a cold and quiet time of the year, but animal life is active all winter long. Many animals migrate or hibernate during the winter months but many animal species are toughing out the cold weather and we can tell who is still around by the clues and signs of life they leave in the snow. Students will put on snowshoes and discover how rivers are alive, even in the winter by searching for animal signs and learning animal tracking basics.

The Watershed Game

Essential Understanding

The Watershed Game is an interactive, educational tool created by the University of MN Extension and Minnesota Sea Grant that helps individuals understand the connection between land use and water quality. Participants learn how a variety of land uses impact water and natural resources, increase their knowledge of best management practices (BMPs), and learn how their choices can prevent adverse impacts. Participants apply the tools of plans, practices, and policies that help them achieve clean water goals for protection and restoration while providing for community growth.

Field Trip Fun

Grades K - 2

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Sensory Scavenger Hunt

Essential Understanding

Our eyes are not the only tool we can use to make observations of the natural world. We can use all five of our senses to experience and explore nature. This sensory scavenger hunt activity will activate students' sense of awareness and encourage them to notice new sights, sounds, and smells.

Visitor Center Scavenger Hunt

Essential Understanding

We do not have to travel too far to visit a National Park or Monument. An interactive scavenger hunt during your field trip to the Namekagon or St. Croix Visitor Center will inspire your students to learn more about this incredible Riverway. Students will also view a short film that tells the story of the St. Croix and how it became designated as a Wild and Scenic River through the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

What is a River? (Grades K – 5)

Essential Understanding

Learners will consider that how a river is more than just a flowing, moving stream of water. It is a home and highway for many living organisms.

Grades 3 – 5

The Flooded Forest

Essential Understanding

Along the banks of the St. Croix River, beneath the shimmering leaves of silver maple trees, lives a special community of creatures. These organisms have been shrouded in mystery, until now! Students will become science sleuths, using magnifying lenses, identifying birds, and using their observation skills to untangle the ecosystem web of this fascinating place.

Let's Go Mucking

Essential Understanding

Sometimes it's the smallest creatures in an ecosystem that tell us the most about its health. It doesn't get any more hands-on than mucking in the river for macroinvertebrates. In this class, students become biologists and use a variety of tools and materials to collect, observe and identify the tiny creatures that are big indicators of how healthy a body of water is.

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What is a River?

Essential Understanding

Grades 3-5 will investigate what causes a river to bend, move and flow and where they start and end. Students will learn about how the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers were formed.

Grades 6 - 12

Custom paddling program (May – Sept)

Essential Understanding

There is nothing quite like getting students on the river! It is much easier to learn about and study the river ecosystem when you are paddling in a quiet, backwater channel. We will work with you to customize a paddling program for your students (there are size limitations) with a focus on river systems, floodplains, and river health.

Forest Futures

Essential Understanding

Coming soon...

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Our Forest Biome Home

Essential Understanding

Different forests have different "looks" and "feels;" a forest in northern Minnesota or Wisconsin "look" and "feel" different than a forest might than a central or southern Minnesota or Wisconsin forest. In this class students will explore the layers and vegetative life of the forest.

Snowshoe Sleuths (Jan - March)

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What's In the River?

Essential Understanding

Sometimes you can tell how healthy water is just by looking at it, but sometimes you can't. In this class, students become hydrologists and use a variety of tools and materials to measure the quality of water.

DIY Pre and Post Activities

PRE ACTIVITY: Macroinverte-what? (Grades 3 – 12)

Essential Understanding

Macroinvertebrate is a mouthful and what even is a macroinvertebrate? This activity will prepare your students for their Let's Go Mucking field trip with Rivers Are Alive.

PRE ACTIVITY: Mapping the St. Croix River Watershed (All grade levels)

Essential Understanding

Provide your students with a sense of place before their Rivers Are Alive experience. We will send you a grade level appropriate mapping activity so they are familiar with the St. Croix River and its watershed.

POST ACTIVITY: Pollution Tolerance Index (Grades 3 – 12)

Essential Understanding

This activity will close out your students' Let's Go Mucking experience in a powerful way. Students will discover how macroinvertebrates are indicators of water quality by using the Pollution Tolerance Index.

POST ACTIVITY: Research Project (Grades 3 – 12)

Essential Understanding

Grades 3 – 5: Research the wild and scenic qualities of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and coordinate a parent, school or community presentation.

Grades 6 – 8: Research their water comes from in their community, where and who grows food in their part of the watershed, and how food is harvested in their part of the watershed.

Grades 9 – 12: Research environmental threats to the watershed and work in teams to engineer possible solutions.

POST ACTIVITY: Snowshoe Science (Grades 3 – 5)

Essential Understanding

Review the concept of biomimicry with your students (the imitation of the models, systems, and elements of nature for the purpose of solving complex human problems) and how snowshoes were designed after observation of animals like the snowshoe hare. What other examples of biomimicry can your class research?

POST ACTIVITY: Where the Wild Things Art (Grades K – 3)

Essential Understanding

Just like we have a home that provides shelter, space, food and water, there are tiny creatures who make their home in a stream or river and this habitat provides everything they need to survive. Students will be introduced to macroinvertebrates by observing them in their aquatic habitat and then recreating their habitat through art.

POST ACTIVITY: The Written River (Grades K – 12)

Essential Understanding

From children's literature (K – 3) to poetry (4 – 6) to conservationist writing to protect rivers (7 – 12), the words written about rivers live on in articles, books, and in the hearts and minds of people who love rivers. Give your students the opportunity to reflect upon their Rivers Are Alive experience through writing a simple St. Croix Haiku, exploring river literature and other forms of writing.