



RIVERS ARE ALIVE

2025 TEACHER'S GUIDE





Rivers Are Alive is a K-12 environmental education program offered in partnership by Wild Rivers Conservancy and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway throughout the St. Croix watershed in every season.

We aim to provide accessible, engaging, watershed-wide, youth environmental education programming to inspire a future community of park visitors, stewards, and advocates.

We work to achieve our goals by following our guiding principles:

- **Joint Partnership**
 - Wild Rivers Conservancy and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway work hand in hand to deliver Rivers Are Alive programming.
- **Positive Partnerships**
 - We collaborate with partners throughout the watershed to create meaningful, inclusive, community-based programming.
- **Accessible and Affordable**
 - We strive to remove barriers by traveling to you or offering transportation scholarships to bring you to the river to provide low-cost programming with flexible schedules.
- **Standards based. Student centered.**
 - We offer a curriculum to assist schools in meeting academic goals while fostering self-discovery, exploration, reflection, and wonder.
- **Watershed Wide**
 - We educate the watershed to protect the National Park that flows through its heart.
- **Whole School Model**
 - We offer a whole school model that serves students from grades K-12 and professional development for educators. We believe in empowering educators to be river and watershed experts through valuable teacher in-service workshops.

LEARN MORE



Additional resources and the Rivers Are Alive program request form can be found at:

wildriversconservancy.org/learn-explore/rivers-are-alive

Have questions? Reach out to:

Katrina Schlicker - Environmental Education Coordinator:
715-483-3300 x 28 | kschlicker@wildriversconservancy.org

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

	Rivers Are Alive Program	Adventure Program	Outdoor STEAM Program	Indoor STEAM Program	NPS Visitor Center
All Ages	Let's Go Birding	X	X		
	Let's Go Mucking	X	X		
	Let's Go Snowshoeing (Jan-March)	X			
	Let's Go Ice Fishing (Jan-March)	X			
	Let's Go Fishing	X			
	Naturalist Hike	X			
	NPS Scavenger Hunt and Film				X
K-2	Mussel Mania		X	X	X
	River Connections in the Classroom			X	X
	Observation Olympics		X		X
3-5	Mussel Mania		X	X	X
	Out of Place? Intro to Aquatic Invasive Species		X	X	X
	River Connections in the Classroom			X	X
	What is a Watershed?		X	X	X
6-12	A Watershed in Jeopardy - Aquatic Invasive Species			X	X
	River Connections in the Classroom			X	X
	Mussel Mania		X	X	X

**Adventure Programming will get your students out and about in the watershed while learning more about the space around them!*

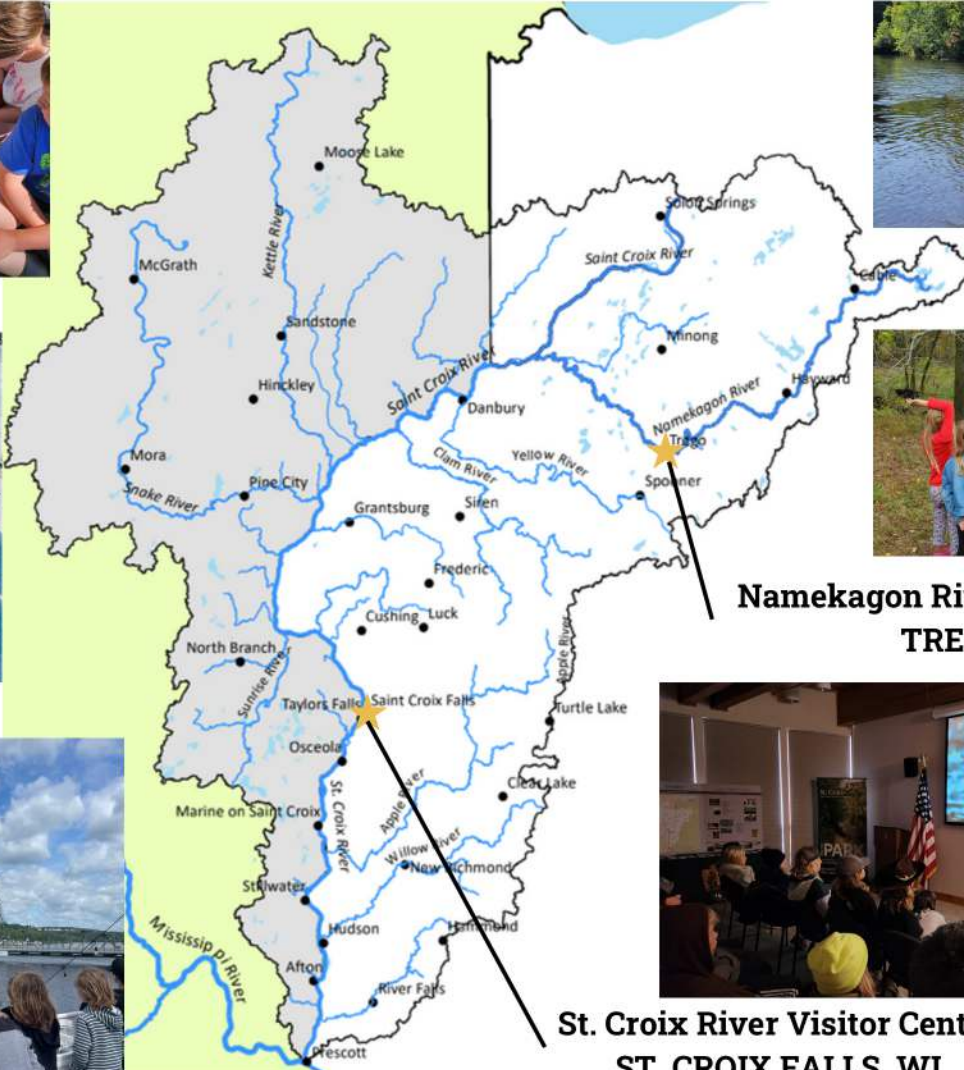
DON'T SEE A TOPIC HERE?

TALK TO OUR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR TO LEARN HOW WE CAN ADAPT OUR PROGRAMS TO FIT YOUR NEEDS!

Have you thought about...?

- A Service Project
 - Our team will assist in finding the perfect fit for you and your students to help your school, your community, and your river! Some options may include garlic mustard pulls or buckthorn removal, storm drain stenciling and river clean-up, or connect you with citizen science projects to suit your needs.
- The St. Croix Junior Ranger Program
 - Engage your students with our Junior Ranger booklets. Complete 10 or more activity pages and schedule your field trip at the Visitor Center to check off the last activity: the Life Jacket Activity. Your students will get sworn in and receive their own badge and certificate!
- Meet a Ranger
 - What does it take to be a Park Ranger and how much do they really know? Our Rangers will provide an instructional talk about the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and what they do!

FIELD TRIPS TO THE ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY



**Namekagon River Visitor Center
TREGO, WI**



**St. Croix River Visitor Center
ST. CROIX FALLS, WI**

St. Croix Visitor Center



A visit to the Visitor Center makes for a fun and educational field trip! Students will explore the Visitor Center, watch a fantastic film, and discover the wild and scenic St. Croix River.

MN and WI State Parks

We work closely with MN and WI state parks to coordinate field trips to all state parks in the St. Croix River watershed. Hiking and hands-on learning are integral parts of these state park adventures!

RIVERS ARE ALIVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY



We can meet your class at a tributary or river landing near you or even at a local park or preserve. Students will experience how their community is connected to our watershed and to this National Park.

RIVERS ARE ALIVE AT YOUR SCHOOL

Our most popular programs can take place right at your school! Let us bring the river to you with fun activities and lessons that will help students learn what makes the river alive.



In the Classroom

Students will explore the connection of their local river ecosystem discovering their place in the watershed.

Consider bringing your class out to the School Yard or School Forest!



VIRTUAL PROGRAMING

If meeting in person is not the best option, ask us about our engaging and interactive virtual programs. They can be scheduled as stand-alone programs or as a pre/post activity to your in-person program.

Check out our Rivers Are Alive Online series on the RAA webpage. Each "class" has videos, instructions, and resources for teachers (and parents) to use!

ST. CROIX YOUTH SUMMIT



Our virtual week of learning, St. Croix Youth Summit, returns again April 22 -25th.

Each year, this partnership with St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, brings virtual learning into the classroom for elementary and middle school students about Riverway biology, climate change, natural resources, and more.

Thanks to our generous supporters and sponsors of our mission, we are able to keep it FREE to all.

All sessions are recorded and free to use later on our Youtube!

Register Here:

<https://2025youthsummit.eventbrite.com>

ADVENTURES IN THE WATERSHED FOR YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS

WILD RIVER JOURNEY

Wild River Journey is a field trip for 4th-grade students in May to experience the awe and wonder of our incredible National Park on a historic riverboat. On board the boat, students rotate through three learning stations that raise their awareness of the cultural, historical, and natural significance of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.



Scheduling is first come, first served. Contact kschlicker@wildriversconservancy.org for more info.



EVERY KID OUTDOORS FOURTH GRADE NATIONAL PARK PASS

Fourth-grade teachers, your students are eligible to receive an Every Kid Outdoors Pass which gets them into National Parks and other Federal sites for free!

Talk to the Rangers at the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway to get yours today!

TEACHER WORKSHOPS

Our workshops allow teachers to expand their awareness of opportunities in the watershed and participate in RAA programs!

Paddles are fully supported with kayak, life jacket and paddle provided

Educators will earn CEUs.

SAVE THE DATES:

- 1.11.25 | MN National Treasures - MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge
- 7.24.25 | Summer Teacher Paddle - MN Interstate to Osceola Landing
- 9.20.25 | Fall Teacher Paddle - Earl Park to Trego Town Park Landing
- 12.13.25 | Winter Teacher Workshop - Osprey Wilds ELC



Learn more



PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Let's Go Birding (All Ages)

Available year round. The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is home to an amazing variety of birds from small colorful songbirds to large powerful raptors. Learning to use binoculars and identify common bird species are lifelong skills that students can use anytime of year and anywhere they go. Older students will learn about the Riverway's wide variety of protected habitats and environments that make it a uniquely rich birding corridor.

Let's Go Ice Fishing & Fishing (All Ages)

Available January - March (Ice Fishing) and April - October (Fishing). Learn about water safety in all seasons and how to set up for success when fishing in our lakes, streams, and rivers! Students will be able to put hooks in the water and try their hand, and patience, at catching fish.

Let's Go Mucking (All Ages)

Available April - October. Sometimes it's the smallest creatures in an ecosystem that tell us the most about its health. It doesn't get any more hands-on than mucking in the river for macroinvertebrates. In this class, students become biologists and use a variety of tools and materials to collect, observe and identify the tiny creatures that are big indicators of how healthy a body of water is.

Let's Go Snowshoeing (All Ages)

Available January - March. Winter is a cold and quiet time of the year, but animal life is active all winter long. Students will put on snowshoes and discover how rivers are alive, even in the winter, by searching for animal signs and learning animal tracking basics.

NPS Visitor Center

Scavenger Hunt and Film (All Ages)

We have a National Park right in our backyard! An interactive scavenger hunt during your field trip to the Namekagon or St. Croix Visitor Center will inspire your students to learn more about this incredible Riverway. Students will also view a short film that tells the story of the St. Croix and how it became designated as a Wild and Scenic River through the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS CONT.

Observation Olympics (Grades K-2)

Our eyes are not the only tool we can use to make observations of the natural world. We can use all five of our senses to experience and explore nature...and it can be fun! This fast paced, hands-on class makes observation fun. When we are actively observing like scientists, one could argue that observation could even be an Olympic sport!

Out of Place?

Intro to Aquatic Invasive Species (Grades 3-5)

Have you ever been the new kid and felt a little out of place? Sometimes in nature, animals and plants are introduced to an ecosystem where they are considered out of place, and they have to figure out a way to thrive and survive. And sometimes, those out of place animals and plants figure out a survival strategy that works too well and they make it hard for the animals and plants that have always lived in that ecosystem to survive. Students will participate in an interactive game to explore this idea.

River Connections in the Classroom (Grades K-5)

Rivers Are Alive! We can learn a lot by observing the animals that live near us, even if we are only observing animal objects. In this class, we will bring the river to your classroom. Students will step into the shoes of scientists and participate in observation, collaboration, and team teaching. Finally, they will discover the interconnectedness of a river ecosystem, in which humans are part of, by creating an ecosystem model.

Mussels Mania (All Ages)

We have muscles (strong, of course) and rivers have mussels; freshwater mussels! These bivalves remind us of oysters and clams, and North America has more than 300 species of freshwater mussels; more than anywhere else in the world. But what are these two-shelled organisms? Why are they so important to our ecosystem and how have they shaped the St. Croix River?

A Watershed in Jeopardy (Grades 6-12)

Invasive species may forever change the way we live our lives. From gardeners to hikers, farmers to landowners, humans are impacted by these fast-spreading species. Students will identify how terrestrial invasive species affect our economies and ecosystems, and the role we all can play to prevent their further spread through an engaging and interactive game of jeopardy.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS CONT.

What is a Watershed? (Grades 3-5)

The ponds, streams, creeks, rivers and lakes in our communities are full of life, and they are all connected to each other. Students will be introduced to watersheds by constructing their own watershed and experimenting with a watershed model. They will understand that we all live in a watershed and are connected by them, and how we care for the water in our communities can positively or negatively impact our downstream neighbors and the quality of water within a watershed.

DON'T SEE A TOPIC HERE?

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READY TO SCHEDULE

GET IN TOUCH



COMPLETE ONLINE REQUEST FORM

wildriversconservancy.org/learn-explore/rivers-are-alive/raa-program-info-request

PROGRAM COSTS

Suggested Donation:

- \$5 per student

Limited busing scholarships available!

Find additional information on our website:

wildriversconservancy.org/learn-explore/rivers-are-alive

Our Rivers Are Alive programming is made possible
with support from:

- National Park Foundation
- National Resources Foundation of Wisconsin
- National Park Trust
- National Park Service
- Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- St. Croix Valley Foundation
- Xcel Energy Foundation
- Pine County
- Andersen Windows
- Royal Credit Union
- Best Buy
- MidWest One Bank
- Le Chateau
- Taylors Falls Scenic Boat Tours
- Stillwater River Boats





“We can't thank you enough for the learning you facilitated with our students. We were all so impressed and the students were so engaged. We will definitely be contacting you next fall for a similar experience.

THANK YOU!”

– River Crest Elementary Teacher