



TAKE CARE OF TEXAS: EDUCATOR MATERIALS

HANDOUT

The Rio Grande

Fill in the blank

Introduction to the Rio Grande

Rivers are an important natural resource in Texas. They're not only essential natural _____ for many different species of plants and animals, but they also provide a significant portion of the state with water and irrigation for agriculture.

The Rio Grande is the longest Texas river, extending almost _____ miles from the mountains of Colorado to where it enters the ocean at the southern-most tip of Texas. Along the way, it provides drinking water for _____ people and irrigation for 2.1 million acres of land.

What Makes the Rio Grande Unique

What makes the Rio Grande different from other rivers in Texas is that, along with being a vital habitat for wildlife and spanning two National Monuments and _____ National Park, it also serves as the international boundary between the United States and Mexico. That means _____ in both countries affect the water quality of the Rio Grande.

Water Quality and Pollution

The Rio Grande provides communities on both sides of the river with water for drinking, farming, livestock, and for recreation, but humans can have _____ effects on the river if we aren't careful to protect it. Some of these harmful activities are:

- industrial _____ from factories
- surface water runoff from nearby farms, from crops, or _____
- urban runoff from _____ tanks and sewage treatment facilities
- and rains and flooding that carry trash and debris through storm drains and end up in the _____.

Working Together

Fortunately, the United States and Mexico work together to find solutions to these water quality issues.



The Rio Grande was first established as the international _____ between the United States and Mexico by a treaty in 1848. In 1944, both countries signed another treaty that established the amount of water each country receives from the lower Rio Grande. It also established _____ to improve water quality.

In 1983, the La Paz Agreement was signed by both nations and created a more detailed plan to tackle environmental issues in the border area. One action put into place by the La Paz Agreement is the _____ Program. Over the next few years, federal, state, and local environmental agencies in the United States and Mexico will work together on projects to reduce air _____, improve _____ quality, and promote sustainable _____ management in the border region. One goal is to improve water and wastewater treatment facilities to reduce discharges of polluted water into rivers, including the Rio Grande.

Conclusion

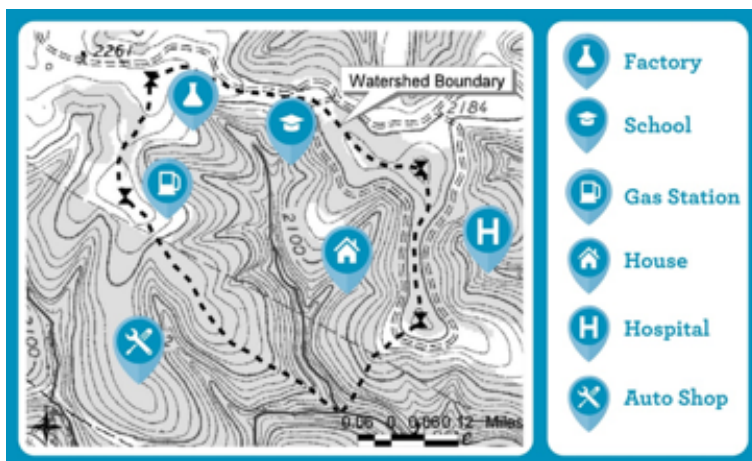
By working together, the United States and Mexico have brought positive change to a shared resource—the Rio Grande. It’s important for all of us to realize that working together is the first step to finding a _____ to environmental problems. We all can help keep our rivers clean too! By properly disposing of our waste, limiting the _____ we put in our yards, and _____ water wherever we can, we are helping protect the beautiful rivers of Texas.

Talk to your family about ways you can reduce your waste and conserve water. Talk to your friends about how you can work together to improve the environment. Ask your teacher where you can learn more about water quality.

Just like the Rio Grande, there are countless resources that need to be protected. It’s up to us to do our part to Take Care of Texas.

Activity

A **watershed** is an area of land from which water drains into a body of water. Scientists examine watersheds to help determine possible sources of pollution. The map below shows an example of a topographic map of a surveyed watershed for a river in Texas. There are several buildings and facilities both inside and outside the river’s watershed.



Watershed Boundary

1. Which identified locations are outside this specific river’s watershed?

2. Which identified locations are inside this specific river’s watershed?

3. Name some of the possible human and natural activities that might be taking place within the watershed.
Note: Think about some of the activities that take place around rivers in your local area.

4. Name possible sources of pollution that might be found in the surveyed watershed. Use the chart below to identify the source as well as some of the pollution associated with that location. *Note: There can be multiple types of pollution from one location.*

Pollution Source	Type of Pollution
Example: House	Soaps & Cleaners – if someone washed their car on their driveway, the soapy water would flow into the river.

Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills

- 4th Grade – 4.2D, F; 3A.
- 5th Grade – 5.2D, F; 3A; 5C; 9C.
- 6th Grade – 6.2E; 3A.