



THE ALPENA NEWS

NorthEastern Michigan's Newspaper

113TH YEAR

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2011

2 SECTIONS - 50 CENTS

Today's weather

Mostly cloudy

High: 50 Low: 40

30 percent chance of rain. Forecast, 8A.



WHAT'S UP? A-OK

Looking for something to do? Weekly Calendar of Events. 6A.



ALL SET

Texas, St. Louis ready to square off in World Series. 1B.

Negwegon field trip begins ecotourism projects in Alcona

BY ANDREW WESTROPE

News Staff Writer

BLACK RIVER — Alcona Middle School and High School students started laying the groundwork for future ecotourism projects, in partnership with DNR parks, with a field trip to Negwegon State Park on Friday.

About 60 students from Christie Thomas' eighth grade English language arts class and 30 from Brian Matchett's ninth-12th grade environmental science and plant biology classes met with Park Manager Eric Osterlander and explored the park's habitats and organisms. Their tour included input from local experts on invasive species, threatened and endangered species, soils and beach habitats, indigenous plants, and other facets of the park's ecosystem. MSU Extension District Educator Brandon Schroeder said the informative visit was only the first stage of more ambitious student projects to come.



Courtesy Photo
Alcona students learn about ecology of coastal dune-swale habitats from Jack Guy, volunteer educator from Sprinkler Lake Education Center.

gon State Park."

Alcona is a partner to the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, a regional partnership of agencies and schools that promotes place-based education and hands-on learning to help students get involved with environmental stewardship and community service projects. In this case, the middle school students' writing projects may be turned into educational materials for use by park staff to promote the property, and the high school students want to make an interpretive guided native plants trail through the park. Schroeder said that in addition to the fact research supports the efficacy of place-based education, the partnership between the schools and parks is mutually beneficial in several ways.

"There's this value of kids interacting with natural resources that are local to them. We talk about maybe protecting a rain forest, but it's more exciting to talk about protecting natural resources that are right in our

own back yard," he said. "The kids are going to be learning environmental science whether they do it through textbooks or field trips, and because they're learning about these environmental science topics, they're experts in their own right, so the parks may be short-staffed in terms of park interpreters, but now they've got 26 environmental science students or 60 middle school students that can basically become volunteer park interpreters through their learning."

Schroeder said students are gaining valuable life skills and interacting with natural resources and community partners in Alcona County. By coordinating these opportunities with the parks, he said, they're asserting themselves in community development opportunities, and they're enhancing their own community.

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and the uniqueness of the natural resources in their own backyard, then in their learning through the rest of the year they may be taking on projects in cooperation with DNR parks and the Friends of Negwegon State Park ... Both groups may go back at different points of the year as they dive into their project, so this is kind of an introduction to get them excited about Negwegon-

learn a bit about the property