

4-H Youth Conservation Council

October 2012-April 2013

Audience

This program is open to Michigan teens interested in natural resources issues and community change. This program had 16 participants. One participant from each of 7th, 8th, and 9th grades, three from 10th grade, 5 from 11th grade, 4 from 12 grade, and one who had started college. There were 7 males and 9 females. Two participants had American Indian ancestry, one had Asian ancestry, and the rest were Caucasian. One participant was Hispanic/Latino.

Objectives

This youth development program is designed to:

- Educate council members about the public policy process and empower them to make positive change in their community
- Improve council members' skills in research, writing and public speaking
- Increase council members' knowledge about natural resource and environmental issues

Description

Youth select an environmental issue, research the issue, develop a paper and present to the Michigan Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Environment, and Great Lakes.

Return youth select five natural resources topics as potential topics for the year at first meeting in October. In December, the entire council comes together and meets with professionals in those topic areas. Based on what they have learned, the participants select a topic. The following two meetings students learn more about their topic as well as public speaking, research, public policy, and leadership skills. There were about 60 contact hours with the students throughout the process.

The program culminates with a presentation to the Michigan Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Environment, and Great Lakes around Earth Day.

In 2013 there were 2 MSU faculty/staff, 3 volunteer advisors and many government and natural resource experts involved.

Outcomes

A pre-/post-survey was used to measure participants skills and perceptions. Below are response highlights for youth who "agreed or strongly agreed" with targeted skills.

Before the event responses are shown in parentheses.

- *I can think critically about public policy issues and suggest ways for improvement—(44%) 94%*
- *I know who to contact to get things done—(37%) 87%*
- *I am open to different points of view—(55%) 88%*
- *I feel an individual teen can influence state government policy and policy makers—(44%) 87%*
- *I know I can make a difference in my community.- (44%) 100%*

Select comments from Teen Participants

- *I feel like I'm much more aware of human's impact on the environment. I can't wait until next year to see what topic we research.*
- *I am way more interested in government happenings than I was previously. It has opened many new doors for me.*
- *I gained leadership skills and confidence that I can make a difference. I also gained good friends.*

Funding

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Contact Information

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