



# Students study health of watershed

By **CRYSTAL NELSON**

News Staff Writer

Sanborn School sixth-graders traveled to Island Mill Park Wednesday afternoon to check the health of the Thunder Bay watershed. The trip was part of a project Bob Thomson's class has been working on to create a database to monitor all of the watershed.

Students were looking at macroinvertebrates and abiotic factors of the water.

"The kids look at the types of macroinvertebrates that are in the water and what types are in the water gives us an indication of how healthy the water is," he said.

Sixth-graders also were able to operate Thomson's underwater remote operated vehicle to get video of the river bottom and check for zebra mussels.

Thomson said he thinks the project is fantastic. He said there are all kinds of agencies, like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Natural Resources that have been helping them along the way that he didn't take advantage of except as a speaker in the classroom.

"Now the kids are out here working with biologists and so it really makes them think that we are doing something serious," he said. Thomson said that's why



Students from Bob Thomson's sixth grade class at Sanborn School listen to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Angle Bowen before looking for macroinvertebrates. Looking for macroinvertebrates was just one way the students were able to gauge the health of the Thunder Bay River Wednesday afternoon.

his class has started its own Web site, [www.thunderbayriverwatershedproject.org](http://www.thunderbayriverwatershedproject.org), dedicated to the project and publishing their data.

"We're hoping that eventually we can pull in other

teachers around the area, along the Thunder Bay watershed to help us," he said.

Thomson's class at Sanborn is one of the first five schools selected locally to participate and benefit from

a new mini-grant program managed through the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan, according to Brandon Schroeder, Northeast Michigan Sea Grant Extension Educator.

The grant program is part of a new regional hub supported by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust's Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, according to Michigan Sea Grant. This northeast hub,

which is one of seven educational hubs in Michigan, recently received \$200,000 from the Fishery Trust.

The grant included teachers in the Alpena - Montmorency - Alcona Educational Service District and the Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Educational Service District.

Schroeder said the funds support school-based programming - getting funds directly into the hands of teachers working with students to develop these projects; providing professional development opportunities to support educators engaged in these efforts; and school and community partnerships - engaging schools directly with community partners and community benefiting projects. He said they're not just learning projects, but projects that are enhancing community and environment.

The next request for proposals and opportunity for educators to apply for funds will be announced in early December with the projects to be selected in January, according to Schroeder. In the meantime, he said there are many professional development opportunities open to any educators from our region interested in this initiative.

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