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Students Discover the St. Mary's River Watershed

Students from the Chesapeake Public Charter School peered over white trays and through discovery scopes filled with aquatic invertebrates on Tuesday, April 28, at the Great Mills Canoe/Kayak Launch.

Nearly 60 second and fifth-grade students participated in the environmental field trip hosted by the St. Mary's River Watershed Association, with help from high school students from the Dr. Forrest Career and Technology Center and from the St. Mary's College of Maryland St. Mary's River Project Education Group.

"As a society, we have become prisoners of our homes, workplace, cars, and other manmade structures. We are constantly captivated by television, video games, and Internet sites. We are no longer aware of the natural world and how we are impacting it," said Bob Lewis, who serves as Executive Director of the Association.

The field trip gave students the opportunity to see the St. Mary's River and the species that live within it first-hand. Through various hands-on demonstration stations, students learned about the watershed, the importance of quality water for the survival of various species, the threats to water quality, the ways to protect the watershed, life cycles, food webs, and the methods for sampling water and the species within.

"Many aquatic species, such as frogs and various flies, start their lives in the water. The things that we do on land affect them, as well as us," said Association program director Lindsay Tempinson.

"Interaction with the natural world is stimulating for young people. They quickly become attracted to the beauty and the serene atmosphere. This triggers the imagination and students learn to be more creative and expressive. The calming effect of the field trip persists into the classroom where attention span lengthens and learning is enhanced. Appreciation for the natural world can only be achieved through awareness," said Lewis.

April is Environmental Education Month throughout the state of Maryland.

For more information call 301-737-2903 or email info@stmarysriver.org.

Caption for Photo 1: John Spinicchia, Natural Resources Management Program teacher at the Dr. Forrest Career and Technology Center shows off a crayfish, with her eggs attached, from a St. Mary's River tributary.

Caption for Photo 2: Second-grade students from the Chesapeake Public Charter School look on as high school students from the Forrest Career and Technology Center demonstrate fish collection with a seine net in the St. Mary's River.

