

Interview

Mare Cromwell, Program Director Global Rivers Environmental Education Network

The Global Rivers Environmental Education Network (GREEN) is one of the many environmental projects which benefit from NELC Clean Water Act litigation.

NELC: How and why did GREEN begin?

Mare Cromwell: GREEN began in early 1989, when our director Bill Stapp was working with a team of graduate students at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Bill had a vision of water-monitoring work being done by high school and college students through an international network, and he, along with his students, developed a basic field manual for water monitoring. In the summer of 89, after logistical legwork had been completed, GREEN was born through 22 different, 3-day workshops in 18 countries.

NELC: Why was water-monitoring chosen instead of a different project?

MC: Water is of the utmost importance to our survival on this planet. Yet the uncertain quality of our waters threatens the health of 70 percent of all people. GREEN emerged from a recognition that our planetary well-being depends upon the quality of this shared resource.

NELC: How does GREEN work?

MC: GREEN provides a

means for the exchange of data, information and ideas, between people interested in studying and improving local and global water quality, through hands-on monitoring and local problem-solving. Students study local rivers chemically, biologically and physically, collecting data to identify water-quality issues.

Students also discover how personal behavior impacts water quality. Schools around the world are linked through newsletters, sister watershed exchanges, and in some cases, computers. Experts are consulted to help explore solutions, and students learn from the actions of other communities around the globe.

NELC: What happens to funds raised for your program from Clean Water Act lawsuits like the Mueller Brass settlement, where the company will pay a \$2 million penalty for polluting the Black River with millions of gallons of contaminated wastewater?

MC: The funds we receive from NELC litigation go directly back into the area which was affected by the pollution. Because the polluter from this case is located in Port Huron, MI, the money we received supports our Port Huron testing program. Teachers and their students from the Port Huron School system will test for heavy metals, bacteria and runoff in the highly polluted Black River.



The need for community awareness and concern in cleanup efforts gives this project a real sense of being part of a community effort.

NELC: What does GREEN offer to students?

MC: Well, students today are very concerned about the environment, and they feel helpless because they don't know where to start with these overwhelming problems. The water-monitoring project gives them hands-on experience, which helps them develop good skills, and it also provides them with the ability to research the solutions which can occur. But this program really moves students beyond environmental awareness to empowerment.

GREEN helps empower them to understand the problem, and find solutions, which makes them very beneficial assets to their local and global communities. ♦

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For more information about GREEN, contact them directly at: The Green Project, School of Natural Resources, University of Michigan, 430 East University, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48109, (313) 764-5171.