

During our Rivers to Reef program, we participated in a deployment of a trawling net. After this net trailed the boat for 15 minutes, we were able to meet some of the creatures that were in the river. Cathy Sakas walked us through more of the details of these animals and plants, giving us a greater understanding of their purpose in the ecosystem.

When it comes to a classroom setting, there are so many ways that K-12 kids can get involved and have a better understanding of marine biology as it relates to Georgia and the Atlantic. To start this lesson, I would pull in a hands-on activity to help them understand how our watershed ultimately connects to the ocean. I would like to rent an Enviroscape from the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream. These are interactive watershed models, mostly used to show water pollution, which could also help them grasp the bigger picture of what they do affects even the animals and plants. This can be done by using a bit of paper, markers and spray bottles of water. In groups they can create hills/valleys and draw out a river. By spraying the paper, they can see how water will travel through the terrain to a watershed. We can then discuss how this would look in our city. This would be a good spot to also open the conversation on how indigenous people would have used the waterways and how it would affect their culture.

From there I can add instruction in the class on what kind of flora and fauna they could find in our local waterways. It will be important to show how these flora and fauna impact our ocean, through it being a watershed. Discuss why it might look different from the flora and fauna in our ocean. If possible, it would be helpful to take samples from our waterway, so that they have the opportunity to see it in a classroom setting. I can include fast facts about these creatures or plants to help the students remember them.

Due to the number of waterways near us, I believe that taking on an adopt a stream project through the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream. It would be a great way to conclude the lessons on rivers to reef as it pertains to marine biology. Once I complete the volunteer training, I will begin monitoring for myself using their manuals. From there, I would like to use the data I collect to bring in the classroom to show them how to do it. Another option would be to bring out a local representative to do a workshop in class. For those who participate in being a citizen scientist, I plan to offer extra credit.

It is so important for our local youth to have a better understanding of the flora and fauna in our waterways, as well as the oceans. All things lead to the sea. A lot of what they do directly impacts the creatures and plants that they have now learned about and studied. The Rivers to Reef workshop was a great place for hands-on learning for educators to bring back important information for their students.

Elspeth Pirrie

