



Missouri River Watershed Festival & River Clean-up

Sixth Annual - October 3-4, 2008 - La Benite Park - Sugar Creek, MO

Hands-first learning on the riverside

Slowly, the fog burned off of the levee, moving slowly through the parking lot and revealing the tents, tables and booths clustered together to host nearly 300 Kansas City students on the banks of the Big Muddy at La Benite Park.

The **Missouri River Watershed Festival** is a 2 state, 7 county, metro KC regional event, featuring over 30 exhibitors conducting hands-on, interactive activities for area 5th graders with a focus on river stewardship and education. The festival is held in conjunction with a **Missouri River Clean-up**, giving an opportunity to follow up education with stewardship and an on-the-river experience.

Students arrived and left their buses armed with a festival passport. They toured learning stations enthusiastically learning about how their behavior in one part of the watershed can affect the entire region.

Big river fish entranced students as their eager hands touched animals caught that morning in the muddy water passing by La Benite Park. Muddy water was made drinkable right before their eyes. The Missouri River Relief Trashology

exhibit showed students how trash travels down the river. Box City showed students how cities are developed and underscored the need for forward thinking in city planning and infrastructure.

Excited chatter from the students showed that an impact had been made. "Did you see those fish? They were HUGE!" "If I built a city, I'd put bridges in first!" "I touched a

snapping turtle. His shell was leathery." "The girls beat the boys at the Recycle Relay!"

Lunch time arrived as students gathered for a meeting with **Dr. H2O**. Students participated excitedly as science came alive with an entertaining twist. The session was recorded for later broadcast on **KCMO channel 2**.

As students left the river, exhibitors enjoyed a valuable chance to network with friends and fellow educators. The exhibitors also found some time to travel to others' exhibits, passing along their knowledge to colleagues.

Middle school students are a terrific group to work with. They have the stamina to pay close attention to the information provided by exhibitors, while employing that sense of wonder that energizes us all.

Special thanks go to the teachers who take time out of a school day to bring students to the river. We believe that this type of learning allows students to become effective, critical thinking members of society who will pass



Students had the unique opportunity to hold a shovelnose sturgeon at the Missouri Dept. of Conservation booth at the Missouri River Watershed Festival.

photo by Jill Anderson-Hamilton, National Park Service

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Missouri River Watershed Festival Exhibitors

American Society of Civil Engineering

"Alligator Cove" Missouri Stream Team 1876

Black & Veatch

Blue River Watershed Association

Coast Guard Auxiliary

Jackson County Soil & Water District

Kansas City Water Services

Kansas Dept. of Wildlife & Parks

KSU Extension 4-H

Little Blue River Watershed Coalition

Missouri Department of Conservation

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Missouri River Relief

Missouri State Water Patrol

Platte Land Trust

Schlagle Library

University of Kansas Architecture

University of Missouri-Kansas City students

US Environmental Protection Agency

US Geological Survey

Watershed Institute and Land Trust

Wyandotte County Conservation District

Wyandotte County Master Gardeners

these values on to their peers and families, establishing a sustainable environmental ethic and care for our natural resources.

Additional thanks go to the **City of Sugar Creek**, who allowed us access to the Missouri River at beautiful La Benite Park, to **Courtney Ridge** who provided handwash stations and portable toilets, to the **Sugar Creek Fire Department** who provided our exhibits with water and to the land managers, biologists, not for profit experts, college students and community leaders who donated their time and talent to bring river education to

the students.

None of this would be possible without the leadership and guidance of the **Missouri River Watershed Festival Committee** chairs- Kimberlee Foster, Cheri Miller, Larry O'Donnell, Vicki Richmond, Colleen Doctorian, Wendy Sangster and Steve Van Rhein. These individuals design passports and maps, recruit exhibitors and teachers and set up the event. Their hard work behind the scenes is visible to all after a successful day, and **Missouri River Relief** is proud to be a part of this inspiring annual collaboration.



Top: Students get a hands-on lesson in water chemistry from the Blue River Watershed Association.

Left: Missouri Dept. of Conservation biologists show the diversity of fish found in the Missouri River.

Right: Students from Scuola Vita Nuova Charter School came back on Saturday to help with the Missouri River Clean-up.

photos by Jill Anderson-Hamilton & Melanie Cheney



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Thanks and Praises

These folks made the Missouri Watershed Festival and River Clean-up possible. Thanks!

Major Sponsors

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
 Port Authority of Kansas City
 Kansas City Water Services

BP

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