

A student from Lorraine Academy, Buffalo Public Schools checks the dissolved oxygen levels of water samples taken from the Buffalo River. Students attending the two-day NYSG co-sponsored Great Lakes Student Summit in May also recorded the river water's pH and temperature.

All photos by Paul C. Focazio



Powering the Future

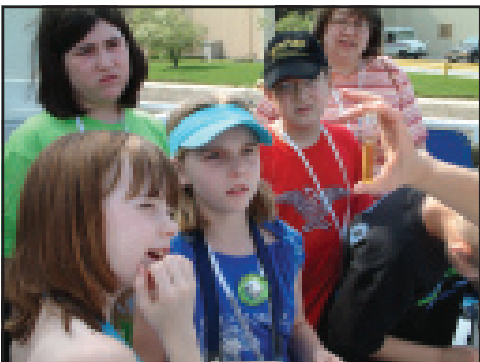
"The great thing about dealing with students is that they're so open minded," said NYSG's **Helen Domske** to a WBFO 88.7 Buffalo Public Radio reporter during this past May's opening day of the fifth Great Lakes Student Summit. "They don't point fingers, don't want to hear whose fault it is, as adults do. They really want to hear what's going on in the Great Lakes and also what they can do to correct things or not create the same mistakes."

For two days, teachers and nearly 130 fifth through tenth graders from schools around the lower Great Lakes descended upon Buffalo to show, as this year Summit's slogan states, Great Lakes youth are the "Energy That Powers the Future." They gave presentations, put up displays, and attended workshops on aquatic invaders, energy

conservation, water quality, and other environmental topics.

During one afternoon discussion, students and teachers learned about 41 locations in and around the Great Lakes and its bays and rivers that the International Joint Commission has determined need special attention. "When we talk about problems in the Great Lakes," explained Domske, "we often focus on Areas of Concern." Six of these AOCs are in New York State, three of which are in its western region – the Niagara and Buffalo Rivers and Eighteen Mile Creek.

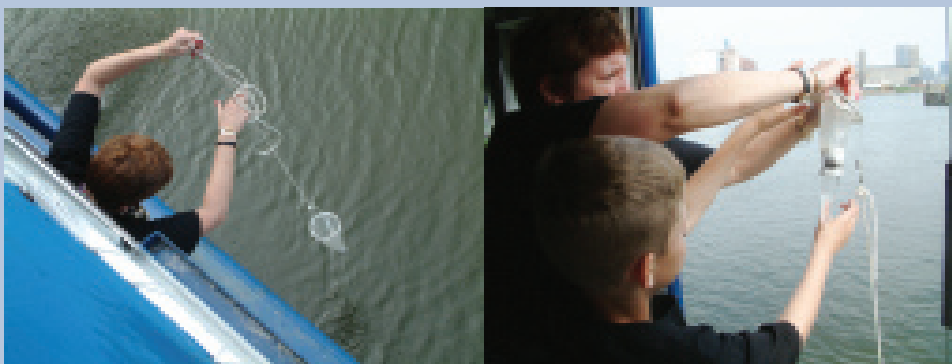
Eager students and teachers experienced some AOC-related issues firsthand during an educational cruise aboard the *Niagara Clipper* along the Buffalo River and Lake Erie. They saw hydroelectric power being harnessed at Niagara Falls and explored the Aquarium of Niagara to hunt



Students aboard the *Niagara Clipper* also tested for

If you look really close ...

you just might catch a glimpse of the plankton NYSG's Coastal Education Specialist Helen Domske discovered while collecting Buffalo River water aboard the *Clipper*. She shows off her find to a student from the Lorraine Academy, Buffalo Public Schools.



for answers to a competitive scavenger hunt. Last stop on an all-day excursion around the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem was the Niagara Power Project Visitors Center. There, a dozen students were selected to read the group's "Statement of Stewardship" (see sidebar).

Park School sixth grader **Lucas Baumgait** told WBFO Radio that stewardship is what it's really all about. "You need to make a promise to the Great Lakes, saying you're really going to help. Some people are coming here because they have to. But when you make a statement of stewardship it means you really care about the Great Lakes."



Attending the Summit were 130 students and their teachers from both sides of the border – ten upstate New York schools and one each from Pennsylvania and Canada.

And, with take home messages like this from perspective educators and environmental stewards of tomorrow, the overall response from teachers at the Summit comes as no surprise. "What a phenomenal program," said Fredonia Middle School's **Jennifer Neri**. "We are so excited to go back to our community and talk up environmental awareness and the Great Lakes."

Teachers left the two-day Summit with resource materials and posters that will hopefully evoke responses similar to one made by Dunkirk Middle School student **Bianca Moore Sayles**, who said: "I will teach my classmates that we should be part of the solution, not the problem."

— **Paul C. Focazio**

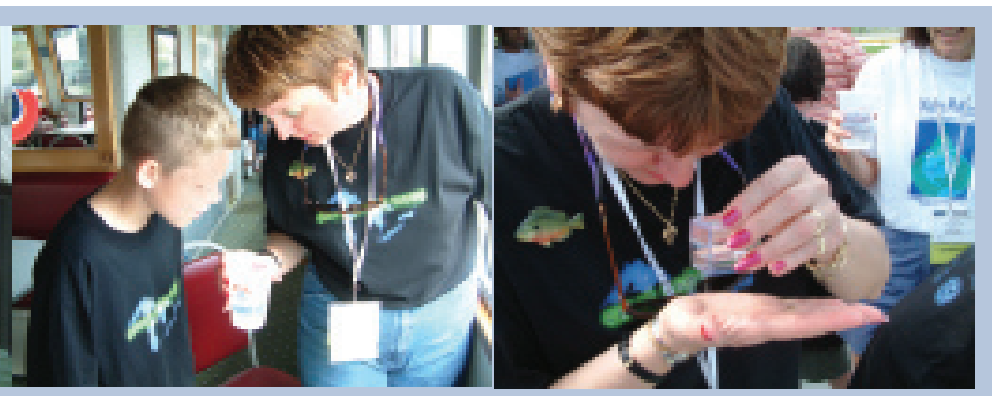
Statement of Stewardship

The Students of May 2004's Summit generated about a dozen statements on Great Lakes protection and preservation.

Promising to promote alternative energies such as solar, wind and hydropower, students resolved to reduce their electricity consumption by 20% by the next Summit. They also intend to use less fossil fuels by riding bikes and walking short distances, conserve water at home and school and restore and protect natural habitats in their local environments.

As environmental stewards, they plan to reduce litter, participate in beach sweeps, tree plantings, clean-ups and other volunteer efforts. Educating others about environmental issues and concerns such as invasive species and toxics also made the list. Students pledge to remind themselves and their schools to follow the 4 R's (Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and purchase environmentally friendly products. They will also encourage school officials and governmental representatives to support legislative efforts for Great Lakes protection, maintenance and restoration.

A US Fish and Wildlife technician uses equipment to shock smallmouth bass, emerald shiner, rock bass, brown bullhead and other fish species, then scoops them up in nets. Fish were placed in a cooler aboard a boat alongside the Clipper, identified for students and later released back into the Buffalo River.



Read the students' statements in full at: www.greatlakesed.org/2004glss.html