Marc Schollett from TV 7 & 4 leads a Discovery Hike program called "Pond Dectives." Kids ages 4-13 met at the Meadows Pavilion and hiked along the Beaver Pond Trail.

Everyday ways to save the bay

In the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed the everyday habits of residents and visitors are having an impact on the health of our waters.

Protecting the sparkling waters that we all love and enjoy is a group effort. You are probably already doing many things to help protect the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed and just don't realize.

Check out the list below and see how you are doing. To have an even greater impact, start small by picking two or three things you know you can do and make a commitment. Small actions can add up to big results.

KEEPING STORM DRAINS CLEAN

__ Clean up pet waste and put it in the trash.

__ Pick up litter and debris before it gets into the catch basins.

__ Wash your car on your lawn or a gravel pad. Or, take it to a car wash — the soapy water will go to the sanitary sewer for treatment, not to a storm drain.

__ Don't dump motor oil or other wastes into the storm drains. Dispose of them properly at hazardous waste events or a disposal center. Most of our storm drains empty directly to the bay or some nearby body of water.

__ Use de-icers sparingly during winter months.

__ Avoid sweeping or spraying yard waste into storm drains.

AROUND THE HOUSE

— Dispose of excess household chemicals and paints at a hazardous waste pickup event or a disposal center. Your county's solid waste offices can tell you when the next one is taking place.

— Use environmentally-friendly cleaning products whenever possible.

— If you have a septic system, maintain it regularly.

— Use latex paint instead of oil-based paint where appropriate. Allow excess to evaporate before throwing the can away.

— Recycle!

IN THE YARD

— Have your soil tested — most area soils do not need more phosphorous.

— Use lawn fertilizer and pesticides carefully and sparingly.

— Try using more natural products to control pests and enhance soil, such as ladybugs, diatomaceous earth, insecticidal soap, bone meal, manure, etc.

— Avoid spreading lawn chemicals on sidewalks or driveways where they can wash into nearby water.

— Landscape with native species and reduce the size of your lawn to avoid having to use too much fertilizer or water. (See links on Page 8)

— If you live on a lake, stream or river, don't dump your grass clippings or fall leaves in the water.

— Use mulch to reduce water consumption and help prevent erosion and runoff.

— Compost.

— If you live on the water, maintain a natural, vegetative buffer strip along the shore or streambank to prevent erosion and runoff.

ON THE WATER

— Dispose of garbage and other waste properly — onshore, not overboard.

— Keep your bilge clean with an absorbent sponge or pad.

— To avoid spreading invasive and aquatic nuisance species, inspect your boat and trailer for plant debris and zebra mussels.

— Be careful about taking baitfish from one lake to another.

— Help protect vital plant and animal life by respecting no-wake zones.

IN THE WATERSHED

— Volunteer for The Watershed Center's volunteer Stream Search Program.

— Organize or join a beach, stream or river cleanup.

— Organize a storm drain labeling project in your neighborhood. We'll help you with supplies.

USING WATER EFFICIENTLY

— Fix leaky faucets and toilets.

— Use low-flow showerheads.

— Before pouring water down the drain, consider using it for other things such as watering plants.

— Turn off the water while you shave or brush your teeth.

— Run your washing machine only when full.

— Water your lawn less frequently, but more deeply.

— Avoid watering on windy days or during the heat of the day — evaporation has more impact during these times.

— Mulch your garden.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

— Fix the leaks in your car – oil, antifreeze and other fluids that leak from your car end up in the water when it rains.

— Use alkaline rechargeable or low-mercury batteries.

— Drive your car less — auto emissions are a huge source of greenhouse gases and other airborne pollutants. Greenhouse gases alter our climate and are believed to be a factor in lower water levels in the Great Lakes.

— Conserve electricity and reduce the demand for electric power. Power plant emissions include greenhouse gasses, mercury and sulfur (which causes acid rain).