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## Highland middle schoolers work with DNR on field studies

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Highland Community Middle School students recently had the opportunity to work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource professionals and other local water experts, at Blackhawk Lake and Otter Creek, as part of their field studies program. The long term project is designed to introduce students to the fisheries and water quality science fields by providing a hands-on approach to learning scientific methods by collecting, transcribing and organizing data.

Groups rotated through different stations at Blackhawk Lake and downstream and upstream on Otter Creek. At Otter Creek, students assisted in conducting electrofishing surveys to assess the fish community. Students measured trout, with the longest reaching 15 inches long. For some students, this was the first time they had ever touched a fish. Students put on waders to enter the stream, and took measurements for flow, temperature, stream width, and dissolved oxygen. Water quality samples were also obtained. This station was led by Justin Haglund and Bradd Sims, Fisheries Biologists; Lloyd Meng, Cole Douglas, Mitchell Trow, Fisheries Technicians; and Kimberly Kuber, Water Resources Management Specialist.

Studies at Blackhawk Lake included a lesson and discussion on native and invasive species. Julie Benzschawel, Water Resources Management Specialist, and Matt Wallrath, Invasive Species Project Coordinator (Upper Sugar River Watershed Association) demonstrated how students can be part of the clean waters' movement by informing the public about transporting organisms from lake to lake. Students were able to "throw the rake," to gather samples for an aquatic plant inventory. Donna Sefton, Clean Lakes water quality monitor, and Sue Graham, Water Resources Management Specialist, led students through stations where they used secchi disks to determine the turbidity of the water. Students also collected water samples using homemade gear.

Ten lucky students had the chance to go out on a pontoon and collect water samples in the middle of Blackhawk Lake. These samples, along with those collected from Otter Creek, have been sent to the State Hygiene Lab for testing. When the results are in, Justin Haglund will share and analyze the data with the Highland students.

The hope is that this project will continue over the next 10 years and allow for the analysis of long term fishery and water quality trends in the Otter Creek Watershed. Highland Middle School students will also participate in the Trout in the Classroom program where they will raise trout in the classroom and stock them in Otter Creek this spring. They will potentially recapture some of the same fish during the fall surveys. These opportunities provide Highland students with hands-on learning, while opening their eyes to career opportunities in the field of natural resources. This project was made possible through the help and support of Justin Haglund, DNR professional and organizer of the project, the Highland Community Middle School staff, and the team of experts.

### News

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- Dodgeville board issues preliminary non-renewal notice
- Barneveld approves open enrollment numbers for next school year
- Sexual assault, meth distribution, etc. charges filed
- IG School Board Approves Engineering Bid, Caps Two Open Enrollment Sections
- Highland Board of Education hires Bryce Bird as new district administrator, Hendrickson to retire at the end of June



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