

# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

## INTRODUCTION

The *Wyland Clean Water Challenge: Exploring Aquatic Ecosystems* program is founded on the concept that we protect what we know.

For people in most industrialized nations, clean water hasn't been a topic of great concern. We turn on the tap and out comes clean water. We hear about water shortages and begrudgingly turn off our sprinklers for a while or run our dishwashers less frequently. We can't see below the surface of the water, and we don't often hear about less fortunate countries where people are faced with a daily struggle to obtain enough clean drinking water to survive.

Although we may not have been aware of it, as a nation we have been struggling to keep water supplies clean and plentiful. If you think about it for a moment, the signs are there: water shortages happening more often, warning signs at beaches and lakes closed to swimmers, produce that is unsafe to eat because of contaminated water, high levels of mercury and other pollutants in seafood, and aquatic animals paying the price due to human impacts on their environment.

It is time to acknowledge this important issue by taking steps to clean up what we've damaged and by protecting what remains. One of the first and most important steps we can take is to inspire our youth to make better choices and take action. This program leads students through an exploration of an aquatic ecosystem—from the properties of the water, to the animals that rely on it, and finally to the impact of humans—good and bad.

This program is designed to engage students and leave a lasting impression. They will never again look at a body of water and see only the surface—they will have the ability to see the weird and wonderful inhabitants below. They will understand how these creatures and the habitats they live in enrich our daily lives. They will understand that clean water connects us all and is essential for survival.

Young children and teenagers are amazingly creative thinkers and passionate beings. Armed with an understanding of the connections between the actions of people, clean water, and the health of the planet, they will become active stewards for our environment.

## GOALS FOR THE PROGRAM

- To educate and inspire students to become better stewards of our aquatic habitats
- To foster excitement about science through visual arts
- To provide supplemental tools to teachers for art and science education
- To encourage teachers and students to use creativity to address today's environmental issues