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# NEWS RELEASE

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## Students Explore Catfish Creek Watershed Through Game, Field Trips

DUBUQUE, Iowa – Over the next two weeks, sixth graders from Dubuque’s Washington Middle School will have a literal “watershed moment” when they participate in field trips to a local park to apply what they have learned through “The Watershed Game.”

The 46,300 acre area of land known as the Catfish Creek Watershed encompasses more than one quarter of the city of Dubuque and supports a diverse set of plants and animals, but remains threatened by large amounts of soil and nutrients entering the water from both urban and agricultural runoff. As part of an educational outreach initiative, affiliates from the Catfish Creek Watershed Management Authority and the City of Dubuque are engaging local students on water quality, pollution, and preservation of the watershed.

In February 2014, sixth-grade classes at Washington Middle School served as a pilot for an educational outreach program led by Dean Mattoon, Engineering Assistant for the City of Dubuque, and Eric Schmechel, Urban Conservationist for Dubuque County Soil and Water Conservation District. Mattoon and Schmechel introduced the students to “The Watershed Game,” an interactive tool and exercise that helps individuals understand the connection between land use and water quality and learn how their choices can prevent adverse impacts. On Friday morning, May 2, and Friday morning, May 16, Mattoon, Schmechel, and staff from Washington Middle School will take the sixth graders to Bergfeld Pond in Dubuque for on-site learning.

“The game is a great way to raise awareness on the health of a watershed, improving water quality, the importance of coming together towards a common goal, and the practices you can implement to achieve those goals,” said Mattoon. “Now that the kids have learned what a watershed is, our goal is to take them out so they can implement what they learned back in February.”

Students will be divided up into three groups; one group performing trash clean-up, another monitoring water quality, and another hiking around the location and writing poetry about the experience.

For information about educational outreach programs on the Catfish Creek Watershed, contact Dean Mattoon at 563-690-6116 or [dmattoon@cityofdubuque.org](mailto:dmattoon@cityofdubuque.org). For information on The Watershed Game, visit [www.northlandnemo.org/watershedgame.html](http://www.northlandnemo.org/watershedgame.html).

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