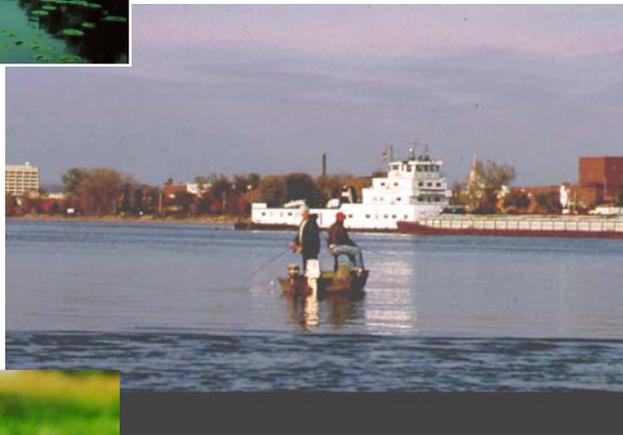


EXPLORATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

ACTIVITY GUIDE



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FORWARD

Take a moment to paint a mental picture of what the Mississippi River means to you. Did you hear the power of the engines as a tow gingerly made its way into a lock, or did you imagine a quiet backwater channel reflecting the embrace of majestic trees, sunlight sparkling through their leaves? Did you hear the laughter of children as they explored a sandy beach in the sun, or did you marvel at the beauty of an eagle as it soared from the bluffs to a lush and watery world below? Did you see dams and levees built in an effort to “tame” its waters, or did you remember that the River and its creatures depend on floods and droughts to be healthy and productive? Did you see a colorful collection of waterfowl on their annual migration south, or did you dip under the murky waters to witness the passage of fish from their winter to summer homes? The Mississippi River is all of this and much more. Someone once said, “...think of the river as a huge puzzle consisting of many interlocking pieces, but with the capability of forming a different picture depending upon where and how the pieces are placed together.”

Putting the puzzle together can be quite difficult if you don’t know which pieces are related. Sharing the secrets of this puzzle requires more than an explanation of how humans and nature have interacted through the years. It also requires experiencing firsthand the wonders and mysteries the Mississippi River has to offer and discovering how everyone has a connection to the “Father of Waters.”

This activity guide was put together as a resource for educators interested in using the Mississippi River as a focal point for teaching. Where possible, actual data from monitoring the ecological health of the Mississippi River has been used as examples from which students can learn.

This guide is intended to be a living guide, periodically updated with new information and activities. Therefore, it is formatted into sections that will allow addition of future resources without reprinting the entire guide.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Compilation of this guide has been many years in the making. The first advanced Project *WILD* workshop focusing on the Mississippi River was the brainchild of Elizabeth Janvrin. This first workshop was done in the winter of 1992 as three, 2-hour sessions. The workshops have evolved over the years to be 4-5 days in length and now include field trips and numerous guest speakers.

The first workshop relied on existing activities from Project *WILD* that were adapted using information provided. Feedback from this workshop resulted in the development of written activities that were either specifically written to address the need for resource materials and activities focusing on the River or adapted from other sources.

The time finally arrived to put all of this information in a single guide designed to give educators the resources necessary to teach their students about the Mississippi River. Several people helped in the development of the activities through direct involvement in writing the activities to offering support and ideas. The Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa coordinators for Project *WILD*, Aquatic *WILD*, and Project WET have provided permission to include their adaptations of activities in the guide. The activity "On the River to La Crosse" is reprinted from, "Where Rivers Meet: An Educator's Guide to the History of La Crosse, WI" with permission from Robert Taunt and the La Crosse Grand Excursion Education Committee.

The activities that were specifically written for this guide were researched and written by a variety of people. Rhonda Kenyon and Donna Wilson spent many hours developing the initial drafts of the water quality and sedimentation activities. Brian Brecka, Wisconsin DNR, contributed by sharing his activity on Mississippi River habitats and worksheets in the bluegill activity. Theresa Stabo, Wisconsin DNR, offered many helpful editorial comments. Elizabeth Janvrin developed some of the mussel activities and the trade book guide for "And Still the Turtle Watched" included in the history section. She also provided many comments on the other activities that have greatly improved their content, taking my technical jargon and making it understandable.

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