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New Haven Common Ground students get a taste of Regional Water Authority jobs



John Triana, real estate manager for the Regional Water Authority, shows Common Ground students how to effectively collect Mill River invertebrates in nets. (Brian Zahn/Hearst Connecticut Media)

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NEW HAVEN >> Nine Common Ground High School students received a deluge of information about jobs at the Regional Water Authority's Environmental Careers Summer Camp this week.

[For six years, the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority has hosted the week-long survey of jobs](#) available with the utility company for students at the environmentally-focused charter school through a grant from The Watershed Fund.

For the RWA, the training program could have a positive impact in the immediate future. Jean Dyer, vice president of service delivery with the RWA, said of the approximately 265 employees at the company, half will be eligible for retirement in the next five years.

On Thursday, the students went to Mill River to look for macroinvertebrates as a way of gauging the water quality. In a brief lecture beforehand, John Triana, real estate

manager for the RWA, instructed students that various types of invertebrates can only survive in clean water, like dragonflies and crayfish.

“The more things we find in general, the better the water quality will be,” he said.

At the river near a riffle, students took turns holding nets as partners kicked rocks loose as the stream carried small critters into the nets.

Margeaux Ivy, a rising junior at Common Ground, is a veteran of the program, having done it the year before.

“I enjoy this,” she said. “I did it last time to show people what we’re drinking and to see things we don’t usually see.”

The body is 75 percent water, she said, so it’s painful to see the effects non-potable water can have on communities. She said she would consider a job at the RWA, but she has other passions as well, like the arts and sports.

Her partner in the activity, Cody James, a rising sophomore, said he participated because he imagined it would be fun learning what happens behind the scenes at RWA. Rising junior Josh Barrett said he would like to pursue a career in computer science after high school, but the intricacies of the RWA are “enlightening and fascinating.”

For participating in the program, each student receives a \$250 stipend upon completion. Students cover topics such as watersheds, water treatment, safety, forestry, laboratory analysis and water-borne pathogens.

Dyer said the entire purpose was to expose students to the large variety of jobs available at the RWA. She said students rarely dream of themselves working for a water utility company after graduation, but some may discover the “noble purpose” of providing the one utility that people ingest.

“It’s a heavy responsibility, but it’s highly rewarding,” she said.