"The Land and Water Connection"

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The Land & Water Connection 2010

The Dorchester Soil Conservation District is coordinating the "Land and Water Connection" program for teachers and middle school students from all nine Eastern Shore counties. This week long residential program for students also serves as an in service program for teachers. Students and teachers learn together about the natural and political processes that impact the Chesapeake Bay Watershed through field experiences and simulations. Experience and knowledge acquired through this project help students gain personal confidence to enable them to meet the challenges that affect our aquatic environment. Both teachers and students are expected to become aware of the many factors affecting the management of the Chesapeake Bay and teachers are expected to bring these into focus in their classrooms.

The curriculum unit used is designed to examine the management of the threatened and complex environmental system of the Chesapeake Bay. Students are introduced to the historical and ecological significance of the Chesapeake Bay region and participate in a Bay Interest Group (BIG) conference simulation. Students will assume roles to identify Bay issues, develop public policies and judge the environmental impact of the policies.

Teachers and students will be involved in a variety of field experiences such as:

- soil pit study
- marsh soil investigation
- water monitoring (turbidity, dissolved oxygen, salinity, phosphorous)
- health of aquatic vegetation and marine life
- recycling, pollution, and sewage treatment
- aquatic life cycles, hatchery tour (oysters and striped bass)
- skipjack trip studying aquatic organisms, water quality, oyster history and navigation
- forestry management, selective harvest techniques
- wildlife habitat walks and ID's
- night habitat and awareness walk

Objectives:

Learn about the key economic, political, social, biological, and physical factors and interactions associated with the Chesapeake Bay and surrounding region.

Describe the competing and conflicting pattern of issues surrounding the environments and people of the Bay area.

Develop critical thinking skills for solving problems facing the Bay by participating in a simulation where each student will:

a) Assume a given role and research the concerns relevant to the role;
b) Meet in interest groups to identify shared concerns;
c) Negotiate and bargain to select Bay environmental issues for further study;
d) Research, write, and present policy options for the environmental issues chosen;
e) Determine the impact of each policy option on the environment and the people of the Bay area.
f) Experience ways to monitor and improve the quality of the environment
g) Have Fun!