

RIVER of LIFE QUEST

created by the 4th grade students working with Ms. Munro
at the Union Elementary School

Background: This Quest is about the Georges River Land Trust's three-acre Pool Preserve, which is located on the St. George river in the upper part of the Muscongus Bay watershed.

Directions to Start: Take rte 17 to Rte 235 North (Sennebec Rd.) in Union. Drive 1 mile to a dirt road on the left. Parking is on the shoulder of the road. Map available at: <http://www.grlt.org/consprop.html>.

Terrain: Easy

Over the river
And through history,
We can learn a lot
About what people make
That can change rivers and lakes.
We need to protect what we've got.

Come along so you can see
How important a river can be.
How through the years it is life for all
For fish and for farmers big and small.

**1. Go north on Sennebec Road.
You'll see a "No Trespassing" sign.
You're allowed to go past it.
Don't worry, you will be fine.**

**Walk down the dirt road
And in just a short bit.
Look to the left.
You will see a big gravel pit.**

**Keep walking straight ahead.
You will see something really cool.
A big brown wooden sign
It says that you're at the Pool.**

**Walk 20 steps right behind the sign.
Watch out for the prickly bushes.
Pay attention to roots and vines
And make sure no one pushes.**

In 1780 the river was full of life.
Alewives went up river to spawn.

No bridge or people to stop them,
Just moose, bears, fox and fawn.

Stand still for a moment.
Look down where you're standing.
You're on an old road built over a dam.
To your right was the river's original
meandering.

**2. Look over the bank to the left.
A pipe and what looks like a grater you'll find.
Water rushed through the penstock pipe
And went through an electrical turbine.**

In 1728, a small settlement grew by the river.
Fields were made by cutting down trees.
Lumber for houses was made by hand.
Josiah Reed found a worker for free.

The River! All they needed was a dam.
He built where you are now standing.
The mill pond filled in and the water it held
Was used to let the gears of the sawmill begin.

**3. Looking over the left bank you'll see
A tall gear that drove the bale to make boards.
For over 100 years the mill did the job well.
People moved in by the hoardes.**

People were happy for the work the dam did.
But alewives could not get to the top
Of the high dam wall to spawn at the pond.
Part of the ecosystem had been stopped.

In 1803, Reuben Hills and his family arrived.
He bought the mill to make a living.
In 1804 snow melt made the river run fast and deep
And a whole different way the river was driven.

No mill pond now, so the mill could not run.
They added a dam so now there were two.
Soon a bridge was put up to cross o'er the river.
People traveled as the town grew.

With two dams together
More mills could be built here.
Grist mill, saw mill, stave mill, & carding too;
Making money for those who lived near.

4. Walk back to the sign and turn left now.
High on the berm you will see
St. George River rushing below.
At the path end is the remains of dam #3.

Electricity was new in 1910.
Two Shaw brothers thought this the best site
To wall up the water and use its great force
To give houses and stores electric light.

Two iron ruins you find at the end,
Wheels and gears all around.
One controlled the water's heights
One made the sluice gates go up and down.

The dam was removed in 2001
To restore and protect this watershed.
(The electric power for years hadn't been running.)
Alewives are not free to spawn instead!

5. To find the treasure go to the back
of the dam's old concrete wall near some rocks.
Look around by the gates,
To find the stamp in the box.

The words on the bridge wall
Read "Dirigo Power Company".
They tell the story of the Shaw brothers' dream.
Now just a pile of debris.

6. Now you are finished with the Quest
Back to the road you should go.
We hope you learned a bit about change,
And how we affect the river's flow.

Glossary:

- *Berm*: a flat strip of land raised bank bordering a canal
- *Carding mill*: a mill preparing wool to make fabric
- *Grist mill*: a mill for grinding grains
- *Saw mill*: a mill where logs are sawed into lumber
- *Stave mill*: a mill that makes long flexible strips of wood that go around barrels

FYI: Alewives are anadromous fish because they live in salt water, but spawn in fresh water. They live in the fresh water three to five months before traveling back to the ocean. They are 30 cms. long and weigh 250 grams. They eat zooplankton and bugs. Bass and haddock prey on them. Five hundred thousand returning alewives were counted at the fish weir in Warren, ME a few years ago. They are used for lobster bait.

