

The River Starts Here: A Water Workshop for Educators Report June 2018 Whitewater State Park



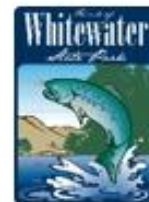
BACKGROUND

On June 21-22nd, 2018, twenty-two educators from across Minnesota gathered at Whitewater State Park for a two day water-focused professional development workshop. Participants toured the Whitewater Watershed, interacted with local farmers, and were introduced to a large variety of sample lessons, resources, and tools for incorporating water topics into their curriculum while meeting state education standards.

Grant funds offsetting the costs of two local lunches and 10 participant scholarships were provided by MN Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) and the UMN Extension's SE MN Regional Sustainable Development Partnership respectively. In addition to Whitewater State Park Interpretive Staff, representatives from Project WILD, Project Learning Tree, Project WET, MinnAqua, the International Water Institute, and the Ecological and Waters Division of the MN DNR facilitated workshop sessions over the course of the two days.

This report compiles participant feedback from a survey conducted at the end of the second day of the workshop. 19 out of the 22 participants completed and submitted the survey.

PARTNERS AND SPONSORS:



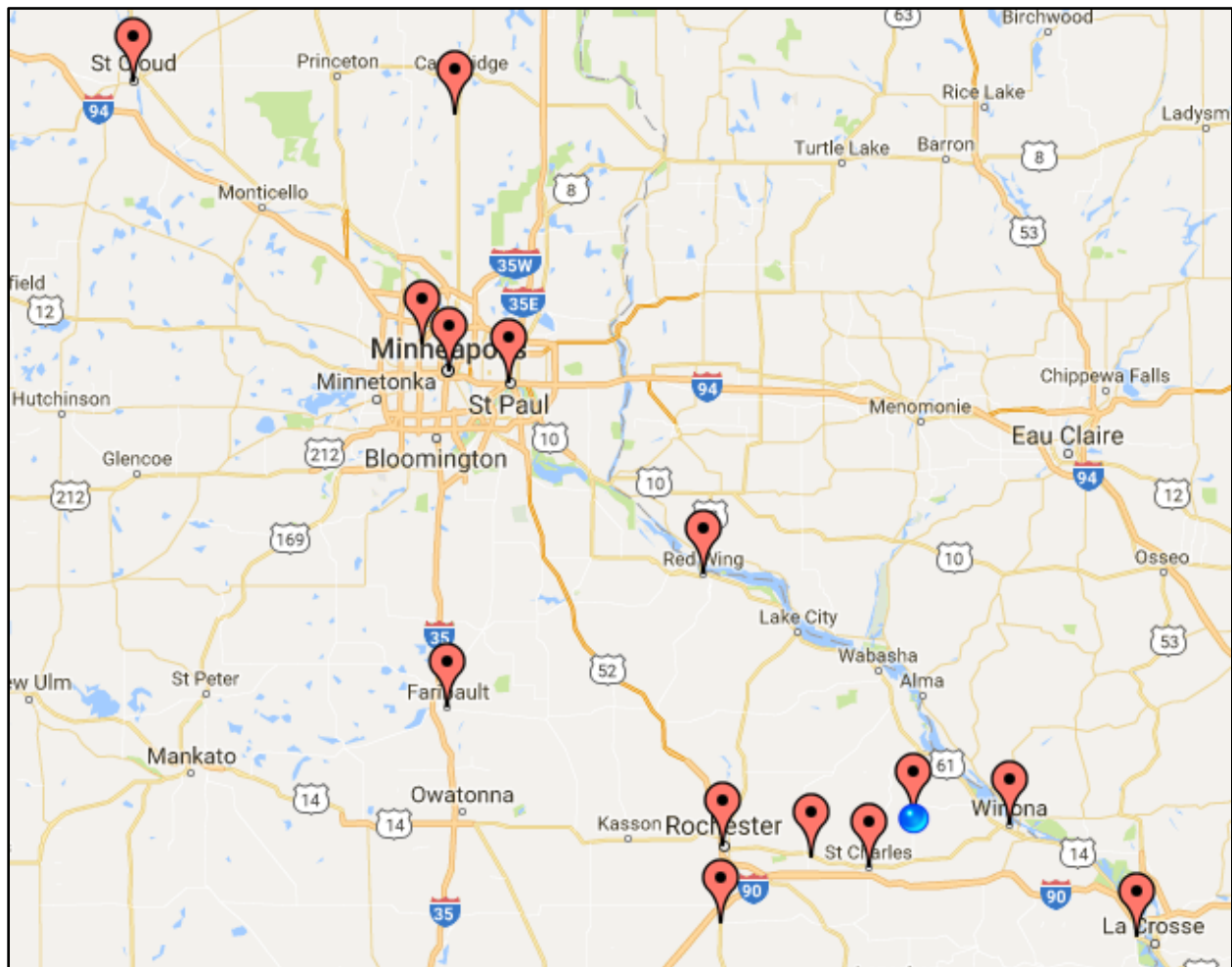
Report prepared by Allison Bender, a Member of the Minnesota GreenCorps, 2017-18.

PARTICIPANTS

Although most participants were middle school science teachers, the workshop was intentionally cross-disciplinary and lessons easily adaptable for a variety of ages. Educators ranged in subject content taught all ages from kindergarten to high school. A few home school educators participated as well.

The workshop was intentionally marketed to school districts within the Whitewater Watershed, but was publicized state-wide through some of the DNR education project websites and newsletters.

This map shows the communities from which participating educators came. Some communities, Rochester and Winona for example, had multiple schools represented.



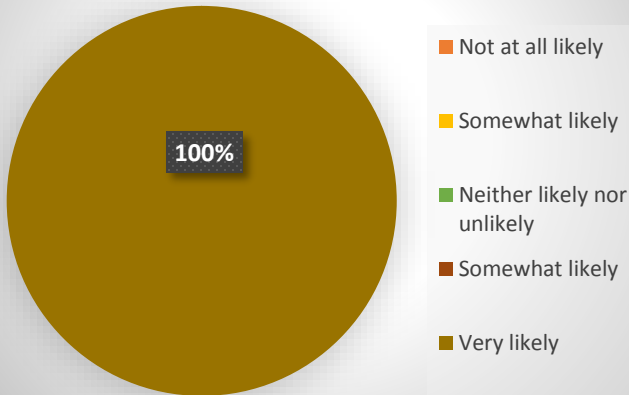
AGENDA

	<u>Thursday, June 21st</u>
8:00-8:30	Welcome and Introductions
8:30-11:30	Field activities: Watershed Field Experience
11:30-12:30	Farm Tour and lunch (Prairie Hollow Farm, Elgin)
12:30-1:00	Return to Whitewater State Park
1:00-2:00	River of Dreams
2:15-3:15	Watershed Health Assessment Framework Overview and Activity
3:30-4:00	Collaborative curriculum planning time
4:00-4:30	Workshop Choice: Explore your watershed with SMART Board Tools or Oral History in the Classroom
	<u>Friday, June 22nd</u>
8:00-8:15	Welcome and Introductions
8:15-9:45	Breakout Session One -Project WET OR -MinnAqua
9:45-10:00	Break
10:00-11:30	Breakout Session Two -Project WET OR -MinnAqua
11:30-12:30	Lunch
12:30-2:00	Breakout Session Three - Project WILD/Flying WILD
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:45	Breakout Session Four - Project Learning Tree
3:45-4:15	Collaborative curriculum planning time
4:15-4:30	Wrap up, Survey, Present CEU certificates

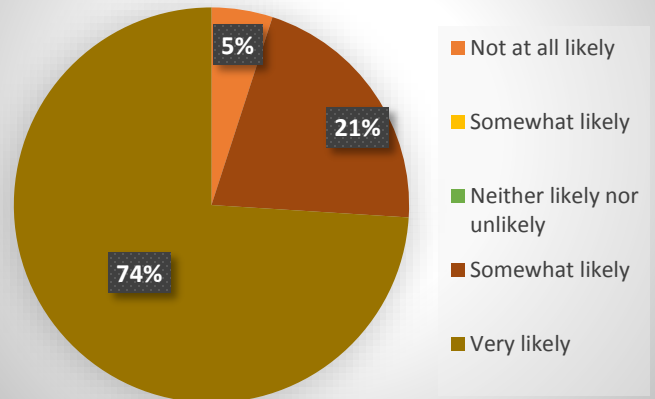
RESULTS

- 100% of participants reported they're "very likely" to incorporate topics from the workshop into their teaching
- 95% of participants reported they're either "very" or "somewhat likely" to use sample lessons in their classroom
- 90% of participants reported they're either "very" or "somewhat likely" to plan a field trip to a State Park or other public land
- 73% of participants reported they're either "very" or "somewhat likely" to visit a farm or bring a farmer into the classroom

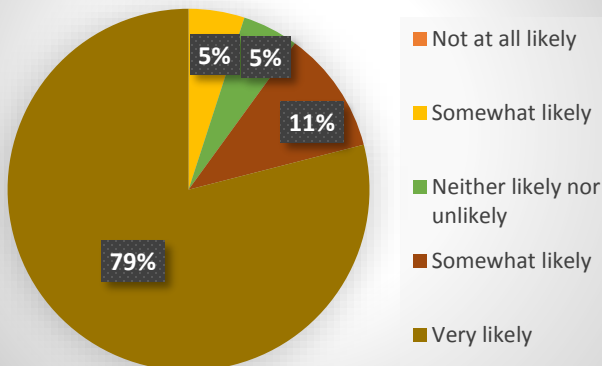
How likely are you to incorporate topics from this workshop into your teaching in the next two years?



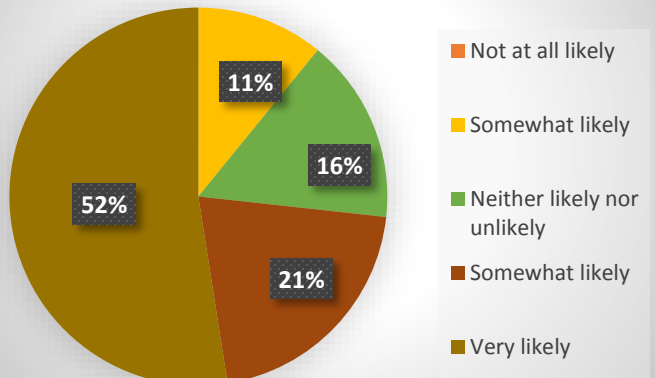
How likely are you to use any of the sample lessons in your classroom in the next two years?



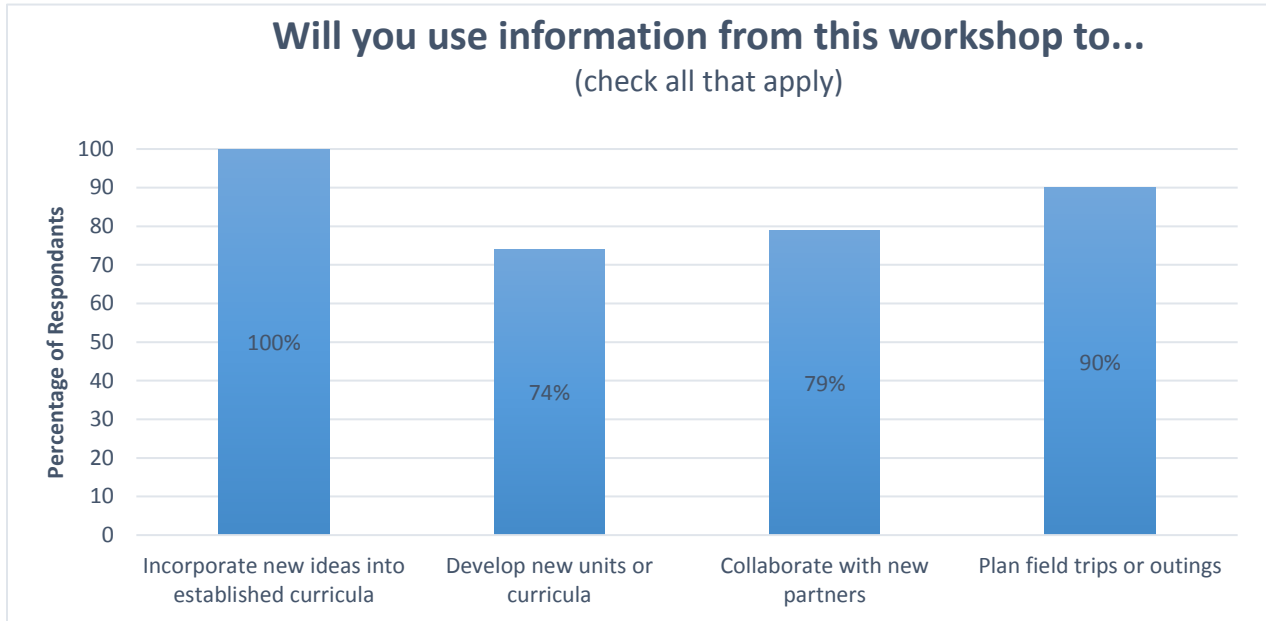
How likely are you to plan a field trip to a State Park or other public land in the next two years?



How likely are you to visit a farm or bring a farmer into your classroom in the next two years?



RESULTS CONT.



Participants will use content from the workshop to incorporate new ideas into their established curricula, develop new units, collaborate with new partners, and plan field trips.



Five local farmers shared their experiences with implementing conservation practices and answered participant questions.

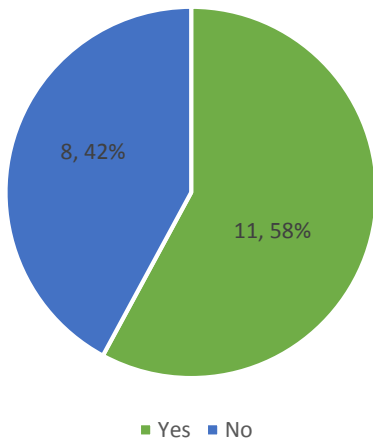
With dreams of making it to the Gulf of Mexico, several cedar canoes were decorated and released with tracking numbers into the Whitewater River.



Participants got a taste of MinnAqua curriculum. Here they worked in teams to sort Minnesota fish into families.

STATE PARK RESOURCES

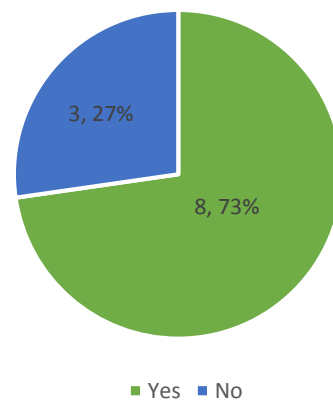
Prior to this workshop, were you aware that MN State Parks offer free interpretive programs for educational or school groups?



Whitewater State Park, along with the other Minnesota State Parks, offers free interpretive programming for educational and school groups. Nearly 50 different programs are available for educators to choose from at Whitewater State Park.

Before attending this workshop, 42% of participants were unaware of these offerings. Of those that were aware, 73% had taken advantage of naturalist programming.

If yes, have you taken advantage of State Park programming with students?

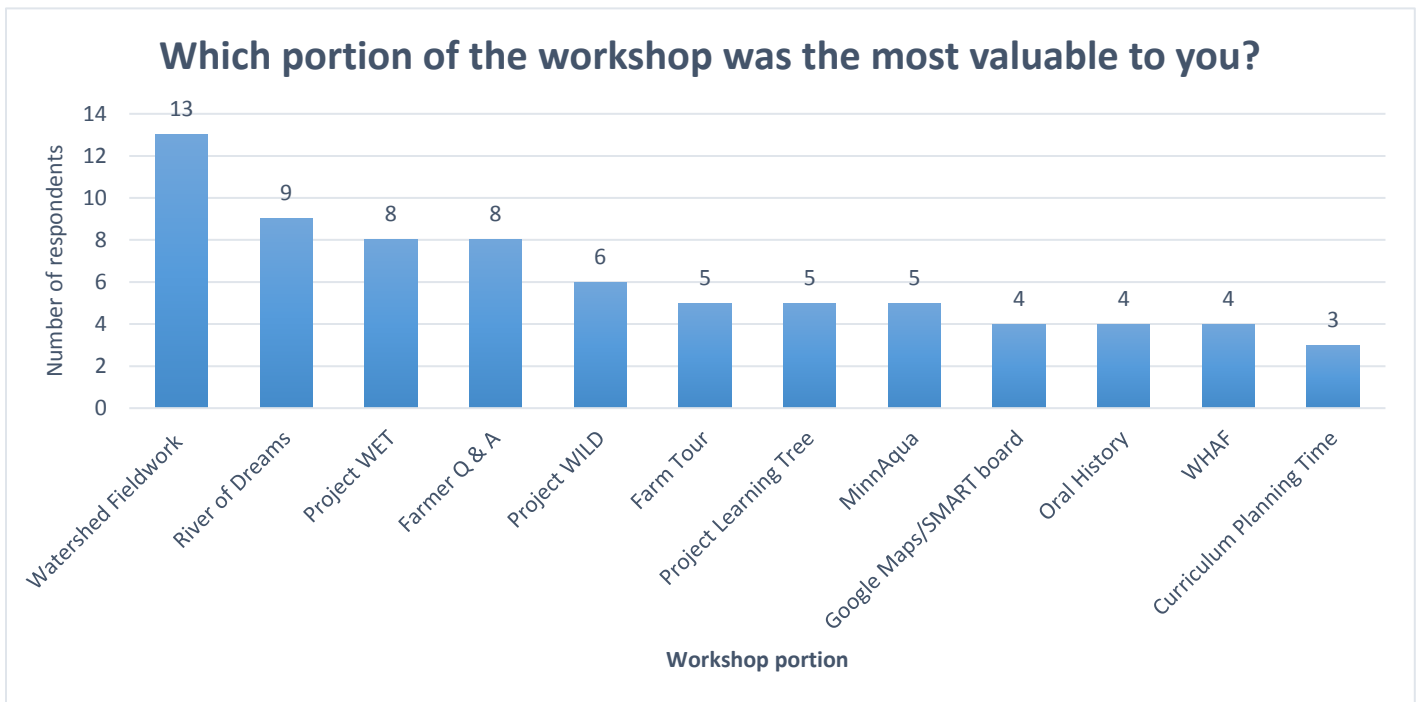


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“If I don't make it back [to the park with students] it will only be because of funding. I would absolutely return to WWSP.”

Despite free programs and waived parking fees for school and educational groups, funding for student transportation was often cited as a reason for educators being unable to take advantage of State Park Naturalist Program offerings with their students.

VALUE



Number of responses totals greater than 19 as some respondents listed multiple portions as most valuable.

Participants cited the Watershed Tour and Fieldwork as the most valuable portion of the workshop, with the River of Dreams demonstration, Project WET, and the Farmer Q & A following.



"I can't pick one. They were all valuable, informational, and gave great resources and ideas. It was idea overload- I'll be processing for quite a while to incorporate and put into use."

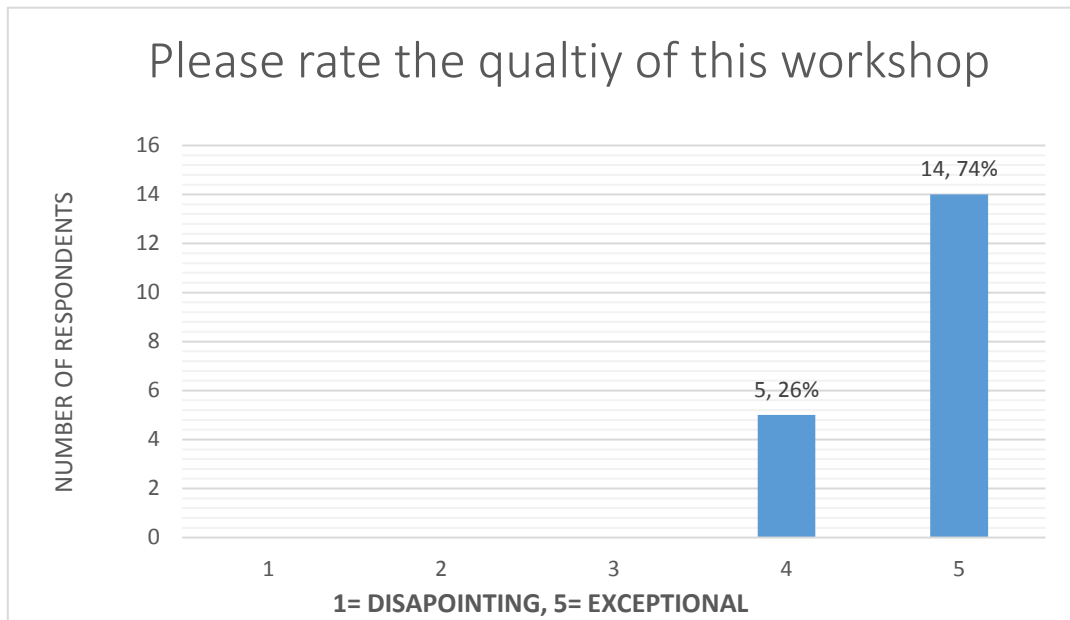
"I learned so much about conservation, protecting the land, different kinds of farming, and tools like Google Earth!

I could pick out specific pieces from all of these [workshop sessions] to fill gaps in my knowledge or replace activities that weren't as strong"

"I truly enjoyed learning about the history of the valley. The Watershed tour and fieldwork gave such a good background.

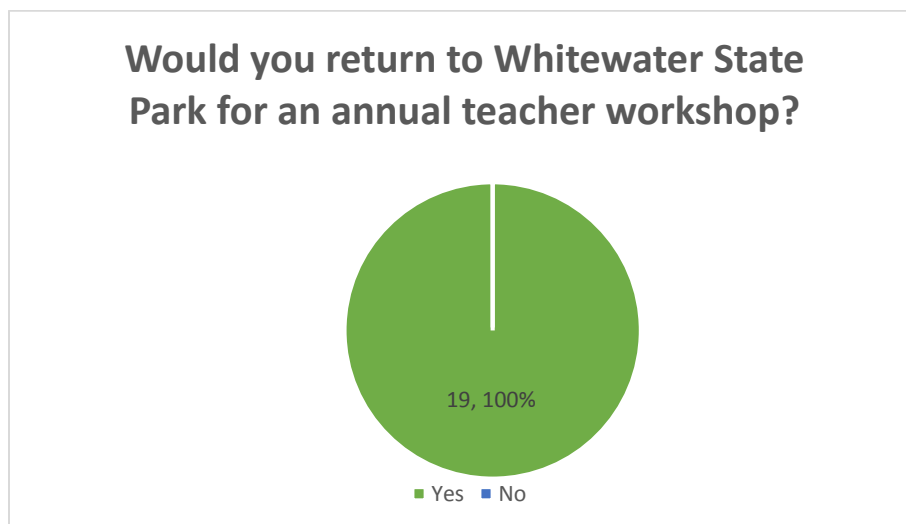
I learned so much about where I live!"

FUTURE WORKSHOP



74% of participants rated the workshop as “exceptional,” or 5 out of 5 stars. No participants rated the workshop below 4 out of 5.

Every participant indicated they would return to Whitewater State Park for an annual teacher workshop. Some suggested future workshop topics include Invasive Species (89% indicated interest), School Forests (72% indicated interest), Agriculture 61% indicated interest), urban gardens, and macroinvertebrate study.



FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

The following is a sampling of participant comments.



“My mind is spinning with all of the science content I learned! I am extremely motivated to get back to school and find ways to incorporate environmental education lessons into my district curricula. The Whitewater Staff is amazing!”

“This was a great idea filled workshop. I enjoyed learning about and trying new lessons. The canoe release was awesome. Loved the MinnAqua especially. Get your info on dates and prices out in the fall so we can reserve staff development funds!”

This is absolutely the best teacher CEU class I have attended on ANY subject! Great work!

“Most informative, generous, upbeat, encouraging!”

“This workshop was well-planned, well-paced, and informational. I am looking forward to future workshops!”

“Thank you for hosting us teachers here at Whitewater State Park. The learning that I did here will have a huge impact on my teaching-my students will love it!”

“I am teaching Earth Science and I loved it! I'm so glad I came-I have already thought of how I can use a lot of this with my 8th grade Science Class!”

“Classes like this want to make me be a science teacher (instead of English!)”