

Fishing and River Fishery Stewardship

The use of leisure time with family and friends is important for socialization in a society that is becoming more technologically orientated. During the leisure experiences, there is often the opportunity to educate individuals about their environment and communities' natural resources. The



Recreation Leadership and Management program at Ferris State University works with students to help them develop as professionals in the field of leisure services and recreation. The academic course work incorporates the planning of leisure activities to address issues of community socialization, environmental awareness and healthy lifestyles. FSU students gain experience and application through service-learning projects in the community.

In May 2006 and continuing through the fall semester, the students in one of the service-learning projects of the RLM program are using fishing experiences to educate youth and adults about the river fishery and its value as a natural resource through a fishing leisure experience. To date, the project has served 30 youth ages 6-14 from Big Brothers Big Sisters, Girl Scouts, the Ferris Minority Affairs' King-Chavez Summer Camp program. The equipment was loaned for use in a student fund raiser Catch a Fish, Make-A-Wish fishing tournament, organized by the Ferris State University Stars student organization in June. Families fishing together and first time fishing experiences for children were part of the day. Tournament dollars were donated to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

The RLM program used Michigan Campus Compact Venture Grant funding to purchase fishing poles and to create teaching tools and visuals. The grant allowed RLM student Dane Williams to present a two hour program to the youth groups on the ecosystem of a fishery in the Muskegon River that runs through the Big Rapids community. Dane discussed with the youth what types of animals and plants live in the river ecosystem, types of interdependency of the food chain, how fish fit into the food chain system, the impact on the fishery by humans, and what can we do to protect the fishery. The youth were also provided instruction in casting through a game challenge on dry land, followed by the opportunity to fish using different types of lures and live bait that substitute or replicate the types of foods different fish eat in the local river system.



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