

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

WHERE DOES THE WATER GO AFTER SCHOOL?

Conducted by: The Children's Museum of Denver
 Project Partners: Amesse Elementary School, Laredo Elementary School, McGlone Elementary School, Smith Renaissance School of the Arts
 Contract Period: 1998-1999
 NPS Funding: \$65,557
 Matching Funds: \$44,429

Unique in its target audience, the Children's Museum of Denver spearheaded a nonpoint water source pollution education project, which reached more than 2,500 K-2 students and their teachers.

Teachers Debbie Livingston and Sarah Mooney collaborated with Sarah Brown Mathews of the Children's Museum to develop the curriculum that was utilized for this program. They drew upon a variety of existing materials and correlated them to Colorado Model Content Standards.

A three-day teacher workshop was held on two occasions to educate and prepare teachers for the upcoming activities for their students.

Each teacher received printed material including curriculum materials and an evaluation form. Guest speakers for the event,

which was held at the Children's Museum, included representatives from the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, Colorado Foundation for Agriculture, Denver Regional Council of Governments, Colorado Department of Transportation, the Friends of Bluff Lake and the University of Northern Colorado.

The workshops also included a visit to Bluff Lake and the museum exhibit "We All Live Downstream." The 123-acre Bluff Lake Natural Area site consists of a sheltered lake basin and riparian corridor surrounded by upland bluffs. During the late 19th century Bluff Lake was likely constructed to store irrigation water for agricultural activities on the plains east of Denver. The Bluff Lake basin lies in a natural meander of Sand Creek, a tributary of the South Platte near the former

Denver Stapleton International airport.

At the end of three days, teachers were prepared to teach the curricula and to guide the class field trips. In evaluations, teachers particularly valued and enjoyed the hands-on activities and field trips.

Following the teacher training, each class made two field trips to Bluff Lake, one in the fall and one in the spring. The goal was to help students understand how Bluff Lake functions as an urban wetland — processing water from storm drain runoff from nearby neighborhoods. Students also studied how water affects plants and animals as well as how human activities can impact the environment. More than 700 students participated in the program.

Participating classes also made two field trips to the Children's Museum, fall and spring, to see the "We All Live Downstream" exhibit and participate in activities from the "Where Does Water Go After School" guide.

The museum exhibit examined the dangers of pollutants that find their way into the South Platte River including pollution threats from downtown streets, mines, farms and residential neighborhoods. Students examined how individual actions contribute to pollution and what can be done to improve water quality.

Extending the reach of the program, an original play by Diana Brittan and Carol McClure, *Garbage Stew*, was performed at each of the participating schools on several occasions to a cumulative audience of more than 2,500 students.

The final phase of the project included a family day at Bluff Lake and a community service activity. The activity included the identification and painting of neighborhood storm drains. The students marked the drains and stenciled messages asking the public not to dump waste into the drains.

"Your play was really cool! I learned not to pour things down the sewer."

– Rachelle Bordeaux, Student