



# Multiple Film Grants Awarded to NGRREC

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EAST ALTON – The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center’s (NGRREC<sup>sm</sup>) Illinois RiverWatch Network and Education Department were both recently awarded \$7,500 grants to produce short films focusing on freshwater science and education.

The RiverWatch film will tell a story of the volunteers who represent both the energy and diversity of people participating in a freshwater mussel community science program, and what a small group can accomplish when people work together to understand what is happening in their local environment.

“We hope the film will encourage viewers to consider the importance of freshwater mussels and other animals living in their local streams,” said Danelle Haake, RiverWatch Director, and Stream Ecologist.

The film will also highlight the biodiversity and unique traits of freshwater mussels found in the Sangamon River and the importance of healthy water quality to protect these important animals.

Perceptive Visions, Inc. will produce the film, which will feature volunteers with the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy (USRC).

“Although we would love for everyone to have an opportunity to work with us in-person to experience the excitement of finding their first mussel, we know that just isn’t possible,” Haake said. “We hope this film will help us bring that joy to classrooms and computer screens across the region.”

The NGRREC Education Department’s film will capture the transformation of students as they start to learn about and understand how water is integral to their lives and community.

“Viewers will go with the students on this journey and observe the changes in this student group as they explore what water means to them,” Director of Environmental Education Sarah Fisher said.

The education team’s film will feature student exploration of science and ecology through experiences with local waterways in the Alton region. It will track their progression through different classroom and outdoor educational activities and will demonstrate the power and impact of place-based education and outside learning opportunities on students' overall engagement with and excitement about science.

Route 3 Films, out of St. Louis, Missouri will produce the film, and partners on the project include Swarovski Waterschool and Watershed Cairns artist Libby Reuter. Reuter will work with students to channel their creativity while learning about and creating found art pieces with recycled materials.

“The purpose of this film is to look into how this community of students relates to water in their lives, and explore how that relationship changes as they learn more about the ecological and social issues surrounding water,” Fisher said. “This film will be used to demonstrate the power behind connecting students to a sense of place and understanding of the complex interactions between water, humans, and the environment.



Both of the projects are being funded by the Consortium of Universities for the Advancement of Hydrologic Science, Inc (CUAHSI) through their “Let’s Talk About Water” grant program. They will both be publicly available through NGRREC’s YouTube channel, as well the center’s social media channels.

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### ***National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC)***

*Founded in 2002 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Lewis and Clark Community College, NGRREC is dedicated to the study of great river systems and the communities that use them. The center aspires to be a leader in scholarly research, education, and outreach related to the interconnectedness of large rivers, their floodplains, watersheds, and their associated communities. To learn more about NGRREC, visit [www.ngrrec.org](http://www.ngrrec.org).*