

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOYOTA USA FOUNDATION AWARDS \$100,000 TO RIVER STEWARDS

Grant will support the Colorado River Foundation's innovative outdoor science education program for 300 Bay City Youth

June 20, 2007 - Austin, TX – The Colorado River Foundation has received a grant for \$100,000 from The Toyota USA Foundation. The grant will help complete funding of the *River Stewards* program for more than 300 Bay City youth.

River Stewards is a three-year program for Bay City, Texas Independent School District middle school youth that uses field-based learning to enhance science performance and environmental stewardship. More than three hundred students attended their first one-day science enrichment excursion in January 2007 after the opening of the LCRA's new Matagorda Bay Nature Park, and subsequently returned in May for their spring program. During the first year of *River Stewards*, these sixth-grade students (65% minority and 70% at-risk) have been introduced to the following topics and more:

- Animal Adaptations (studies with live animal presentations, skeleton and shell analysis)
- Dichotomous Key (shell gathering and classification)
- Classification of Fish (hands-on presentations with various oceanic and freshwater fish species)
- Energy (solar, wind, hydroelectric experiments generating energy)
- Watersheds, Water Conservation & Pollution (constructing sample watersheds with natural resources such as sand, rocks, and soil, examination of dune formation and beach erosion)
- Water Usage Timelines (historical research, relevance of water conservation)
- Geology & Scientific Method Practices (use of scientific measurement tools, including microscopes and GPS, as well as compiling group data reports)

During year two of the *River Stewards* program (September 2007-June 2008), these same students will return to the Matagorda Bay Nature Park as seventh graders. They will participate in one fall and one spring program with lessons that build on topics studied in their first year. They will cover concepts ranging from chemistry to oceanography to ecology, all using the natural resources of the Colorado River, the coastal marshland and estuaries, and the beach and bay as teaching tools. As in year one, LCRA outdoor education specialists will administer all programs at the Matagorda Bay Nature Park.

In addition, curriculum writers will work with Bay City teachers to complete the development of the *River Stewards* curriculum for its third year, and evaluators from Texas

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A&M will compile an annual evaluation report and implement updated pre-tests to participating students and teachers.

Year three of *River Stewards* will commence in September 2008, and will implement several new curriculum techniques as the students visit as eighth graders. By June 2009, all three hundred students will have completed six field excursions to Matagorda Bay Nature Park, and evaluators will have administered final testing and surveys reflecting the students' understanding of the curriculum and attitudes about their environment.

The students will also complete their TAKS exam during their eighth grade school year, which includes a thorough science testing component. CRF will work with evaluators to determine the effect *River Stewards* has had on the students' standardized testing performance, and will include this data in a final program evaluation report. Initial evaluation is already underway, using quantitative and qualitative methods including: teacher, parent, and student surveys, pre- and post-tests, standardized assessment scores (TAKS exam results), and academic performance. The goal of the evaluation is to gather empirical data that reflects the impact of field-based programs on academic success, understanding of the sciences, and attitudes about the conservation of our natural resources.

"Toyota is proud to support worthwhile programs that share our beliefs in the value of education and helping our environment," said Patricia Pineda, group vice president, legal, philanthropy and administration at Toyota Motor North America. "By combining classroom education with an innovative and fun hands-on experience, the Colorado River Foundation is preparing students to become the next generation of environmental stewards, while also helping them expand their science skill sets."

The Colorado River Foundation is deeply grateful to the Toyota USA Foundation for its generous contribution to the *River Stewards* program. This support enables CRF to sponsor all program participants, completing all funding for the three year program and study. CRF believes that *River Stewards* will have a lasting impact on its participants, both in classroom comprehension and in appreciation for their natural environment.

For more information about *River Stewards* or other programs of the Colorado River Foundation, please contact Zach Horton, Grants & Programs Manager, at zhorton@coloradoriver.org or 512-458-8844.

The Toyota USA Foundation is a \$42 million charitable endowment created to support education programs serving kindergarten through 12th grade students and their teachers in the United States, with an emphasis on mathematics and science. For additional information about the Toyota USA Foundation, visit www.toyota.com/foundation.

The Colorado River Foundation (CRF), a 501(c)3 organization, was established in 1994 to promote education, protection, and stewardship of the Colorado River in Texas. As the separate, non-profit funding partner for the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), the Foundation raises funds to support natural science education and outdoor recreation, particularly for at-risk and underserved youth, annual river cleanups, and additional community projects that encourage the stewardship, awareness, and protection of the Colorado River in Texas.