



Rivers & Coasts

Sustainability Audit

This guide will help you actively observe your surroundings by zooming in on Rivers and Coasts near your school. Go out, explore, identify and start your Eco-School actions!



EXPLORE RIVERS & COASTS WITH ECO-SCHOOLS

Oceans and rivers are vital ecosystems that support countless species and sustain life on Earth, yet they face growing threats from human activity. Overfishing, pollution, invasive species, and climate change disrupt biodiversity, harm habitats, and alter water conditions, including ocean acidification and flooding. By focusing on this theme, you will learn to understand these challenges and take action through environmentally friendly choices, collective efforts, and education.



Your Eco-Committee can choose to focus on the theme Rivers and Coasts, or explore several themes at once. Forming sub-groups within the committee ensures continuity, with each group taking responsibility for a specific theme and developing expertise over time. Use the Eco-Schools Seven Steps to explore and weave the theme throughout every part of your school.

SOME QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED...

Local Practices Supporting Rivers and Coasts

- What local and traditional practices support healthy Rivers and Coasts?
- How can we celebrate and encourage these?

Local Water Sources and Biodiversity

- How far is the nearest river, lakes, or ocean from our school?
- What local efforts are in place to monitor and protect the health of these water sources?

Human Interaction with Water Sources

- How does our school and community interact with nearby rivers, lakes, or oceans (e.g., for recreation, education)?
- What activities might negatively impact the health of these water sources?

Conservation and Action

- What actions can our school take to conserve and improve the health of local water sources?



Challenge assumptions, slow down, and really observe your surroundings. Your school has its own unique challenges and solutions that only sharp, curious minds will discover. Record what you see - notes, sketches, photos, or simple counts - at different times and seasons.

Ask critical questions: *What's here? What's missing? Why is it like this? What could change?* Use these insights to understand the current situation and move towards high-impact actions for Rivers and Coasts near your school.



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Questions	Your Answers	Reflections/Observations
Water Bodies		
What sources of water are in your local area?		
Does the water appear clear or murky?		
List the floating materials you spot such as leaves, litter, foam, algae?		
What materials seem to guide water (concrete, soil, stones, pipes)?		
Are there any places where water once flowed but doesn't anymore?		
Do any drains, gutters, ditches or waste water from your school or community flow into this water body? Is there a risk of pollution or contamination?		
Nature		
How does vegetation change as you move further from the water?		
What animals live in or around this body of water? Can you see any?		
What plants grow closest to water or in damp areas?		
Are insects hovering or landing on the surface?		



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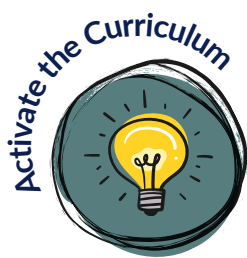
Questions	Your Answers	Reflections/Observations
Human Presence		
What signs are there that people use the water for leisure (e.g. benches, boats, paths, fishing areas)?		
How many bins are there placed near rivers, ponds, or coasts?		
What evidence of pollution (e.g. litter, plastic, oil, or unnatural colours) can you spot?		
Are there names, signs, or plaques that reference the river, stream, or coast?		
Can you see art, murals, or sculptures celebrating water or marine life?		
How many local stories, songs, or traditions linked to nearby water do you know of?		
Are there local businesses that depend on the river or coast such as fisheries, boating, tourism?		
Community		
Are there projects or local groups that protect or clean local rivers, canals, or beaches? If yes, has your school participated in any?		
To the best of your knowledge, how many students have participated in beach, river or canal cleans this academic year? How much waste was collected?		



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Your questions		

Choosing *Rivers & Coasts* as a key theme for action? Follow these next Eco-Schools steps...



What knowledge or skills do you still need to start putting your ideas into action? Take some time to identify what's missing and discuss it within your Eco-Committee. Then, reach out to your teachers and tell them what you'd like to learn more about, whether it's local rivers, marine life, or practical ways to protect the human impact on water around your school. Together, you can build the knowledge and confidence needed to start real change!



Use what you've learned from your lessons, your Eco-Schools activities, and your own observations, and work together to turn your ideas into real change by creating an Action Plan for Rivers & Coasts. Mobilise your Eco-Committee, teachers, school staff, parents, and the wider community to help you reach your goals. You could:



Organise beach cleanups



Hold local storytelling sessions

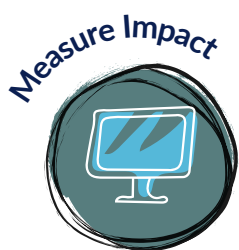


Partner with local marine organisations



Organise fieldtrips

Whatever actions you choose, make sure they are realistic, measurable, and long-lasting, so your Eco-Committee's work continues to grow year after year.



Monitor your actions to see the difference you have made! Use your Action Plan to check what's changed in your school and community. Are more people aware of the negative impacts of human behaviour on natural water sources? You could compare *before-and-after photos*, *count bins by water sources*, or *note how many people joined your activities*. Measuring your impact helps you celebrate success and plan even better actions for the future!



Make sure the whole school and local community are part of your Rivers & Coasts journey. Share your findings and actions through assemblies, newsletters, posters, or social media. Invite teachers, students, parents, and local experts to join activities or share their knowledge. By including different perspectives and experiences, your Eco-Committee will build stronger, more creative solutions that last.