

Fourth-graders get a lesson on stormwater

By [Ollie Reed Jr. / Journal Staff Writer](#)

Published: Friday, February 19th, 2016 at 11:43pm

Updated: Saturday, February 20th, 2016 at 12:14am



Students from Lew Wallace Elementary School crowd around an interactive kiosk at the Main Library on Thursday. The three-sided kiosk helps children learn what they can do to prevent stormwater pollution. (Adolphe Pierre-Louis/Albuquerque Journal)

Copyright © 2016 Albuquerque Journal

Fifty fourth-graders huddled together on the floor of the children's section in the basement of the city-county's Main Library as Patti Watson talked about all the stuff stormwater washes into the Rio Grande.

“Stormwater is what happens when it rains, or, sometimes, when it snows,” Watson said during the Thursday morning presentation. She told the children that stormwater rumbling through drainage ditches at 55 mph pushes plastic bottles, cigarettes, leaves, limbs, gasoline, oil, concrete, any kind of trash, rubble or debris you can imagine into the Rio Grande.

“We’ve even found wedding dresses and rusted-out pieces of cars in the river,” Watson said. “We’ve found furniture.”

And then there’s dog poop.

Stormwater Kiosk for Kids To learn about the Mid Rio Grande Stormwater Quality Team and its programs, [click here](#).

A three-sided interactive kiosk, designed to teach kids about stormwater pollution, will be at the Main Library, 501 Copper NW, for at least six months before rotating to other locations.

“The average dog poops 1 to 2 pounds a day,” Watson said. “There are 70,000 dogs in this area. That’s 140,000 pounds of dog poop a day, enough poop to reach to the next floor. Imagine if all that poop flowed into the Rio Grande. Yuck!”

“Yuck,” the kids chorused in agreement.

The kids are from Lew Wallace Elementary School on Sixth Street, just north of the Main Library.

Watson represents the Mid Rio Grande Stormwater Quality Team, an interagency group organized in 2004 to teach the public how to reduce stormwater pollution. Team members include Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Los Ranchos, Sandoval County, the town of Bernalillo, the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority and several others.

Watson and fellow team representatives met with the Lew Wallace fourth-graders to unveil a \$30,000-plus, interactive kiosk designed to help kids learn about stormwater pollution and ways to limit it. The three-sided kiosk features maps, games and videos that illustrate the middle Rio Grande’s stormwater system and its connection to the river.

There is, for example, the “Scoop the Poop” game aimed at showing kids how to properly dispose of pet waste. By touching his or her finger to a screen, a child can move images of poop piles from the ground to a waste can. On another side of the kiosk, an interactive educational screen allows children to watch videos reminding them that everything they throw on the ground flows into the Rio Grande.

The third side of the kiosk showcases an interactive stormwater system map. By touching different points on the map, kids learn the role arroyos and channels play in the stormwater system. On Thursday, this map appeared to be the kiosk feature most popular with the Lew Wallace kids.

“The pump station was the dirtiest place on the map,” Jade Chavez, 10, said with conviction.

She was talking about the map display that shows the huge amount of garbage pulled out of the river by trash racks at Rio Grande pump stations.

“I feel bad for 7-Bar Channel,” said Asher Barreiro, 10, referring to another display on the interactive map. “It’s like the dump for plastic stuff.”

Levi Citrin, 10, punched the button on the map that tells the story of the wildlife living along the stormwater system.

“I was surprised how much wildlife is in these arroyos,” he said. “They’ve got rock doves, scaled quail and black-tailed jackrabbits.” Levi’s discovery punctuates a point Watson made earlier.

“When the river gets polluted, it’s not only bad for humans but also for animals that use the river,” she said.