

RL3

WHAT IS RIVER-LAB?

- River-Lab is a science-based environmental studies curriculum which teaches all Fairfield public and parochial school students Grades 3-6 about the river basin structure of the Earth.
- The River-Lab program makes up one-third of the Fairfield school system's science curriculum and meets CMT requirements.
- Classroom teaching is reinforced by study-trips to the Mill River and town estuaries for over 3,500 students each year.
- These study-trips are organized and run by the Mill River Wetland Study Group. This arm of the non-profit Mill River Wetland Committee (MRWC) has supplied environmental science curriculum to Fairfield school students since 1969.
- Each study-trip is led by trained volunteer guides. River-Lab trains over 150 guides annually.
- MRWC encourages community commitment to protect rivers and the environment.

River-Lab Grade 3: “The Living River Basin System”

This unit introduces the students to the River-Lab program and the concept that the entire Earth’s surface is composed of river basin systems. Through classroom activities, students learn that the water cycle operates the river basin systems, that the work of flowing water creates soil and habitats, and that organisms are adapted to survive in specific habitats.

On the 3rd grade study-trip to the Mill River Open Space, guides help the students build a model river. They also explore the river basin system to observe different habitat areas, examining such factors as water depth, current speed, light, and river bottom material.

The 3rd grade study-trip is designed to reinforce learning about:

- the work of the river: eroding, sorting and depositing different soils
- how this work creates different habitats on the floodplain and in the river
- who some of the plant and animal inhabitants are
- how organisms contribute to the river basin system