

# My Trip to River Quest

By Lauren Johnson

On May 15, my class attended River Quest 2008. We had such a fun time exploring the St. Louis River by boat. We also had a very educational experience as well, by going to different stations spread out on the boat.

We learned a lot about water, the dangers of it, and the importance of keeping it clean. The stations that taught us about these things were the Coast Guard, WLSSD, the EPA, and the Sea Grant station. All of these stations were all talking about protecting our water, purifying it, and keeping dangers out and away.

At the Coast Guard station, we learned how they clean up an oil spill, why it is important to clean up an oil spill, and what to do if you see an oil spill. To clean up an oil spill, the coast guard blocks off the area that the oil is in to prevent it from spreading, then cleans it up by using these absorbent pads that only soak up oil, not water, then dispose of the pads in a special recycling plant. It is important to clean up an oil spill because oil spreads quickly and easily, and can greatly affect the environment by killing animals, and polluting the water. If you spot an oil spill, tell an adult, call 911, or call the coast guard.

While we were at the WLSSD station, we learned what happens to all of our waste water and who cleans it. It turns out that all of our waste water goes to a water treatment plant to get cleaned and sent back out to us again. The real workers who clean the water turned out to be a surprise to us. It is bacteria that clean our water!

At the EPA station we were taught about pollution and where it often ends up. Pollution on land often runs into rivers which run into lakes and important bodies of water such as Lake Superior. Even when you wash your car the chemicals run down the street and drain into a river, then to another body of water. Pollution is really dangerous to our environment, so don't cause it because we only have limited resources.

While visiting the Sea Grant station, my class learned about dangerous animals living in the water and why to keep them away. Dangerous animals include zebra mussels, who attach themselves to clams, and then the clams die and it brings the population of clams down. Goldfish can overpopulate too, so don't release your goldfish into a natural place because they can kill off other species by overpopulating.

My class had a wonderful time and a great adventure on River Quest and learned a lot of lessons about Lake Superior and the St. Louis River area. I learned many new things and now will be more respectful of nature and of my environment from now on.