TOPIC:
Team-building, Mission-building, Background research

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will get acquainted with their co-participants.
- Through small risks, students will begin to trust each other.
- Students will identify water quality problems in a watershed.
- Students will understand how different specialists work with issues, and how to access those people.
- Students will identify a project to complete.

LENGTH:
A few hours to 3 days

ENVIRONMENT:
Outdoors in a wilderness setting.

MATERIALS:
- Access to a wilderness trail or boating area.
- Access to camping and tripping equipment.
- Disposable cameras for all students.
- Van or other transportation off-site travel and gear movement.
- Permission forms and supply lists for each student participating on the trip.
- A trained and certified trip leader.

Observation and Adventure Trip

Background:
This activity serves multiple purposes, and may be a high point for many participants. The adventure trip is central to the lesson, and may stand alone as a capstone experience for students who have developed a strong team identity. In this case, however, the trip is augmented with self-directed identification of environmental stewardship needs, and meetings with natural resource professionals who deal with these issues. At the conclusion of the activity, students employ their experience and new-found knowledge to select a service project. Thus, this activity provides an effective bridge between team and mission-building and project implementation.

Activity Outline:
Choosing an Adventure:
Depending on popularity of campgrounds, trails and waterways in the area, efforts should be made to plan the trip months in advance of the leave date. Determine the length of program, and overnight accommodation needs. For most groups, plan to cover a novice distance on trail or water (usually 5 to 10 miles). Contact staff from the Department of Natural Resources, National Forests, Parks and Recreation Departments and outfitters for help in selecting an appropriate location.

Because of the risks inherent to an adventure trip, safe facilitation requires specialized training and experience. Due to these concerns, a professional outfitter should be contracted to lead the trip. Use the following guidelines when sub-contracting a group:
- Meet with the outfitter. Ask staff to describe how their trips operate.
- Ask about their safe operating procedures. Ask to see risk management policies, emergency response plans, forms, etc.
- Ask about their staff qualification standards. How are they hired and trained? Can they effectively deal with an emergency?
- Discuss their experience in dealing with groups similar to yours. What special considerations do they identify? How will they handle these?
- Make sure that they are willing to hear and respond to safety and education concerns of their groups.
- Ask about their expectations of the participating group. How many chaperones are required? What items will they provide for participants (i.e., lifejackets, paddles, backpacks, tents, etc.)? Will you be responsible for meal planning and preparation? Etc.

Permission and Preparation:
Follow facility guidelines and timelines for securing transportation to the site. Before departing on the trip, make sure that all participants also have a permission slip signed by a legal guardian. This form should conform to any safety needs expressed by trip leaders. It should 1) clearly communicate all risks associated with the activity, and 2) solicit any health conditions that might bar a participant from safely participating.

Students need to dress for the weather forecasted on the trip dates. Prepare a packing list, including items to bring and those to leave at home. Cover trip specifics like where bathrooms and phones will be located, what the landscape will be like, what they will eat, etc. Make sure that all students have this information at least two-weeks prior to the trip. Pre-trip meetings are a good means of disseminating and discussing this information. Trip leaders should be contacted 1-week prior to the arrival date to confirm procedures, times, concerns, etc.

Finding Presenters:
Once a location and trip length have been determined, natural resource professionals should be identified and contacted about presenting to students about their jobs and understanding of environmental stewardship in the area. Consider contacting staff from the University Extension Service, Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency, City Environmental Services, other public and private organizations dealing with environmental restoration. Present them with a choice of two or three specific timeslots during your trip, and a preferred length and topic of presentation. Before the trip, along the trail at an access point, in the canoe, at a lunch stop, at the evening campsite, etc. are all good locations to plan presentations for students. Work with your trip leaders to identify workable presentation locations.

Trip Itinerary:
A reputable outfitter will take care of most trip planning details. However, the unique details of this activity require cooperation of facilitators. Make sure that the trip leaders understand the educational mission of the trip. Plan extra time for exploration and interpretation along the route. Make sure that the group will arrive at presentation spots on time, and that a representative will be able to meet the presenter ahead of time.

It may be helpful to camp and dine in locations accessible by van. In this case, students need to carry nothing but education supplies, snacks, and extra clothing on the trip. The van can ferry all food and camping equipment ahead for setup before group arrival. Lunches can be prepared, camp set-up, and presenters greeted while the group is enroute.

Both parents and students should be provided a detailed itinerary ideally at the same time that they receive their packing list and permission forms. It should contain contact information for all points on the trip where students may receive emergency information.

Adventuring and Observing:
Upon arrival at the trip location, provide students a few minutes to explore and get used to their surroundings. Once the novelty of the setting has diminished, ask students to gather for directions. Introduce trip leaders, and allow them to discuss rules and expectations. Review the agenda and answer questions. Rather than hosting a presentation or education activity at this point in the trip, harness students' excitement and head out. Spend time chatting with students, singing songs, sucking deep breaths, savoring the freedom of the adventure.

Plan an initial stop an hour or so into the trip. This is a good point for adjustment, answering new questions, and even hosting the first presentation if possible. It is also an ideal time to discuss the educational purpose of the adventure. This trip isn't just about getting out, and celebrating good team-work and fun. While those are a part of the adventure, students are also going to learn about and critically examine the area for possible service projects. Ask them to brainstorm things they might see that would signify damage to the environment. Explain that in accord with presentations students will also be expected to seek out and catalogue these signs of damage. Provide each with a camera. When students see any sign of environmental damage that might be interesting to adopt as a stewardship project, they should snap a picture. Later, the group will examine these pictures to pick a project focus. Remind students that they only get 1 camera, and 12, 24, or 36 pictures. They should try to reserve film for pictures throughout the trip. Don't take them all of friends along the trail.

Answer any additional questions, and head out again, snapping pictures along the way. Keep a careful watch on time, so that the group arrives promptly for presentations and meals. It may be advantageous to collect cameras at the end of each day to mitigate midnight flashes, crushed cameras, etc.

At the end of the trip, ask students to gather for concluding remarks. As a group, thank the trip leaders for their vigilance and hard work. Allow them to congratulate the students, etc. Recall the goals of the trip. Ask students to relate what they have learned along the adventure in regard to 1) teamwork, 2) the environment, and 3) possible service projects. Remind students that they will soon gather to look over the developed pictures

and choose a service project. Finally, ask students to write their names on their cameras, and collect them. Give a cheer for the successful trip.

Choosing a Project:
When dropping off the film for processing, ask the developer to clearly mark the name of the student from the camera on the film envelope. This will make identification of owners much easier. In preparing pictures for discussion, simply mark the owners' initials on the back of each picture in the envelope. Then, the shots can be mixed up, moved around, traded, etc. without losing to whom they belong.

Spread the environmental photos on tables, floors or other areas in a way that allows easy access and movement of student perusing them. Mark each with a number for identification. Place personal photos in a similar fashon elsewhere.

Gather students for the activity. Remind them of the focus and pictures taken during the trip. To mitigate concerns, explain briefly how ownership has been labeled and preserved. Students do not have to worry getting their picture back at the conclusion of the activity. Instead, they should scrutinize carefully all of the environmental photos laid out for possible projects. Considering their experience on the trip and lessons learned from presenters, they must critically consider the feasibility, time-requirements, etc. of any problem accepted for service. As a group, brainstorm things that students should consider when looking over the pictures. Then, set students free for 30-40 minutes to look over the pictures, devising solutions to some of the problems. Gather again to discuss these proposed solutions. Weed out any problems that will not be feasible to solve under the constraints of the project. Finally, ask students to re-visit the pictures and find an interesting project. Have them to list their top 3-5 choices by identification number on a piece of paper.

When students have finished making their choices, gather and tally the votes. The project with the most votes represents the popular choice. However, take a moment before certifying this as the official service project to again re-visit feasibility. Will students succeed at the project? How will the problem be solved? Once these questions are legitimately answered, the project is accepted. Congratulate the group on a fine job.

Then, take some time to peruse the personal photos, recalling fun on the adventure.

References:

Submitted by Regional Extension Educator, Amy RB Rager based on her experience in The Minnesota River Adventurers program.
Safety Guidelines adapted from:
Wade, I. (2001). *Subcontracting for Adventure Programs*. Downloaded 7.12.06 from www.adventuresafety.org.

Observation and Adventure Trip

Sample Letter to Students

The following letter is adapted from the Minnesota River Adventures Program for a group canoe trip:

Dear Adventurers:

Greetings I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying the season. We are all ready for you to come on the Adventure with us. We will be leaving at 10:00am from _____. This is located _____.

Each person needs to bring clothing for outdoors (see enclosed list), sleeping bag, bug spray, sun screen, toiletries, towel, life jacket (we will have extras if you don't have one) notebook, pen/pencil and health card. You will need to have a metal pie tin and metal silverware labeled with masking tape and your name. You also need a reuseable plastic glass. We will be camping out 2 nights. The first night we will be at _____ and the second night we will be at _____. There is running water and showers at each campsite. Each team needs to provide enough tents for their members, so be sure and talk to your classroom teacher and see who needs to bring tents. We will canoe several lengths each day with some shuttling in between. We will have ground support to bring our gear from site to site, so that we will not have to have the camping stuff in the canoes. Pack as lightly as possible-this means that you are allowed one duffel bag to have your stuff in, plus your sleeping bag, and life jacket.

Remember the purpose of this trip is to gain an understanding of what a watershed is. We will be in the _____ watershed. As we travel down the river, various experts will talk with us about many related topics. These experts will help to give your team a taste of what kind of project you would like to design.

We will complete the trip at 11:00am on _____ at _____. We will then shuttle canoeists and boats back to _____ to be picked up or to get cars.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the _____ at _____.

See you at the River!

Amy RB Rager
Extension Educator
Environment & Natural Resources

Enc.: maps, clothing list

Observation and Adventure Trip

Student Packing Checklist

The following letter is adapted from the Minnesota River Adventures Program for a summer group canoe trip:

Clothing

- ❑ Wind breaker/light jacket
- ❑ Nylon pants
- ❑ 2-3 pair of shorts
- ❑ socks
- ❑ shoes that can get wet-(not flip-flops-they must tie, buckle or Velcro)
- ❑ underwear
- ❑ 2-3 t-shirts
- ❑ 1 Sweatshirt
- ❑ 1 pair pants
- ❑ Swimsuit
- ❑ hat
- ❑ towel
- ❑ Toiletries-Toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, etc. (no make-up, curling irons, blow dryers)

Note: jeans are not the best pants to wear canoeing, as if they get wet, they are very heavy and uncomfortable. Nylon pants (like the running pants) are the best they dry quickly and are not heavy even if they are wet. Cotton pants are okay too.

Other Items to Bring

- ❑ sunscreen
- ❑ bug spray
- ❑ health card
- ❑ notebook
- ❑ pen/pencil
- ❑ Life Jacket
- ❑ Metal Pie Tin
- ❑ Silver Ware
- ❑ Plastic Glass
- ❑ SMILE