



# **Metro East High School Students Work Together at Mississippi River Learning Session**

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**GODFREY** – Nearly 60 students from Edwardsville and Alton High Schools will come together over river-related issues on March 26 at Lewis and Clark Community College's N.O. Nelson campus.

The Edwardsville High School Honors Biology class and Alton Senior High School's Biology and Field Ecology classes will work in small groups, in a professional setting, from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to form consensus, utilizing requested input from experts in their critical thinking process. At the end, they will present their solutions to the larger group.

This year's topics include floodplain development, coal ash disposal in the floodplain, and invasive species. Volunteers from the Illinois Natural History Survey, the Nature Conservancy and Labadie Environmental Organization will serve as river experts.

After the student presentations, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Biology and Environmental Education professor Elaine AbuSharbain will speak on the importance of trees to reduce wind erosion in the Mississippi Basin, then will utilize the orange Osage fence row on the N.O. Nelson campus, which was preserved for historical reasons, to lead the activity based on the history of the Dust Bowl and its impacts to wildlife and humans.

"Remembering why tree rows are planted is important as we see these old fence lines disappearing one by one," AbuSharbain said.

“Experiences like this UMR Education Learning Session prepare today's youth to ensure our resources are well managed tomorrow.”

This education program is co-sponsored and conducted by the Upper Mississippi River Education Committee, a group of non-profit organizations and higher education institutions working on introducing river education into high schools. Member organizations include Lewis and Clark and SIUE, as well as the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Principia College and the Sierra Club.

“Skills such as the ability to problem solve, think critically, design solutions and lead a team of peers are all needed to protect and plan for our natural resources,” said Christine Favilla, Three Rivers Project Coordinator for the Sierra Club.

“The issue solving session is meant to mimic a real-world civic experience where students from two schools work together to form consensus,” said Natalie Marioni, Environmental Educator at Lewis and Clark and NGRREC. “It is rare to be involved in that method of learning at the high school level, so we hope we’re filling a void.”

For more information, contact Favilla at (618) 462-6802 or by e-mail at [cfavilla10@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cfavilla10@sbcglobal.net), or Marioni at (618) 468-2783 or by e-mail at [nmarioni@lc.edu](mailto:nmarioni@lc.edu).