

RL4

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 supports 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 4 COURSE CONCEPT

A Basin in Balance

The 4th grade unit, A Basin in Balance, focuses on the role of the underground water system and its role in the river basin system. The unit builds on the River-Lab course from Grade 3, in which students studied the parts and functions of a river basin system, and how it creates habitats which support organisms. The students learn that all land on earth is part of a river basin system.

Power point slides, a student reference book, and inquiry-based lessons are used in the classroom to teach the role of the water cycle in river basin dynamics, the formation of rivers and the underground water system, and the role of water in changing the land. Students develop an understanding that the underground water system is essential in sustaining the web of life in a river basin. Students will be engaged in discussions of our management of the environment in a river basin system, and how human's impact along with natural phenomena effect life in a river basin system.

On the study-trip students develop a model of the underground water system to investigate how it works and how it is connected to the surface water system. Guides lead students to examine habitat factors that either help or hinder water as it is absorbed into the underground system. Students develop their science skills as they observe and record information along the trail points.