

Farragut students test Turkey Creek's health

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Writer

A branch of Turkey Creek got a health screening Friday as Farragut High School students joined AmeriCorps water quality team members and a Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) biologist in a look at the creek's aquatic life.

The students were part of FHS teacher Debbie Fraser's college preparatory ecology class.

TDEC's Jonathan Burr said a stream's health could be assessed by looking at the fish community that lives there.

"The main way we check water

quality is by looking at biology, not by looking at the water itself. It's a lot more efficient for a biologist to screen a stream by using the things that live in a stream as indicators of water quality. When you look at the fish or the benthic organisms that live in a stream that will give you clues about how healthy it is," Burr said.

To collect the fish Burr used a device that sent a 300-volt electric current into the water. The current shocked the fish, which were then swept by the force of the stream into a net that the students had strung from shore to shore.

Once caught, the fish were

identified, catalogued and released.

The data collected was compiled to produce an Index of Biotic Integrity, which will be used by TDEC as part of its evaluation of Turkey Creek.

Barbara Sparks, an AmeriCorps water quality team member, says the organization regularly brings environmental education activities to schools.

"We take kids to their creek, their watershed. We learn about the quality of the creek and do activities related to water quality so (the students) learn what their creek quality is and how they can improve it," Sparks said.



Farragut High School ecology students Robert Butturine (left), Mike Forbes (center) and Parker Woodroof (right) help TDEC biologist Jonathan Burr (second from left) and AmeriCorps team member Barbara Sparks (second from right) catch and identify fish living in Turkey Creek.

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