



Life of the River

Rivers are a great example of the way that we are connected to our environment: we use them for transportation, fishing, as water sources, etc. and there are broad ecosystems living within these bodies of water. A discussion about rivers opens up greater conversations about the link between sustainability and the recent flooding in Nebraska, as well as about human interaction with the environment, water quality, river health, and invasive species. Below are some activities about a variety of water- and river-related topics that might be of interest to students (organized by grade level, but may be applicable across ages). One great option for all grade levels would be to bring an educator from [Nebraska Game and Parks](#) to give a presentation about a related topic. See Additional Resources for contact/more information.

Activity Ideas

Pre-School + Kindergarten

- **Fish and pollution.** [This activity](#) illustrates how water pollution can hurt fish in a fun, interactive way. (For younger students, consider using fewer/simpler contaminants.)
- **Read about rivers, ponds, and lakes.** There are a number of books that talk about the ecosystems living in bodies of fresh water. Look for [Pond Walk](#) in the school or community library and share with the kids the wide world of organisms underneath the surface.

Grades 1-3

- **Climate and flooding.** In [this video](#), “Marina Ventura” explores how flooding relates to changes in the climate.
- **River vocabulary.** [This video](#) teaches about the basics of rivers – vocabulary words, how they’re formed, and more.
- **Read about rivers, ponds, and lakes.** See above. [This list](#) has some books more appropriate for older students and that they could read themselves.

Grades 4-6

- **Invasive species.** [This video](#) discusses the invasion of zebra mussels into our lakes. [This one](#) talks about Asian carp, another invader. Invasive species can permanently alter the health and ecosystems of rivers and lakes, and students will love these fun videos about wild creatures.
- **River puzzle.** This [puzzle activity](#) helps students understand how various factors affect river health. Have students arrange the puzzle pieces of a river, discussing how the activities depicted on each puzzle piece might impact the river and its ecosystems.

Grades 7-12

- **Invasive species.** See above.
- **Flooding around the world.** [This video](#) shows how flooding impacts people all over the world (in Bangladesh specifically), and explains the connection between flooding and climate change. It also introduces the idea that the effects of climate change have often been hidden from us in the past because they’ve been primarily occurring in other parts of the world, but that soon (as we know from the flooding here in Nebraska) we’ll all be feeling these effects.

Additional Resources

1. Bird's eye view of rivers and flooding: [Flood photos](#) and [video](#) showing the Platte at its record flooding in March 2019.
 - a. If this seems sensitive, [this video](#) takes a more casual journey down the Mississippi River.
2. [Flooding and climate change](#)
3. [List of books about rivers](#)
4. [NE Game and Parks](#) (State-wide organization with resources/educational events & programs)
 - a. Contact information for bringing an educator to your classroom: (402) 471-0641
5. [Central Platte Natural Resources Department](#) (Regional organization with educational resources for K-12)

Let Us Know What You Did!

Report your progress and earn recognition for your school. Fill out your school's row in the [GSC Tracking Document](#) to let us know which activity you did for this month!

Questions?

We're here to answer any questions you may have, talk through ideas or provide further resources. Just email gogreen@kearneycats.com.

RECOGNITION LEVELS

All KPS schools have the opportunity to earn recognition for their participation in the Green Schools Initiative each year. The more activities you complete, the more recognition you receive! For 2019-2020, the following three levels of recognition are available:

- **Level 1 (Green Performance)** - Participation in 5 activities during the year. Schools receive a framed certificate of recognition, \$50 for Green Team Activities next year, and \$100 for the Principal's budget.
- **Level 2 (Green Achievement)** - Participation in 6 - 9 activities during the year. Schools receive \$150 for Green Team activities next year, an award banner, and \$200 for the Principal's budget
- **Level 3 (Green Excellence)** - Participation in 10 or more activities during the year. Schools receive \$300 for Green Team activities next year, a large award banner, and \$400 for the Principal's budget. In addition, all schools that achieve Level 3 participation are placed into a raffle; the selected school receives \$450 to spend on district-approved items. Approved items could entail smart power strips, vending machine energy misers, native landscaping/trees, rain barrels, native plants for classrooms, and indoor/outdoor recycling containers. All items must be approved by the district office prior to purchase.