

Boardwalk at Lake Perrault completed by Jeffers High School

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PAINESDALE - Students at Jeffers High School are learning about math, science and even ecology just by using the skills they have already learned at school.

About 40 students participated in and completed a boardwalk at Lake Perrault, a place they have incorporated into their studies over the years.

"This was a companion project to another boardwalk we built," said Michael Benda, assistant principal at Jeffers High School.

As part of the project, the students worked together to build frames and the walkway for a boardwalk that is located near the lake, which is 3 miles away from the high school, southwest along M-26. The property, including the lake and about 160 acres surrounding the area, is owned by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Benda said.

With permission, the district has incorporated the local ecology into their studies by researching frog deformities, water quality research and plants at the site.

"We built a trail going as far as you can go on dry ground to a bog," he said. "Instead of tracing through muck and bog areas, the Michigan Nature Association decided they wanted to have a boardwalk and viewing platform."

The school completed the first part three years ago, and mid-November, completed another viewing platform on the other end of the bog. The area is known as the Brown Sanctuary outdoor learning classroom.

Logs were purchased by the MNA and the shop class sawed lumber at the school, he said.

"They made frames and placed and leveled them," he said. "There was a lot of construction and math because they had to figure lineal footage how much lumber they needed. They learned quite a bit about the ecology of the wetland area because they had to be very careful around the plants."

Lake Perrault and the Brown Sanctuary outdoor learning classroom have become a valued resources in the community, Benda said. The students plan to preserve the history of Lake Perrault through written, visual and oral preservation. Jeffers High School students will gain a greater appreciation for their natural environment and assume a stewardship for the natural resources, Benda said.

The objective is to conduct site improvements at the Lake Perrault and the Brown Sanctuary with picnic tables, trails, signage and outhouses. They hope to raise awareness by using the school newsletter, postings at the schools, the Toivola lunch, banks and more. They also plan to host a school forest family night and a school picnic as well as a community Earth Day and an annual beach cleanup at Lake Perrault.

Eventually, the school hopes to interview citizens about ways the area has been used and plan to integrate the into their curriculum. This project is part of the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative.

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