

Wiscasset Middle School: Sheepscot River Study

Inspired by her experiences with *VitalVenture* and *Vital Signs*, Sue engaged her colleagues – Cheryle Joslyn (language arts) and Donna Barnes (art) – and their 8th grade students with a year-long, integrated study of the Sheepscot River. Their learning goals include:

- Understanding the Sheepscot watershed
- Becoming stewards of the river for a sustainable future
- Understanding how the river has impacted their community

Through science, art, literature, history, writing, and technology Wiscasset students are actively exploring and understanding their watershed in meaningful ways. Key components of their Watershed Experience are detailed below:

Exploring Clam Flats



Wiscasset 8th grade students experience clamming firsthand.

To kick off their Watershed Experience, Sue took her students clamming. To assist with their experience, Sue brought in community members Cindy Collamore (Maine Clammers Association and registered Maine clammer) and Officer Jon Hentz (Shellfish Warden). Students learned about clamming regulations, licensing, conservation efforts, and a great deal about the hard work of clamming. In the spring they will return to the clam flats to help with annual reseeded efforts.

Investigating the River

In the fall, students traveled the full length of the Sheepscot River (via bus) from Wiscasset Middle School up to the Sheepscot's headwaters at Sheepscot Lake in Palermo. Again, Sue tapped community resources to bring context and relevance to their investigation:

- Jamie Bray, Culture Supervisor for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, led students on a tour of the Palermo Rearing Station to understand how the river is used to raise trout for Maine's fish stocking program
- Tish Carr from the Sheepscot Valley Conservation Association spoke to students about the association's mission



Students use a 1m² quadrat to study stream biodiversity.

Students then investigated one of 4 study sites along the river. Students used scientific tools and methods to collect information about the stream's biodiversity, physical characteristics, geography, chemistry, and geology. Their data and results are publicly available in the *Vital Signs* database.

In the winter, their investigation will continue with the focus turned toward their community. They will interview Wiscasset watershed residents who have a direct connection to the river. The more they learn about their own backyard from various perspectives, the more likely they will be to care for it today and in the future.

Sharing Their Results

Students are documenting their year-long river study using journals, photos, and video. In the spring they will create a multimedia school webpage and CD about the Sheepscot River. They will share their webpage and CD with local residents and more broadly with the [Vital Signs](#) community.