

Lowrey 8th Grade Students Study Environmental Impacts of The Illinois River

The Illinois River is just 3 miles to the east of our school. Lowrey is in a rural area of NE Oklahoma and our local landowners are in the Illinois River Basin. Since the river has the Scenic River designation it has particular parameters to ensure the health of the river. Tourism is a large part of the local economy because of the river.

My students are very aware of Global and local impacts to the environment the part that humans play in that role both as enablers of the negative consequences and what role they can play in finding solutions to lessen human environmental impacts.

My students are now much more aware of their environment and the impact we have on it at the local level due to the studies and GLOBE protocols that we collect and analyze annually and daily. We also have completed some biological studies on the school campus on tree height, diameter, and canopy coverage. Plus we do atmosphere protocols each day.

The students were also interested in the flow rate study we conducted on the Illinois River. This is the only scenic river in this part of the state and Oklahoma has been suing Arkansas and their poultry operations for causing problems in the river, the river's source begins in NW Arkansas. Many of my students family depend on agriculture, poultry, and cattle for their income as well as some who own float trip operations, so there is a lot of tension on who is doing what to the river.

There seems to be a decrease in the macro population over the years, but I am not sure it is all due to the increased phosphorous levels, we had a record flood on the river in April and record drought this summer. So all in all the decrease is probably due to many factors including La Nina and Global Warming.

All the students had questions about what the number of macros had to do with the study of the environment which was a good teaching opportunity on the river and when we returned to class. We are going to do another macro count this spring and they are all excited about it. We will be doing pH and Dissolved O₂ studies also.

Students are all in 8th grade and graduated from Lowrey School on Thursday, May 3rd.

Students in video: Kyle Seals, Dylan Daniels, Mark Million, Tyler Hadden,

Kristen Jones, McKayla Sanders, Brittany Potter, Keri Bell, Destiny Grass,

Kaitlyn Trammel, Kallee Trammel, Samantha Asher. Teacher: Jeff Lawrence