



Friends of the St. Clair River
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NOAA B-WET Funded Project Will Help 350 Students Experience Watershed *Friends receives its first federal grant to launch a 5th grade watershed pen pal program*

Having been awarded competitive funding from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET), Friends of the St. Clair River (Friends) is launching a new educational program for fifth grade classrooms across St. Clair County called *St. Clair River Watershed Pen Pals: From Creeks to Coast*. This program aims to enrich teachers and students' learning opportunities about the Great Lakes using a modern twist on pen pal communication.

Fifth grade classrooms will be paired up across St. Clair County's seven watersheds to serve as their watershed pen pal. *Watershed Pen Pals* will provide teachers with free professional development training and empower students to create environmental action projects. Their experiences will culminate with a community-wide student summit to share what they learned. The project's partners include the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, St. Clair County Regional Education Service Agency, and Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity MiSTEM Region 6.

"It's fantastic to watch learning come to life when we use outdoor field experiences as classrooms," Melissa Kivel, Education Manager, said. "It's all about using community as context. We plant a seed with them when they're young that the environment is worth protecting."

"We are experiencing demand for our programs and to meet that demand we wanted to offer deeper learning for youth that fosters life-long environmental stewardship", said Sheri Faust, Executive Director. "We're using a Place-Based Education approach that builds off our successful decades-long Sturgeon Science School program."

NOAA B-WET is an environmental education program that promotes place-based learning for K-12 students and professional development for teachers. B-WET fosters the growth of new, innovative programs and encourages capacity-building and environmental education partnerships. The primary delivery of B-WET is through competitive grants that promote Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs). Read about NOAA B-WET at <http://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet>. Fifth grade teachers interested in learning about *Watershed Pen Pals* should contact Melissa Kivel, Friends Education Manager.

Friends of the St. Clair River is Michigan's Thumb Coast largest environmental organization committed to inspiring citizen action through stewardship, monitoring and education to restore, protect and enhance the St. Clair River and its watersheds. Visit us at www.scriver.org and "Friends of the St. Clair River" on social.

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