

## Bronx River Alliance Education

# Project WASTE Field Trips

### OBJECTIVE:

Students will learn about the different threats to the Bronx River, with a focus on floatable trash that enters the waterway. They will engage in clean-up of the trash, and categorize each item to potentially identify sources of trash.

### MATERIALS:

*Provided by Alliance staff*

[Project WASTE Data Sheets](#)

Trash bags

Clipboards

Pencils

Gloves

Waders (for in water experiences)

*Provided by teacher and students*

Sneakers

Change of clothes (especially socks!)

Water

Hat

Sunscreen

Bug spray

### ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

A Project WASTE field trip is an outdoor experience where students remove floatable litter from the Bronx River and its shores. There are two categories of Project WASTE field trips:

1. Boom Clean-Ups

These are hosted at the trash boom at East 233rd Street in the Bronx River, in the Woodlawn neighborhood. Students put on waders and enter the water to remove the trash that has collected at the boom.

2. Shoreline Clean-Ups

These are typically hosted at Concrete Plant Park at Westchester Avenue and Whitlock Avenue in the Hunts Point neighborhood. This is a land-based cleanup where students remove trash from the shoreline.

In both experiences, students receive a data sheet and mark each item of trash they find in the appropriate category.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Bronx River is a 23-mile long river that runs from the Kensico Dam in upper Westchester County through 13 Westchester municipalities and through the heart of the Bronx to the confluence of the East River and the Long Island Sound. New York City's only freshwater river, it offers a slice of nature amid the strains of urban life. The Bronx River went from a flourishing and beautiful resource to a contaminated conduit for industrial and residential wastes two centuries ago. In 1974, a small band of community activists formed Bronx River Restoration and began the arduous process of cleaning up and restoring the river. Their effort gained strength and numbers in 1997, when Partnerships for Parks convened the Bronx River Working Group and brought together more than 60 community organizations, public agencies and businesses committed to reclaiming the river and improving access to it throughout the Bronx. The Alliance acts as a coordinated voice for the river. We work collaboratively with public and private partners to protect, improve, and restore the Bronx River corridor and greenway so that they can be healthy ecological, recreational, educational, and economic resources for the Bronx communities through which the river flows.

We have 4 booms on the Bronx River that catch trash as it floats downstream. People are then responsible for removing the trash that accumulates at the booms. There are two in upper Westchester, one at Muskrat Cove (East 233rd Street), and one at Concrete Plant Park. Westchester County Parks is responsible for the Westchester booms, the Alliance takes care of the Muskrat Cove boom, and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection cleans the last boom at Concrete Plant Park. This is the last chance to remove trash before it reaches the ocean (the East River is not a river, but rather an extension of the Long Island Sound).

*What makes Project WASTE different from a regular trash clean-up?*

We collect data. We track the types of materials found. For example, we'd like to know if major chains like Dunkin' Donuts are a leading contributor to trash in the river. We also want to collect data to confirm our hypothesis that trash doesn't just come from the Bronx, but from upstream communities in Westchester like Bronxville and Mount Vernon.

## Itinerary

1. Class arrives at the clean-up site. We go over the history of the Bronx River and safety rules. We also explain how trash can be harmful to animals (example: styrofoam can artificially fill up animals so they don't eat their proper food) and how it affects humans who want to enjoy the river.
2. If in-water, students remove shoes and put on waders. One adult is responsible for watching the students' belongings.
3. Students divide into small groups or pairs. One team member holds the bag, another picks up the trash, and a third tracks the data. If in a pair, the bag-holder is responsible for data collection.
4. Collection occurs for about 45 minutes, less if we run out of trash.
5. The class comes back together and shares their thoughts
  - a. What was the most common type of trash today?
  - b. What was the weirdest item you found?
  - c. What appears to be the oldest item you found?

## Pre-Visit Activity

Students can complete trash journals at home. These trash journals can help students assess their own waste habits and consider where things might end up.

For the full pre-visit packet, please click [here](#).

# VOCABULARY

**Before you and your students come to the Bronx River to participate in the Project WASTE program, we suggest that you familiarize your students with some important vocabulary terms that we may use throughout the program:**

1. **Litter:** trash, wastepaper, or garbage lying scattered about.
2. **Floatables:** litter that has the ability to float (i.e. Styrofoam, Plastic Bottles)
3. **Boom:** a floating marine barrier that is meant to control and contain floating debris.
4. **Watershed:** A watershed is a geographic area in which all sources of water drain to a common surface water body.
5. **Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO):** A combined sewer is a sewage collection system of pipes and tunnels designed to simultaneously collect surface runoff and sewage water in a shared system.
6. **Pollution:** the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment that cause adverse change. Pollution can take the form of chemical substances or energy, such as noise, heat or light.
7. **Stewardship:** the careful and responsible management of something in one's care.
8. **Advocacy:** the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.

