

## Introduction to Gonzales Ranch Restoration Program

**Grade Level(s):** 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Activity Duration:** 60 minutes

Engage (5 mins):

- “Hello! I’m \_\_\_ from STRAW and I have a challenge for you.” Ask students to think about what a watershed is (can close eyes, draw, etc.).
- Ask students to share their hypothesis with a partner.

Explore (10 mins):

- Begin slideshow. When you get to the slide with the photo of the shrimp, pause the slideshow and tell the students you have a story for them. Share the story of STRAW in the most exciting way, emphasizing that students created the project. At the end of the story, mention that our name changed from the Shrimp Club to STRAW.
- Write “STRAW” on a white board and ask students what those letters stand for.

Explain (10 mins):

- Continue slideshow, explore and define watershed and riparian zone and what makes a healthy riparian zone.
- *Alternative activity in the school yard:*
  - Invite students to sit in a circle.
  - Ask students to look around do they see any hills, mountains, taller parts of their school yard? When it rains, where does that water go? You’re looking at the path of water in a watershed! (2-3 volunteers share out)
  - A watershed is anywhere water flows, collects, or is stored.
  - All water eventually flows to a stream or lake and ends up in the ocean.
  - Ask students: are we in a watershed now? Yes, everywhere you go you are in a watershed.
  - Ask students: do you think what we do to the land affects the water? Yes! A river or stream is a report card for its watershed.

Elaborate (15 mins):

- Pause the slideshow when you get to the “Draw a healthy riparian zone” slide. Advise students to think about the shape of a river, what is right next to a river, etc. Remind students that we will come back to these drawing later to add anything we’ve missed.
- *Alternative activity in the school yard:*
  - With materials right here in this schoolyard (give 4 corners parameter to stay within), you have 5-10 minutes to build what you think a healthy stream/ riparian area (define riparian- the area right along a stream) or wetland would look like. Decide or ask teacher if you want students to work in pairs, groups of 3 or 4.
    - Each student collects 5 different objects.
    - We are playing pretend – a leaf can become a tree! A Rock can become a shrub, etc.

Evaluate (20 mins):

- Ask students what they created, drawing a healthy riparian area on the whiteboard piece by piece (or just pointing them out on the picture of a healthy stream). In a riparian zone, note: tall trees that shade the creek; roots stabilize the soil; creek meanders/zig-zags which slows down water; some complexity in creek (rocks or snags that create habitat and riffles); shrubs, grasses, and trees of differing heights have different root depths and are homes and food for all different types of animals.
- Tell students that at their restoration day, they will be helping to make the riparian area/ wetland healthier! Your work will increase habitat for animals and create a more resilient ecosystem that is better prepared for a changing climate. (Some specifics about the Gonzales Ranch project can be found on the slideshow.)
- Finish the rest of the slideshow, and if there’s time, ask students to revisit their drawings and add/make changes to their drawings.
- Exit ticket: Ask students to complete the one- three of the following sentence starters (in regards to what they just discovered/ learned):
  - I know...

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- I feel...
- I wonder...

Materials needed:

- Riparian Restoration Gonzales Ranch slideshow presentation
- White board/white board markers
- Pens/pencils for each student
- Full sheets of paper for riparian zone drawing
- Half or full sheets of paper for exit tickets