Julia Harvey

School: South Eugene High School
Subject: biology and environmental science
Grade: 9-12

How did you first hear about the invasive species workshop and why did it interest you?

I attended the first invasive species workshop about five years ago. I'm always looking for ways to bring new ideas into my classroom because I don't like a monotonous routine. I knew very little about invasive species to begin with so I attended the workshop and just fell in love with the topic.

What did you learn from the workshop?

I received a complete explanation of invasives and their impact in Oregon. Rather than just talking about invasives in general, we would talk specifically about the bullfrog or the quagga mussel and give an example of the impact. And there were visuals, always lots of visuals, which is a key part.

How have you used your invasive species knowledge in the classroom?

I initially developed a five week unit on invasives for my life science class. When we finished it up, they made a "Wanted" poster for various invasive species and got them printed out. It's kind of a "bad guy" scenario and the students like that.

I can't always afford to spend four or five weeks on invasive species, so recently I've done just the highlights. Now, I'm going a step further. My senior students came up with their own thesis projects and they ended up doing their research project on invasive species.

How have your students benefited from learning about invasive species?

It's really opened their eyes to the impacts on our habitats and economy. I don't think they had ever thought about it before, but now they know better. For one project, they were trying to remove a small section of reed canary grass and they realized how tough it is to remove. The hands-on aspect has lasted them much longer because they remember it.

How are you and your students using aquatic invasive species knowledge in the community?

I work closely with the City of Eugene and the park, where we do our research, and they approve our projects. A couple years ago we collected Japanese knotweed and to see how it germinated, because we knew little about the Japanese knotweed's sexual reproduction. We found that it had close to an eighty percent germination rate. I plan on doing that again, so the kids can design their own experimental variables and incorporate that knowledge into plant biology. I'm also looking to getting the student work published to step it up a notch.

Anything else?

I love the information. It's always new and it's such a current topic. There's some genetics research that's going on that hasn't really hit our textbooks yet, but it's not as user-friendly. Invasive species is a real hot topic right now and it's presented in such a manner where it's so relatable. I've been to three or four of the workshops now it's always a lot of fun.