

## LIFE OF A RIVER

**Summary:** An exploration of how a river or stream can change as it moves through the landscape.

**Aim:** To explore a river or stream in the local environment and investigate how it changes naturally and through interaction with people.

**Equipment:** Glass jars, paper and pens, camera (optional), canoeing or rafting equipment (optional)

**Preparation:** Identify a suitable stretch of a river or stream accessible in the local environment that can be followed for a length downstream and observe the changes. If conducting activities on the water, ensure suitable safety procedures and experience of participants.

**Duration:** Variable, up to one day

**Setting:** In the local area alongside the river or on the river with suitable boating equipment.

**Age Range:** 15+



## LARCH HILL

INTERNATIONAL SCOUT CENTRE

*eco adventure*

## Educational objectives

Explore the sources of clean water and clean air in the local environment. Demonstrate the relationship of personal actions to the availability of clean water and clean air in the local and global environment.

## Aim 2

Scouts are working towards a world where people and natural systems have clean water and clean air.

## Background

Rivers and streams come in many sizes and are very important ecologically and for people that use them for many reasons. A river may have a catchment area (the total land area that collects and funnels water towards the river) many times greater than the river, stretching potentially hundreds or thousands of kilometres away from the river. The land uses in the catchment can affect the river from its point source (the place furthest away from the river in its catchment), to its end point (such as where it reaches a lake or ocean). Rivers naturally change as they move through the landscape, with different plants and animals taking advantage of the area surrounding a river. People also make use of the waters from rivers, the plants and animals, and the land that surrounds them, which are often very fertile. Many human settlements started along rivers and have progressively grown into town or even cities. These changes in the built environment also affect the river in different ways.

## Step by step guide to activity

1. The aim of this activity is to explore the life of a river as it changes throughout its catchment. Explore maps of the river system to learn more about the geography of the area, specially features or different habitats and where human settlements occur that need the river or could affect it. Start at an accessible part of the river or further up its catchment, such as a drainage area or smaller stream.
2. Follow the river downstream and record how it changes. What does the environment look like? How are people interacting with the river? Is the water clean? Take samples of the water in glass jars as you travel along the river and record where each sample was taken.
3. Include a section of the river where it passes through a built environment, such as a town or city. What happens to the water here and after it has passed by the built environment?

## Evaluation

1. Have the Scouts present their observations as they followed the life of the river. This could include showing their photographs or sketches, water samples or stories in the order they were collected.
2. Discuss the results and the activity. Use the following questions to help the discussion. What were the natural observations of the Scouts?

Did the environment change as they moved through the catchment?

Were the changes natural or influenced by people?

How were people interacting with the river?

Was clean water available for people and natural systems?

Did the water quality change in the built environment?

How could the catchment be better managed if there were activities that were impacting badly on the health of the environment and the water?

Where would the point source and end source of the river be?

Do people need to share access to the river? Could this cause challenges?

## Further activities

1. Have the Scouts consider what the river might look like in the future and how they can help ensure that people and natural systems have clean water and clean air.
2. Share their experience and results with other people in the community and identify if there are ways the health of the river can be protected.

*This is an activity from the World Scout Environment Programme  
[www.scout.org/environment](http://www.scout.org/environment)*