



# Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council (M4-HYCC)

October 2011-June 2012

## Audience

Twenty-one teens ages 13-19 (grades 8th-college freshman) from across Michigan participated in this six month program. There were 8 males and 13 females. Selection criteria includes a written application, phone interview, awareness of environmental issues, local community leadership experiences, interest in research, public speaking and state government.

## Funding

2011-2012 sponsorship funding was provided by Dow Chemical Company Foundation (\$4000) and other donors to the Michigan 4-H Foundation (\$6000).

## Objectives

The M4-HYCC program is designed to:

- Develop and expand career and personal interests including community leadership
- Develop leadership skills and self-confidence
- Improve important life skills such as public speaking, research, writing and presentation skills, teamwork, and group collaboration
- Provide an opportunity for teens to explore environmental issues and solutions and present their research and recommendations for state government public policy consideration
- Foster scientifically rooted environmental stewardship
- Increase social and academic skills needed for a successful transition to college and life as an adult

## Description

The program has 60 intentional contact hours through overnight state meetings, trainings and the senate committee meeting presentation. The content and instructional methods are researched-based environmental education, experiential learning and youth development. Participants work together to select and research an environmental issue, write a research paper and present testimony that includes recommendations to state legislative committees.

Third year members, as teen advisors, facilitate team-building, discussion and decision making. They demonstrate leadership abilities and commitment by taking ownership for the selection and research of the issue, written report and public presentation. The program adult advisors included MSU Extension staff (2), 4-H adult volunteers (3), state government staff (2), program coordinator (1), and natural resource experts (4).

## Outcomes

The 2011-12 M4-HYCC teens promoted the adoption of a standardized assessment system for the identification of invasive terrestrial plant species in collaboration with Michigan Invasive Plant Council (MIPC). The group strove to understand and address the concerns of both environmental groups and industry as they worked to raise public awareness of terrestrial invasive plants. M4-HYCC teens gave testimony to two senate committees – the Senate Committee of Natural Resources Environment and Great Lakes and the Senate Committee of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, April 2012. The M4-HYCC influenced legislative action to establish a Michigan Plant Invasiveness Assessment System (Senate Bill 1377). The bill is pending approval from the Michigan legislature.

Pre and post surveys showed :

100% plan to attend college

100% said the program better prepared them for college

100% reported it increased their interest in science.

100% said the top life skills developed were communication, time management, accepting people who are different from them, ability to follow through and complete tasks and problem-solving.

75% increased public speaking and presentation skills

70% reported an influence on career choice

65% increased confidence for making a presentation to elected officials to help solve environmental issues

Sample participant testimonials:

“M4-HYCC has further encouraged me to pursue a career in natural resources,” *1st year member*.

“The council played a significant part in my career choice; I plan to become an engineer or consultant for a renewable energy company,” *teen advisor*.

## Additional Significant Information

- 2011-2012 M4-HYCC teens facilitated training workshops for county-based YCC groups in Alger, Ingham and Muskegon Counties.
- M4-HYCC has been recognized with two state and two national prestigious awards since 2003.
- M4-HYCC influenced the passing of three Senate bills that became Michigan law between 2002-2008.
- The [Guide for Creating an Effective 4-H Youth Conservation Council](#) empowers and mobilizes youth for action.

## Contact Information

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