

Grand River Revitalization & Restoration Project

1.2 Take a Stand Activity

This activity is adapted from the Grand Rapids Public Museum Discover: Grand River Watershed Decision-Making Lesson.



Wenk Associates

Estimated Time: 1-2 60 minute class periods

This is a whole-class activity that will engage students by asking them to see the Revitalization and Restoration Project through the eyes of stakeholders who use or live near the River.

Download the slideshow titled 1.2b Take a Stand Slideshow. The presentation provides students with images of historic uses of the Grand, including logging, quarrying, and energy generation. Photos documenting the impacts of dams and channels are included for students to analyze. Finally, students will view a brief video that provides an overview of the Grand River Revitalization and Restoration Project (often referred to as “Whitewater” by the public). Students are asked who will be affected by the proposal and then are assigned to small groups to represent the various stakeholder groups. The lesson concludes with groups making lists of remaining questions held by their stakeholder group.

Slideshow script

Slide 1 Grand Rapids. Ask students: What is this an image of? Why is our city named Grand Rapids? Do you see any rapids? Where did they go? Give students time to discuss this and see what they already know.

Slide 2 Where did they go? Share with students some of the key changes that have happened to the river. The dam near 6th street first went in 1849. The bottom of the river was quarried and limestone was removed to make buildings and to build floodwalls (you can see the image of a kiln used to dry the limestone). Canals diverted water on both sides of the river. The water in the canals was used to power mills and factories.

Slide 3 1836 map: This map is from 1836 before the 1st dam; however the canal on the East side are already present.

Slide 4/5 Now/Then: These two slides overlay the current river on top of the historic map. Have students look at how the shape of the river has changed-- no more canals, the islands are filled in, the rapids are gone.

Slide 6 Should they come back? Watch the video and allow students to share their initial thoughts.

Slide 7 Proposal: This shows the proposed restoration plan by Grand Rapids Whitewater. This is really only a segment of the larger plan that extends up to Riverside Park. Have students examine how this would be similar & different to the 1936 river.

Slide 8 Stakeholders. Ask students: *Who do they think the stakeholders are? Who will be affected by this proposal?* Write down who they think could be interested on the board. The list should include, but does not need to be limited to:

- Fishermen
- Boaters
- Kayakers/Canoe
- Crew/Rowing
- Environmentalists
- Businesspeople
- Locals
- Native Americans

If your students need support in determining what their stakeholder might be interested in knowing, you can provide them with the **1.2a Potential Stakeholder Questions**.

Slide 9 Activity. After you have a list of stakeholders, put students into groups to represent the different stakeholders. Have the groups work together to determine what questions or concerns their stakeholder group would be interested in knowing more about before making a decision. Then have students use the links on the slide to research their questions. If students do not have access to the Internet, the teacher can lead the students through the “A Grand Restoration Story Map” (bit.ly/walkwhitewater2). This story map has answers to most of the questions mentioned in **1.2a Potential Stakeholder Questions**. Have students create the Poster/Whiteboard and present to the class.

Slide 10 Questions. What do we still want to know? Have students make a list of questions they still have about the restoration project. Use this to determine what order or how to proceed in investigating the restoration project.