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CCISD students, naturalists team up to improve water quality at a campus pond

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Photo by KEVIN M. COX

CCISD students, naturalists team up to improve water quality at a campus pond

Clear Falls senior Melodi Atatural and her classmates make concrete anchors for the Floating Wetlands project.



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By CHRISTOPHER SMITH GONZALEZ

LEAGUE CITY — A new type of wetland is being created in a detention pond at a campus in League City.

Master Naturalists, students and coordinators from the AgriLife extension office are teaming up to build island wetlands that will go into a six-acre detention pond at Clear Creek school district's Education Village, 4380 Village Way, in League City.

The water in the detention pond is too deep to build a traditional wetland, said Mary Edwards, a stormwater wetland program coordinator for the Texas Coastal Watershed Program.

So on Sunday, Edwards, with help from students and volunteers, will place wetland plants on floating islands that will be anchored in the pond.

Floating wetlands have been installed in other parts of the country and the world, but this will be one of the first in Texas.

"It's the first public one," Edwards said.

Plants such as soft rush, duck potato, beak sedge, Lizard tail and tickernel weed will be planted in floating plastic mesh that resembles a kitchen sponge, Edwards said. The mesh is made from recycled bottles and other plastic waste.

The wetlands will provide habitat for animals and could also work to improve the quality of the water, Edwards said.

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Photo by KEVIN M. COX

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Clear Falls teacher Emily Morris collects water for the Floating Wetlands project behind the CCISD Education Village on Friday afternoon.



things work in the environment.

Edwards said she hopes more people will find the floating wetland concept interesting and consider putting them in subdivision detention ponds and similar areas.



Photo by KEVIN M. COX

Clear Falls junior Nikki Robinson cuts lengths of wire for the Floating Wetlands project behind the CCISD Education Village on Friday afternoon.

Water from the detention pond drains into a ditch that eventually makes its way to the Dickinson Bayou, which has had problems with bacteria and low oxygen levels.

It will take more than just the three 80-square-foot islands Edwards and her volunteers will anchor in the pond to improve the quality of water in the bayou. But the effort on campus is part of a larger project, funded through a grant from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, looking at how wetlands can improve water quality.

The project also allows students and teachers to use the pond as part of their classes.

Clear Falls teacher Emily Morris brought students from her interior design class to the pond Friday afternoon to help make the anchors for the islands. The students mixed concrete and cut lengths of cable.

While her class was focused on interior design, Morris said she was able to work in discussions about runoff and the role that wetlands play in providing a habitat for wildlife and helping clean the water that runs through them.

“When you build something like the Education Village, which takes up a lot of land, a lot of what used to be costal prairie land, you have to accommodate the water,” Morris said.

Clear Falls senior Melodi Atatural said she had never heard of floating wetlands but said she is used to her teacher coming up with interesting projects. While wetlands may not be a typical interior design topic, Atatural said working on the wetlands still helped her learn about how

“(A floating wetland) would be visually very interesting as well as working for habitat, working for water quality improvement,” Edwards said.

At a glance

WHAT: Volunteers, students and coordinators from the AgriLife extension office will build floating wetlands at Clear Creek school district's Education Village.

WHEN: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday

WHERE: Education Village, 4380 Village Way, in League City



Photo by KEVIN M. COX

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Plants grow in the Clear Falls High School greenhouse for the Floating Wetlands project behind the CCISD Education Village on Friday afternoon.



Photo by KEVIN M. COX

Mary Edwards, Stormwater Wetland Program Coordinator for the Texas Coastal Watershed Program, talks with Clear Falls High School students at Floating Wetlands project behind the CCISD Education Village on Friday afternoon.



Contact reporter **Christopher Smith Gonzalez** at 409-683-5314 or chris.gonzalez@galvnews.com.

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