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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2009 Volume VII: Energy, Climate, Environment

Teaching Ecology Principles through the Study of an Ecosystem

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.07.08, published September 2009

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This unit is designed to teach principles of ecology and ecosystems by examining the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. This bay is the largest estuary in North America and is an amazing resource. Even if you do not live near the Chesapeake Bay, you can still use this unit in your class. The foundation in ecology is the strength of the unit. Some of the focal points are watersheds, food webs, pollutants, global warming, land use, invasive species and endangered species. It is important for students to learn to classify threats to the environment as physical, biological or chemical. However, the ultimate goal is to empower children to connect with nature, to care about their environment and to become stewards in their communities. The target audience is a fourth grade science class, but it could be adapted for use with middle school science students. The activities could easily be altered to teach an ecosystem anywhere in the world.

(Developed for Science and Social Studies, grade 4; recommended for Science, grades 4-5)

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