Teacher Background

This project provides you and your students with the opportunity to support ongoing scientific research. As we have explored in other lessons in this curriculum, a few species of crayfish are negatively impacting other freshwater species at an alarming rate, and your class can play an important role in better understanding and addressing the problem. They should also gain a closer connection to—and appreciation of—your local watershed and its health, for the benefit of people and wildlife. This lesson focuses on collecting data safely in the field and allowing students to begin to explore data through analysis and visualization.

Invasive crayfish pose a substantial threat to aquatic habitats in the Great Lakes region because of their ability to reduce habitat quality, to dramatically alter aquatic food webs, and to outcompete native species. Current efforts to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive crayfish consist largely of reducing the size of existing populations and encouraging people to refrain from releasing crayfish into new bodies of water. The Invasive Crayfish Collaborative (ICC) focuses on improving collective management and outreach capabilities by disseminating novel crayfish research, encouraging collaboration between members, and conducting research and outreach projects with collaborators.

A group of students prepares to collect crayfish data with waders and nets from the ICC.
Photo: Kelsey Berke