

ECO Education / Pontoon Classroom
September 2009

"POA organizes 7th Grade Environmental Field Trip".

The POA provided a day long educational field trip for the Drummond School 7th grade science class of Mr. Stipetich. The 40-45 students and faculty had a wonderful day on the water with skills, educational material and shared learning provided by POA volunteers.

The program began on Sandbar Lake where the students were divided into three groups and rotated through three learning stations. At station #1 Ingemar Ekstrom educated the students on the Eurasian Milfoil infestation. He explained how the eradication process on Tomahawk Lake worked and taught them how to identify Eurasian Milfoil. The students were then able to try some hands on identifying of the Milfoil in the lake. At station #2 John Kudlas had an array of freshly harvested native and invasive lake weeds to show the students. At the end of his presentation the students had fun pulling out random weeds from a big bucket and identifying them for John! At station #3 Lee Wiesner talked with each group about a variety of ways we can help preserve or improve our lake resources through shoreline stewardship. Lee covered the 3 C's to protect our lakes, Curb Pollution and Cut and Cleanse runoff. He also covered 10 simple ways to achieve the 3 C's, such as use 0 percent phosphorous lawn fertilizer, have septic systems inspected and pumped regularly, keep natural buffers along lakeshores or create natural buffers with planting of native plants, stop mowing lawn within 35 feet of lake and establishing rain gardens if necessary. The latest new rules and laws were discussed such as the no transport of plants or aquatic animals on boats and trailers, the zero phosphorus law in lawn fertilizer and the new 100 foot slow no wake rule along shorelines

The group then bussed to the Middle Eau Claire Lake boat ramp where they boarded three pontoon boats coordinated by the POA. The students were engaged in educational- hands on experiences in three different areas.

On boat 1 Lee Wiesner demonstrated how water clarity is measured using the Secchi disc and how we measure dissolved oxygen and water temperature with the Hach meter. Lee discussed spring and fall turn over on the lakes and how the turn over changes where fish are found in the lake. The thermocline on the lake was found and explained and how there is very little oxygen below the thermocline on Middle Eau Claire due to excessive nutrients which can impact fish seeking cooler water and high oxygen levels.

On boat 2 the students put to practice what they learned with John Kudlas in the morning discussion on Sandbar Lake. They worked in teams "grabbing" plants with a rake and identifying at least 4 species. All the students did quite well. They were also provided educational materials about the plants for their future use.

Boat 3 provided a first hand look and overview of the "Fish Sticks" project located on the South shore area of Middle Eau Claire Lake with Jerry Kaiser who has been an active participant in this project. The pontoon boat allowed the students to get very close to the "Fish Sticks" (wood in the water) where they observed turtles, ducks, birds and insects enjoying the new habitat.

This educational field trip was an invaluable experience provided to 37 of our local students.