Solano County high school students wade into local creeks for hand-on watershed science lessons

Juniors and seniors are helping gather biological and chemical samples to help the Solano Resource Conservation District keep track of the region's watershed health.

KCRA 3

Updated: 7:55 PM PDT Apr 21, 2023

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This month, environmental science students in Solano County high schools are getting out of the classroom and into their local creeks and streams. Literally.

These "biomonitoring field trips" are part of a partnership with the Solano Resource Conservation District, a group dedicated to environmental wellbeing through student engagement.

“The RCD has education programs that have been around since the mid-2000s,” said Solano RCD Education Program Manager Shea Kinser.

During a Friday field trip to Union Avenue Creek in Fairfield, Fairfield High School juniors and seniors helped gather samples to study the water's chemistry and biology.

By recording things like nitrogen levels and noting different bug species they find, students got a hands-on lesson in ecological health.

"If the creek is unhealthy then the drinking water that you have is unhealthy,” said Fox, one of about two dozen students who donned hip waders and long gloves before getting into the water.

For Fox and his fellow classmates, this is a one-of-a-kind experience.

“We want to bring kids outside here in Solano County and get them exposed to the amazing open spaces that we have,” Kinser said.

Kinser hopes that students gain an appreciation for the fragility and importance of their local environment.

But beyond that, results from each Solano County environmental science excursion will contribute to a larger study run by Dr. Patrick Edwards at Portland State University.

“He helps analyze the data and presents it to the Vallejo Watershed Alliance among other interested partners around the county,” said Kinser.

High schoolers are actively participating in protecting their watershed and building resume experience.

According to Kinser, the data gathered from over 15 years of field trips shows that creeks in Solano County have been getting healthier thanks in part to more community awareness of the dangers of pollution.

“Water is such a precious resource and we want to make sure that students know as they learn and grow throughout their lives, how to protect those water resources,” Kinser said.

Video: https://www.kcra.com/article/solano-county-high-school-students-wade-local-creeks-science/43672428