

Fifth Grade Ecology Trip Field Study #1

An Inquiry-Based Field Study on Wetlands and Watersheds

Objectives:

- Students will use scientific processes.
- Students will gather information to answer the questions, “Are these lands wetlands? Why are wetlands important?”

Overview: During this field study, students will explore the grounds of Peace Valley Nature Center in an attempt to find wetlands. A naturalist will assist the group in defining wetlands as having specialized plants, the presence of water, and specific soil types. The group will then set out, with data sheets in hand, to gather information about their surroundings.

As they walk through different areas on the grounds of the nature center, the students will periodically stop to collect soil samples using augers. They will carefully examine the soil samples taken on different parts of the property and record their findings about the soil color, texture, and smell. They will be comparing the soil from different areas to see if they have indeed found wetlands.

As they move from place to place, they will also be identifying plants on the trail using a **dichotomous** key. The goal will be to look for the specialized plants that are present in wetlands.

After using tools to collect data from several locations, the students will evaluate their findings to determine whether or not they have found wetlands. They will need to support their conclusions with evidence that they have gathered about the specialized plants, presence of water, and specific soil types found in the wetlands. To conclude the field experience, the students will discuss the importance of wetlands.