

Landing monitors

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HOLLY RIDGE - An osprey, twig in beak, flew overhead as Scott Miller began to sketch.

The waves lapped up on shore and the wind blew as six Dixon High School students began to work. They didn't mind a bit. They'd volunteered to monitor Morris Landing for the N.C. Coastal Federation, which purchased about 50 acres at the site last year.

The intent is to preserve the area and keep it in its natural state, said Sarah King, project coordinator.

"We want to preserve the area and keep it open to the public," King said last week. "It's all part of the Living Shoreline Project."

The students were divided into three groups with three separate tasks. Their science teachers Leigh Bizzell and Myron Beaty were also presented with a task.

King said the data collected last week was important to the ongoing integrity of the shoreline project.

This shoreline, which has been degrading, is being protected and restored by NCCF. A living shoreline is an erosion control approach that combines stabilization with wetlands or nearshore restoration, she said.

Sarah Phillips, an education specialist with NCCF, instructed the students.

"We had a group of students who helped us last year during cleanup," she said. "They were great."

Since part of the project requires a lot of information to be collected, the volunteers were appreciated, she said. She handed the students a clipboard, pencils and the tools they needed to complete their tasks.

"We need you to be as specific as possible when you write down what you see," Phillips said.



Randy Davey/Daily News

Wading in: Top, Sarah King and Sarah Phillips speak to Dixon High School students gathered at Morris Landing. Below, Dixon students Lauren Frost and Kiley Page get their feet wet.

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One group was asked to report on the turbidity of the water, or how muddy it was. The second group had to sketch everything they saw along the shoreline including the osprey, which was collecting debris for a nearby nest.

Tony Miller and his partner, Scott Miller, who aren't related, began to draw the site.

"People need to learn how to respect the environment," Scott said. "You can see all the trash here which means a lot of people don't."

Another group was asked to identify the number and type of plants.

While the boys were walking along and sketching, Freshmen Lauren Frost and Kiley Page wiggled into separate pairs of hip waders one of their teachers brought.

"I like being outside," Kiley said. "I come down here all the time with my parents and friends."

She said some people just don't know how to clean up after themselves.

"It's a mess," Kiley said. "I want to see it look better so I guess we'll just keep cleaning it."

Although the tasks did not include cleaning up on Wednesday the students do volunteer each spring to pick up the area, Bizzelle said.

"This really helps them learn," Bizzelle said. "There's nothing better than hands-on science. This just makes science more real to them, helps the community and NCCF."

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