Trout in the Classroom Essay – Micah Williams

I am interested in the camp because I have always thought fly fishing was interesting and have wanted to learn more about it. I have loved fishing ever since I was three years old, when my dad took me to my cousin's house for a lake day. We decided to fish for a little while, and that was when I caught my first fish. I was shocked because it was a catfish, and it was bigger than me. Ever since that moment, I have had a strong drive to go fishing and be outside.

As I got older, I became more interested in bass fishing. My papaw would always take me fishing on his boat, and one day I caught my first bass. That moment lit a spark in me that pushed me to keep fishing. Now that I am 13, my dad has bought a boat, and I fish tournaments for Bandy's. I think fishermen contribute to stream conservation because when they keep some fish, they help control fish populations so they do not get out of balance.

Stream conservation is the practice of protecting and managing streams. Many factors are used to measure water quality. One of those factors is pH, or potential hydrogen ions, which measures how acidic or basic a substance is. Another measure is bioindicators, which can be used to determine the health of an ecosystem. For example, a large number of bioindicators may show a healthy ecosystem, while few or no bioindicators may indicate an unhealthy ecosystem.

Another important measure is turbidity. Turbidity is the measure of how clear or dirty the water is. Higher turbidity can be caused in many different ways. One cause is runoff, which occurs when excessive rainfall loosens dirt or sediment and washes it into a nearby stream, disturbing the water.

When we first received the trout, they were still in their egg stage. They remained eggs for about a week before hatching into the alevin stage, during which they still had an egg sac to live off of. Normally, alevins live in gravel, but in this case, they were in a tank and stayed closer to the bottom. When the egg sac is used up, they become fry. In their natural habitat, fry emerge from the gravel, but in a tank, they swim around more. At this stage, they also begin feeding on their own.

As they grow larger, they develop blue blotches on their sides and are then called parr. Parr become more courageous and begin going after larger meals, which causes them to grow even bigger. Eventually, the parr grow into mature adults, find mates, and reproduce.

What I have learned is that we need to take care of our streams so organisms like trout can survive. If people dump trash and other pollutants into the water, the water becomes contaminated, and organisms may not be able to tolerate the pollution, which can cause them to die. We also need to be careful about building unnecessary dams because they can cause flooding. Flooding can lead to habitat destruction, animal deaths, and the formation of new lakes.

These new lake formations can be damaging because they force animals to relocate from their natural habitats. Flooding can also affect fossils. If land becomes flooded and water fossils are found, it can indicate that water levels have risen and taken over land that was once dry.

Overall, stream conservation is the practice of protecting streams and creeks by reducing pollution and improving water quality through healthy pH levels, low turbidity, high oxygen levels, moderate temperatures, and a strong variety of bioindicators. This is important to me because it allows for personal experiences, such as catching my first rainbow trout in Cranberry Creek. We must ensure our streams remain healthy and thriving for the next generation so they have access to clean water and can experience nature and all the life and joy it has to offer.