



C.R.O.W. JOINT POWERS

306C Brighton Avenue • Buffalo, MN 55313 • Phone (763) 682-1933 ext. 3 • Fax: (763) 682-2903

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Diane Sander, Crow River Organization of Water

“Critters” in Jewitt’s Creek

There are many “critters” lurking in streams and rivers. While we typically associate fish, amphibians and reptiles with flowing water systems, there are a host of other organisms present in a stream if we just stop to take a closer look. Juniors and seniors in Mr. Rankin’s Environmental Science Class at Litchfield Senior High School took a closer look and discovered macroinvertebrates. Macroinvertebrates are animals without backbones and are large enough to be seen with the naked eye. Some examples of aquatic macroinvertebrates include dragonflies, caddiesflies, and stoneflies in their larval or nymph stage, along with worms, leeches, crayfish and snails.

These critters tell us a lot about the stream they are found in because they are affected by the physical, chemical and biological conditions of the stream. Different types of macroinvertebrates have different tolerance levels to pollution. Species intolerant (cannot handle) of pollution (e.g. Mayflies and Stoneflies) are an indicator of high water quality. Species tolerant (can handle) of pollution (e.g. Worms and Leeches) are an indicator of poor water quality. The Crow River Organization of Water (C.R.O.W.) started a Riverwatch Pilot Program with local schools located in the Crow River Watershed. Riverwatch programs are biological assessment programs that use macroinvertebrates to identify the impacts of pollution, water quality and determine a stream’s suitability for aquatic life. Riverwatch provides students with hands-on learning experience, outdoor learning, and an understanding of natural resources and water quality issues in their community. Mr. Rankin volunteered his class to participate in the Riverwatch program offered by the C.R.O.W.

The program kicked off with a water quality presentation given by Diane Sander from the C.R.O.W. Diane explained how macroinvertebrates play an important role in water quality and what students can do to help improve water quality in the Crow River Watershed. After many rain delays, Mr. Rankin’s class went to Jewitt’s Creek to conduct their macroinvertebrate sampling. Students collected samples and returned to the classroom for identification. Mr. Rankin’s class found the following organisms: mayflies, caddiesflies, leeches, worms, snails and a crayfish. Students enjoyed the experience and look forward in conducting further macroinvertebrate sampling in the fall of 2002/2003 school year.

Photo’s included: