



A Guide for Creating an Effective 4-H Youth Conservation Council

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4-H Youth Development ■ Michigan State University Extension

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Welcome to the Guide!

A Guide for Creating an Effective 4-H Youth Conservation Council is designed for adult and teen volunteers, parents, professionals and others to use with young people aged 13 to 19 who wish to:

- Learn about environmental issues affecting the state and their communities.
- Work toward addressing one or more of these issues.

The handbook is written primarily for use as a guide for organizing and running regional, county and local 4-H youth conservation councils. It highlights activities and ideas that have been used successfully with the statewide Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council (M4-HYCC).

M4-HYCC helps Michigan teens who are interested in current environmental issues become involved with state and local governments to help resolve the issues. The M4-HYCC was created by the Michigan Senate in 1999 and is coordinated by Michigan State University Extension's 4-H Youth Development programs. Teens from each region in Michigan may apply to participate in M4-HYCC. For more information, including promotional materials and an M4-HYCC application form, visit web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/m4hycc.html.

Learning materials and other resources are available to help you learn about natural resources and environmental education and community service learning, including:

- **The Walk: Taking Your Youth Outdoors for Environmental Stewardship and Learning!** (4H1593) – “The Walk” is geared toward adults and older teens who are interested in sharing the wonders of our natural resources, outdoor recreation, and environmental science and stewardship with young people aged 8 to 13. The book outlines a “pathway to success,” a mentoring program that provides long-term, club-based learning activities for young people. “The Walk” and other online resources can be found at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/enved.html#learn.
- **4-H Great Lakes and Natural Resources Camp** – This MSU pre-college program is designed for young people aged 13 to 15. The learning opportunities are focused on the unique aspects of the camp's site on Lake Huron near Presque Isle. Campers learn about coastal ecology, fisheries management, limnology, wildlife, forestry and wetlands in hands-on, natural resources-based recreation and research-oriented field trips. The camp fosters teen leadership development with formal evening programs and natural resources-themed group morale-building games. Structured campfire programs focus on our Great Lakes and aquatic heritage and provide valuable reflection time to help the campers process what they've learned. The campers:
 - Make new friends.
 - Have fun in a unique, biologically diverse outdoor setting.
 - Explore natural resources management issues and career possibilities.
 - Are mentored by content and youth development experts and older teen and college-aged counselors.

For more information about 4-H Great Lakes and Natural Resources Camp, visit web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/glnrc.html.

- **YEA! Youth Experiencing Action: Community Service Learning Guide** (4H1533) – The YEA Guide has information to help in building a team; it outlines a series of activities and lessons that will help the team explore the community and help others. Finally, the guide will help your team plan, conduct and evaluate a YEA project. Materials in the YEA Guide are arranged in easy-to-follow

lectures, activities, handouts and ideas for reflection and further work. Each section of the YEA Guide is designed to carry over for one to three group meetings, and contains several activities from which to choose. School classes or other non-4-H groups will find the material helpful when planning their own service-learning projects. The “YEA!” curriculum is available online at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/commserv/yeacurriculum.html or can be ordered from the MSU Bulletin Office at web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/mainsearch.cfm.

- **4-H Citizenship: Government Is Us! A Civic Engagement Curriculum for Youth Groups** – This curriculum is designed for an adult facilitator, though teens could be trained in the design and content and teach the sessions with an adult advisor. It was created to help 4-H members and other youth groups experience citizenship and civic education. The goal is to have teens develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens and practice what they learn in their communities. Citizenship is not a spectator sport, and the learning activities included here get youth and adults more involved, cause them to think critically about their values and beliefs and prepare young people to want to be active citizens in the future. The activities have been designed for use with 13- to 19-year-olds. Some activities may be adapted for use with younger participants. The book is online at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/cls/documents/GovernmentIsUsCurriculum.pdf

The learning activities in the three-part Adobe Presentation “Government Is Us” curriculum are designed to guide young people and adults in thinking about what citizenship means, developing a sense of caring for the common good, exploring public issues and government, and taking action to make lasting change. The activities have been designed for an adult or teen facilitator to use with 13- to 19-year-olds; some activities may be adapted for use with younger participants. The modules are at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/cls/cls-govtisuus1/index.htm

The Components of Creating an Effective 4-HYCC

This guide is organized into eight steps. Many 4-HYCCs meet once or twice a month for 2 or 3 hours at a time, though you may adapt the frequency and length of meetings to suit your group.

Each step includes the following components:

- **Introduction** – This section includes some background information about the unit’s content to help you feel comfortable with the material as you use the activities with youth conservation council members.
- **Learning Activities** – Each of the main activities includes the components that follow.
 - *Objectives* – Lists the specific learning objectives the activity is designed to teach.
 - *Learning and Life Skills* – Lists the learning and life skills the activity is designed to teach.
 - *Materials* – Lists the materials you’ll need for the activity, including any materials that need to be photocopied for the group.
 - *Time* – Gives an estimate of how long the activity will take.
 - *Setting* – Indicates any special requirements for the meeting space.
 - *Procedure* – Details the specific steps for carrying out the activity. Note that most activities include steps to accomplish before the group meets and steps for doing the actual activity with the group.
 - *Talking It Over* – Suggests questions to ask the group so that they can reflect on what they learned and make some connections to their everyday lives.
 - *Support Materials* – Many activities include support materials (such as handouts or game supplies) that need to be gathered or photocopied for the group.

Young people are influenced by important people in their lives, and that includes family members. You can extend the “reach” of the activities in this guide by informing the parents and families of the group members of how they can build on the concepts that the young people are learning. For a variety of reasons, some group members’ families may not be able or willing to help. In that case, perhaps a neighbor, a family friend, a teacher or some other caring adult in the young person’s life could be the adult resource.

The Impacts of the 4-HYCC

Many people who offer programs like the 4-HYCC for young people are very interested in learning whether the programs truly have an impact on the attitudes, knowledge and behaviors of the program participants. This guide includes tools to help you determine if your group is learning and using the concepts of youth and adult partnerships, youth leadership, problem-solving, teamwork and other life skills, civic engagement, environmental stewardship and community service. In Steps 1 through 8, you’ll find information on the following tools:

Pre- & Post-Program Evaluation Surveys

You can use the Pre- and Post-Program Evaluation Surveys (see the “Helpful Resources” section) with your group at the first and final meetings to assess members’ attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviors. By using the survey at the beginning and end of their 4-H youth conservation council experiences, you can get an idea of how much the group members have learned and changed.

Participant Assent: Before asking group members to complete the 4-HYCC program evaluation at the first meeting, read the participant assent statement that follows to your group:

Before we start our 4-H youth conservation council program, we would like you to fill out a short evaluation form. This evaluation is not a test. Your answers will document your personal program expectations, your past experiences and knowledge of the natural environment, environmental issues, and citizenship and government. When your responses on this survey are compared to those on the survey you will take at the end of the program, it will help your adult advisors identify what life skills you have developed, any change in your level of interest in environmental stewardship and how being involved in the youth conservation council has contributed to your career preparation. The survey will probably take you 10 to 20 minutes to finish. Only the adult advisors of your group will see your answers. We want you to know that you don't have to answer these questions if you don't want to and that if you don't like any of the questions, you can skip them. If you have any questions or need any help, please ask your adult advisors.

Parent or Guardian Consent:

Keep in mind that parents or guardians should know about and consent to having their child(ren) participate in a 4-H youth conservation council and complete any evaluation instruments. Adult and teen volunteers and staff who run 4-HYCC programs should obtain a signed and dated consent form from each young person’s parent or guardian at the beginning of the program. (See a sample consent form elsewhere in this book.) If 4-HYCC programs are being offered by or in partnership with other agencies or programs, volunteers and staff should also follow any other consent procedures required by these partners. (**Note:** These procedures meet Michigan State University institutional review board guidelines for program evaluation. Staff members of other Cooperative Extension Systems of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture should check with their host universities for their university guidelines on research involving human subjects.)

Teens & Learning

This handbook was designed with young people’s developmental characteristics in mind. When you use these activities, you’ll be helping the group members develop life and learning skills related to their development.

Developmental Tasks for Early Adolescents & Older Teens

What does it mean for young people to move successfully through the ages of 13 to 19? Child and youth development experts agree that there are certain *developmental tasks* or “jobs” that young people should accomplish for optimal development. All of these tasks relate to the different areas in which teens are developing: physical, cognitive (thinking), social and emotional. When we see that they are doing well at these tasks, we consider them to be developing successfully.

Early adolescence, the stage of life between childhood and adolescence, is usually thought of as the ages of roughly 10 to 14. It’s an exciting, sometimes scary time in the life of a child-growing-into-an-adolescent because of the major changes that take place during these years.

Adolescence has been described by some as a time of “storm and stress” and a time where one moment the teen acts as an adult and the next a child. Teens can be challenging, changing, wonderfully creative and stimulating individuals at this time of their development. It is also a time when a teen’s interest in club or group activities may change.

Six “Jobs” of Early Adolescents

Young people aged 10 to 14 or 15 have six interrelated “jobs” to accomplish during early adolescence:

- Increase positive feelings about themselves and who they are.
- Increase positive feelings about their changing bodies.
- Become more responsible and develop decision-making skills.
- Become increasingly independent.
- Develop better interpersonal communications skills.
- Begin to think about a plan for the future.

Six “Jobs” of Adolescents and Older Teens

Young people aged 14 or 15 to 19 have six interrelated “jobs” to accomplish during adolescence.

- Increase and maintain knowledge of self and self-esteem.
- Learn to be increasingly responsible and make complex decisions.
- Set goals and develop strategies to reach those goals.
- Become increasingly independent from parents.
- Develop strong relationship skills.
- Increase interpersonal communications skills.

While these are general statements about young people in this age group, it is important to remember that not all young people develop at the same rate. What is “normal” for one teen may not describe another teen’s behavior. Individual differences play a big role in how children behave and what they like to do. Sometimes teens’ development is uneven. For example, while physically they may look older than others who are the same age, the same teens may be behind their peers in their social skills. Furthermore, teens are influenced by the people and places with whom and where they spend their time: with family, friends, school and community, as well as by heredity, temperament, personality, health, cultural influences and environmental influences.

To learn more about adolescent development, refer to sources such as:

- The Michigan 4-H Youth Development web site
 - Early adolescents – web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/earlyad.html

- Older youth – web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/olderyou.html
- *Ages and Stages of Child and Youth Development: A Guide for 4-H Leaders* (NCR292), by Jeanne Karns and Judith A. Myers-Walls, Department of Child Development and Family Studies, Lafayette, IN: Purdue University. You can find this bulletin online at agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/Pubs/NCR/NCR-292.html
- Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERNET): cyfernet.org/
- The Gesell Institute of Human Development: gesellinstitute.org/
- Search Institute: search-institute.org/
- *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14*, by Chip Woods (2007). Available through: responsiveclassroom.org

Making Learning Experiential

The materials in this handbook are designed to help young people learn by doing. The activities give them the opportunity to think about and practice the knowledge and skills they are acquiring. This is accomplished by having the young people go through the “Do – Reflect – Apply” steps of experiential learning:

Do:

- The teens do or experience an activity. This could involve making something, playing a game or solving a problem.

Reflect:

- Next, the teens share what they think happened in the experience. They think about what they did, how it felt, whether it was easy or difficult, and more.
- They also process or analyze the experience by reflecting on the problems or issues that came up for them.

Apply:

- Next, they generalize the experience by connecting it to real-world examples. This is the “so what?” portion of experiential learning.
- And finally, they apply what they’ve learned by thinking about it in terms of new situations that might happen now or in the future.

Most of the activities in this handbook are designed around this experiential learning model. The “Talking It Over” section of these activities suggests questions you can ask to help the teens complete the learning cycle for a particular activity.

“Learn By Doing”: The Experiential Learning Model



From Curriculum Development for Issues Programming: A National Handbook for Extension Youth Development Professionals (1992), Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, pp. 27-28. Also in Pfeiffer, J. W., and Jones, J. E. (1985). *The Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals*, Vol. 1-10, 1972-1985. San Diego, CA: University Associates Publishers and Consultants.

Guide the Questions, Not the Answers*

The “Talking It Over” section of each activity is the time for teens to reflect on the experience by sharing thoughts and feelings, processing and generalizing it, and applying what they learned to future life experiences.

When guiding the “Talking It Over” sessions, consider the following:

- Give the teens time to think of and express their answers, which may mean waiting quietly and encouraging them.
- Don't answer questions *for* the teens. Acknowledge every answer so that the group members don't feel that they have failed to please you. The questions are deliberately open-ended to allow for a range of individual answers, which you should receive openly even if they differ from your opinions.
- Encourage the teens to think deeply. Short or superficial responses could indicate that the teens need to think in greater depth about a question. Use follow-up comments to help them transfer their experiences into understanding, such as “Can you talk more about that?” “Would you share an example of what you mean?” “Why do you think that is so?” “What about another perspective?”

*Adapted from *Guiding the Journey: Theatre Arts Adventures Helper's Guide*. (1999, 4HCCS 6874), by the 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System. St. Paul, MN: Regents of the University of Minnesota. p. 11.

Guiding Principles for Positive Youth Development*

As you work with your 4-H youth conservation council, strive to build the following principles into the learning environment and experiences that you create:

- **Give your group members opportunities to develop positive relationships with adults and peers.**
These sustained relationships play a critical role in nurturing the positive development of young people.

- **Help teens in your group feel physically and emotionally safe.** They will learn more and participate more fully when they feel both physically and emotionally safe. Help provide a structured yet flexible environment that encourages honesty, trust and respect within the group.
- **Help teens be actively engaged in their own development.** Give them opportunities to think about their “selves” both now and in the future.
- **Help teens actively participate in their own learning.** Provide opportunities for teens to choose learning topics in which they are interested. Try to include activities that take into account a variety of learning styles.
- **Help teens develop skills that will help them succeed.** Provide hands-on educational opportunities that relate to a variety of life skills, including decision making, problem solving, critical thinking and many more.
- **Help teens recognize, understand and appreciate multiculturalism.** Provide opportunities for the group to explore their own cultural backgrounds and to interact with others from diverse backgrounds.
- **Help teens grow and contribute as active citizens through service and leadership.** Allow them opportunities to create significant roles to play so they can carry out and recognize their contributions to the group and their community.

*Michigan 4-H Youth Development. (2002). *Guiding Principles for Positive Youth Development*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, Michigan 4-H Youth Development. web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/downloads/4-HGuidingPrinciples.pdf.

Leading a 4-H Youth Conservation Council

Your Role

The 4-HYCC program is designed to help you and your group:

- Develop and improve important life skills.
- Gain hands-on experience with researching and advocating for solutions to the environmental issues facing Michigan.
- Present the “youth voice” in the local and state government policy-making process.

As an adult or teen who works with younger or less experienced 4-HYCC members, you have an important role to play. The activity directions are written for adult or teen volunteer leaders, but the activities are designed to help the group members learn for themselves. Many of the activities have the teens work cooperatively in small groups.

It’s important for you to help the group members think about what they’re learning in the 4-HYCC sessions and how they can apply their new knowledge in other situations.

Help From Other Sources

Don’t hesitate to recruit other people – such as parents, teachers, older youth, and community and business leaders – to help you with 4-HYCC activities and to find guest speakers and field trip locations. Having specific ideas for how you’d like people to help you may put them at ease and increase the odds that they’ll agree to volunteer. They may be able to help you themselves or they may be able to connect you with someone else who can. Other people’s knowledge and connections can help you develop a 4-HYCC program that meets the needs and interests of your group.

Step 1: Forming a Team

Introduction

This section explains the purpose, benefits and organizational structure of a youth conservation council and offers tips on how to form a council in your community. The information is based on the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council (M4-HYCC) model. The content and structure recommendations come from more than 10 years of teens working in partnership with adults, actively providing leadership and solving problems, and helping with program development, implementation and evaluation.

Youth Conservation Council Purpose & Goals

The purpose of a youth conservation council is to give young people aged 13 to 19 who are interested in environmental science and social studies research a chance to help solve conservation issues and learn about policy making and the democratic process.

The goals of the 4-H Youth Conservation Council are for group members to:

1. Improve their self-confidence.
2. Network at the local and state levels with other youth and with adult and peer mentors, agency professionals and government officials.
3. Increase their knowledge of science, natural resource management, social science and technology.
4. Develop their ability to draw conclusions based on research and education.
5. Apply their knowledge to make decisions concerning ways to address conservation issues.
6. Present their research findings on their chosen conservation issue or issues to a state legislative committee or to a city, township or county board.
7. Interact with young people and adults with diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds and viewpoints.
8. Gain an understanding of the democratic process and take advantage of the opportunity to influence public policy.
9. Explore a variety of careers.
10. Increase their communication, public speaking, research, computer and leadership skills.
11. Explore ways to increase public awareness of 4-H youth conservation councils, such as organizing community service projects and making public presentations.

Why Join?

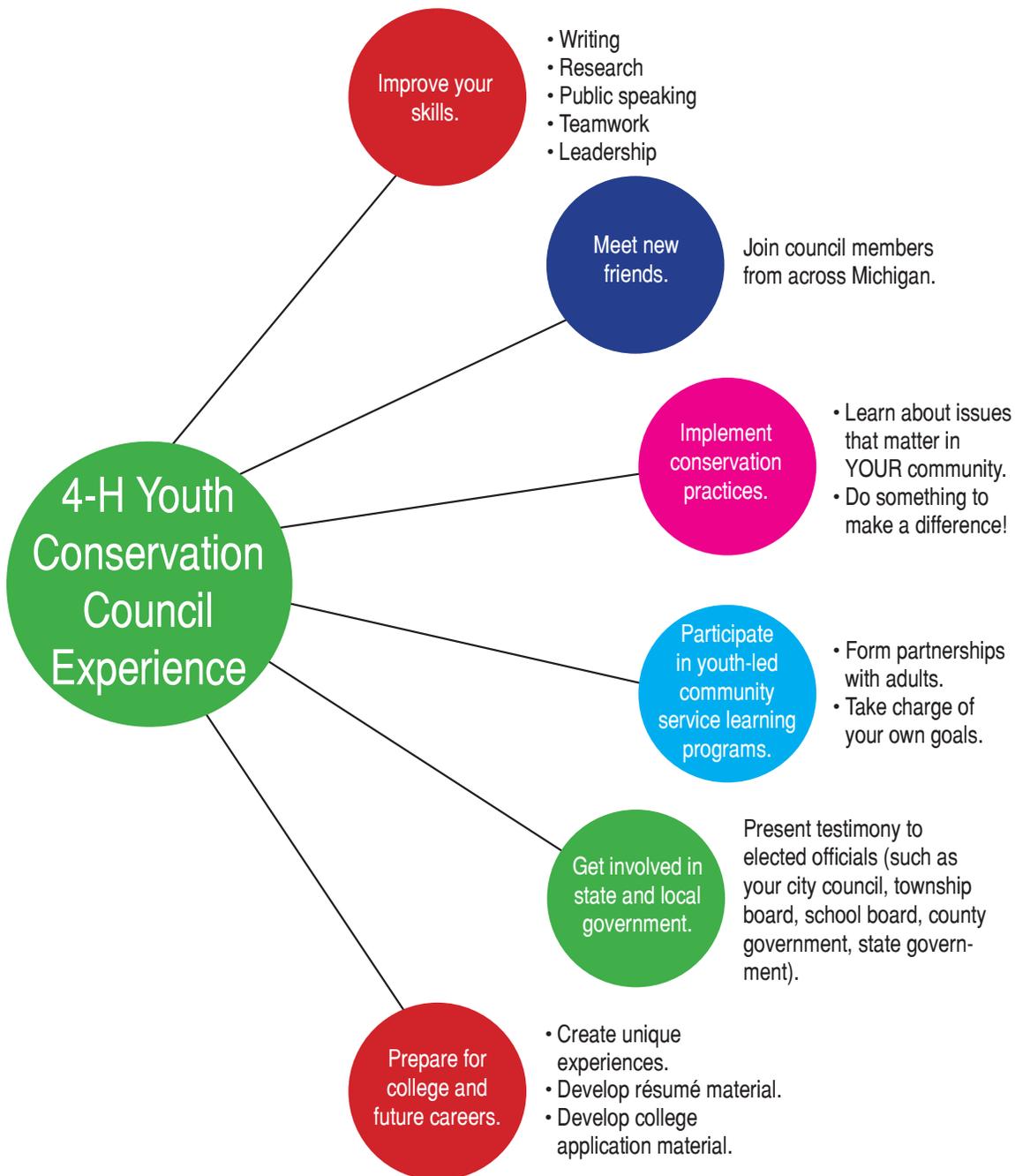
Young people aged 13 to 19 who are interested in politics, environmental issues and developing their leadership skills may find a perfect fit in a 4-H youth conservation council. Most teens who participate in a council hope to:

- Make new friends.
- Work on group community service learning projects.
- Gain experience to add to their résumés and portfolios for the State 4-H Awards program and for college and employment applications.

Teen participants:

- Plan and facilitate the meetings and activities of their youth conservation councils.
- Select a conservation issue on which to focus their group's efforts.
- Research and make recommendations on how to address the issue they've studied.
- Evaluate their own involvement in the program, the group leaders and the group's communication methods.

Why join a 4-H Youth Conservation Council?



Benefits of the Experience

The benefits of a youth conservation council experience are summarized in an article written by Ricky Tanis, a 2007–09 M4-HYCC member from Lapeer County. Tanis shares how his self-confidence, leadership, interpersonal and teamwork skills improved during his time on the council, and what he feels he learned about current conservation issues and active citizenship while providing a “youth voice” in state government policy-making.

Teen Wants to Make a Difference in World

By Ricky Tanis, Lapeer County

The Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council will be an experience I will always remember. Through this council I have improved in many areas, such as researching and public speaking, that will benefit me for the rest of my life. I am planning on signing up again next year and am looking forward to the new things I'll get to do and new people I'll get to meet.

When I first joined the council, I wasn't really sure what to expect, but once I arrived, I found out that being a part of M4-HYCC was a chance to be with other teenagers like me who want to make a difference in the world. As I learned more about the council and met the other kids in it, I realized that this was going to be a really great group to be involved with. Everything we did, we worked together and helped each other out. We would talk, work, research and of course, laugh together, making everything we did – whether in work or play – enjoyable.

I got to attend several events that I would not have had the opportunity to otherwise, including the UP 4-H Leadermete, the 4-H Environmental and Outdoor Education Leader Training, and our M4-HYCC final presentation to a joint Michigan House and Senate committee on “The Effect of Phosphorus on the Great Lakes.” I was able to bring something back from each of these experiences that I will not forget.

Our presentation to the joint session of the House Great Lakes and Environment Committee and Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee at the climax of this year's council was, undoubtedly, an experience that sticks out above all the rest. Researching the subject material, working with other members and preparing our talk were all useful for strengthening my teamwork skills. I also was able to collaborate with my state representative, who provided me with much information about a bill that was in progress on this subject.

The runoff from the use of phosphorus in fertilizers and detergents has caused a build-up in Michigan's lakes. This issue has only recently become a matter of public concern. The state legislators were interested in hearing our findings and I appreciated learning something about procedures and protocol in government meetings like the one we attended. I believe the members of this committee will keep in mind the points we made in our presentation when this issue comes up again on the floor of the House and Senate. I feel the efforts of the Council really paid off on this subject. The legislators seemed interested in the information we brought them and were grateful to see youth getting involved in statewide issues. Overall, our final report – and the hard work we put into it – should certainly make a positive impact in Michigan.

The Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council was a valuable endeavor that I am glad to have been able to contribute to. People have asked me whether they should check out the council, and my answer is always the same. It doesn't matter what you plan on doing with your life – be it veterinarian, politician or farmer – the experiences you gain through the M4-HYCC will be a part of shaping your future, no matter which direction that future takes you.

Roles & Responsibilities for Youth & Adult Members

The youth conservation council organizational structure includes teens working in partnerships with teen and adult advisors. The role of the teen advisor in the youth conservation council is important for encouraging successful youth leadership. In the M4-HYCC program, members may apply to become teen advisors after successfully completing two or more years with the council. Teen advisors for local youth conservation councils could be members interested in taking on leadership responsibilities for the council who have demonstrated leadership skills in another program setting. The recommended roles and responsibilities for youth and adult members of a council are outlined in this section.

All Members

All members of a 4-H youth conservation council are expected to:

- Attend regular meetings.
- Be willing to participate in all activities.
- Complete tasks and assignments in a timely manner.
- Respond in a timely manner to e-mail, telephone and face-to-face communication related to the group.
- Have an “I can” attitude.
- Be willing to learn and be helpful to others.
- Communicate concerns and problems to teen and adult advisors.
- Help teen advisors arrange meetings, create agendas and keep meetings on task.
- Lead tasks and projects based on their own comfort levels and abilities.

Teen Advisors

Teen advisors to a 4-H youth conservation council are expected to:

- Lead by example in fulfilling the expectations for all group members that are listed above.
- Act as mentors to all council members by answering their questions, offering advice on research assignments and helping address concerns and conflicts.
- Support effective communication between all team members.
- Communicate challenging issues to adult advisors.
- Set up, plan and facilitate meetings.
- Keep meetings on task.
- Encourage member involvement and leadership.
- Be willing to participate in outreach activities.
- Consider joining the statewide Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council if they currently are involved in a county-based council.

Adult Advisors

Adult advisors to a 4-H youth conservation council are expected to:

- Remember that their job is to advise youth, rather than to direct them, on how to operate the council.
- Follow Michigan and county MSU Extension rules and procedures, including the MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process and the Youth-Adult Housing Policy for 4-H Overnight Events.

- Attend all meetings.
- Provide guidance and ask and answer questions to promote thought and action.
- Help participants evaluate the accuracy of the information they discover during their research.
- Help participants understand the information they discover during their research.
- Explain to the group the proper procedures for interacting with professionals and government officials.
- Organize transportation.
- Help coordinate communication, meetings, budget management and fund-raising.
- Help resolve communication problems.
- Support and consult with the group's teen advisors.

Promotion & Recruiting

The most successful way to recruit participants for a youth conservation council is for teens to talk to other teens about the program benefits and their own interest in and excitement about the experience. Other proven methods include:

- Asking your county MSU Extension staff to include descriptions of the program in their newsletter and on their web site.
- Posting flyers at local youth centers, schools or community events.
- Having current participants speak at 4-H club meetings and county, regional and state 4-H events.
- Using the M4-HYCC promotional materials (online at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/m4hycc.html) as models for creating similar materials for your own group:
 - M4-HYCC promotional flyer
 - M4-HYCC member application
 - M4-HYCC promotional electronic slide show

YCC Budget Template

Learning to manage the income and expenses for a project such as a youth conservation council is an important life skill for teens to master, and one they'll probably need adult help with, at least at first. They could use the budget template that follows to inserting their own budget figures, or set up a simple spreadsheet using software such as Microsoft Excel or OpenOffice CALC, or a paper ledger.

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Total
Income													
Grant													
Fund-raising													
Other													
<i>Total</i>													
Expenses													
Travel													
Snacks													
Supplies													
Other													

YCC Grant Opportunities

Check the Michigan 4-H Youth Development environmental and outdoor education web site at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/eoe/grants.html#Grants for current grant opportunities.

Step 2: Developing a Team

Introduction

This section covers the following topics:

- Creating and maintaining authentic teen and adult partnerships
- Helping teens learn to be effective facilitators
- Providing leadership opportunities for teens
- Creating a fun learning environment
- Using dynamic team-building and recreation activities
- Developing a program timeline
- Establishing a meeting format
- Identifying and using effective team communication strategies
- Creating and using a participant self-evaluation tool

Authentic Partnerships

Authentic teen and adult partnerships are essential when involving teens in program planning, implementation, problem solving and evaluation during meetings and activities.

Building and sustaining the team's fortitude and participants' interest in the program is critical to the success of the program and project. Providing youth leadership opportunities and a fun learning environment are key ingredients. Including get-acquainted, team-building, energizer and recreational activities throughout the program will support a fun learning environment. Engaging teens in peer teaching using a facilitator role model and facilitation skills will develop their self-confidence and leadership skills, and help connect other teens to the program activities and meetings. In addition, peer teaching supports modeling and encourages other teens to continue with the program because they know they can have similar leadership opportunities in the future. It's important to plan and provide training opportunities for the teens to help them develop the facilitation skills they need to succeed in this role.

Youth Facilitator Role & Tools

Understanding the role of a youth facilitator and having the teens use facilitation tools for leading activities and meetings will support the development of teen leadership and other teen member's interest in the program. The following facilitation techniques and methods are recommended:

- *What's the Difference Between...?* – An exercise to understand the unique features of the facilitation role for leading meetings and activities.
- *Meeting Ground Rules and Desired Outcomes* – A facilitation tool to encourage the involvement of each team member in the current meeting activities, discussions, and decisions, and then evaluate their group successes at the end of the meeting.
- *How to Lead an Activity* – A facilitation tool that offers tips for presenting a team-building or recreational activity.
- *Creating a Timeline and Meeting Agenda* – A facilitation tool to help the group plan and organize meeting agendas, identify project deadlines, plan activities and events, and accomplish program goals. Give the group the option of revising these throughout the year.

Get-Acquainted, Energizer & Team-Building Activities

Try to include team-building, get-acquainted, energizer and recreational activities for improving team dynamics – as well as just having fun – at every meeting. Emphasize the get-acquainted and team-building activities during the early meetings when team members are just getting to know each other and starting to work together. Use the energizer and recreational activities to continue to support a fun learning environment and when young people could benefit from physical exercise to improve their thinking or to just get out of their chairs! The activities and resources that follow are favorites of current and past M4-HYCC members.

Get-Acquainted Activities

Get-acquainted activities help group members get to know each other while having fun. The following get-acquainted activities are easy to lead, can be used for short or long intervals, and are great for getting to know each other or just having fun! (A few more get-acquainted activities, including the “Introduce Yourself Online Game” and the “4-HYCC Treasure Hunt” appear later in this section.)

- **Toilet Paper Game:** In this popular get-acquainted activity, participants are asked to share personal information with the group in a fun, nonthreatening environment. Group members are asked to tear off the amount of toilet paper they estimate they’ll need for the day. Then they take turns sharing one fact about themselves for each toilet paper square they have. (You can also substitute chocolate-coated candies such as M&Ms or Reese’s Pieces for toilet paper.)
- **Have You Ever:** This is a fun moving game for sharing names and experiences. Form a circle of chairs with all but one person seated in a chair. The chairless person stands in the middle of the circle and asks the question: “Have you ever . . .” and fills in the blank with an experience they’ve had (such as cross-country skiing, biking a rails-to-trails path or playing Guitar Hero). If the other participants have had that experience, they get up out of their chairs and find a new chair – but neither of the two chairs next to them. The person left standing after everyone else has found a new chair introduces himself or herself and gives a new “Have you ever . . .”
- **Group Juggle or Name Toss Game:** This get-acquainted activity engages the entire group. The activity begins with the participants passing one ball around a circle and each person saying his or her name while holding the ball. As the game continues, the leader tosses more balls into the circle and challenges the group to continue the juggling and name sharing without letting any of the balls hit the floor. Each participant must touch each ball one time.
- **Blanket Game:** In this speedy get-acquainted name game, the activity begins with splitting the group into two teams. Two volunteers hold a blanket up between the two teams while one person from each team steps up to the blanket. At a signal, the blanket holders drop the blanket and the two contestants try to be the first to say each other’s name.

Energizers

Energizers are short, simple, enjoyable activities that usually include physical movement. These activities can be used when attention spans begin to wane or the group needs movement to break up the more sedentary activities.

- **Helium Hoops:** This activity requires focus, patience and cooperation. To start, 4 to 10 participants gather around a hula hoop that is placed on the floor. Their challenge is to work as a group to lift the hula hoop off the floor, with each person using only the pointer fingers from each hand. Everyone must keep those two fingers in contact with the hula hoop at all times!
- **Popcorn:** Everyone is on the same team in this high-energy activity that demands physical exercise and teamwork! Place an empty box or basket on the floor in the middle of the room. Use a rope to make a circle on the floor around the box about 4 feet out. Then scatter about 50 to 100 plastic balls around the

room. The object of the game is to get all of the balls in the basket at the same time following these three rules:

- The balls must bounce once inside the barrier circle before going into the box.
 - From the instant players touch a ball they can't move their feet until they get rid of the ball.
 - If a ball stops within the barrier circle, players can't enter the circle to retrieve it.
- **Egg, Chicken, Dinosaur:** This simple and fun activity gets teens up and moving. To start the game, everyone squats with knees bent (the egg stage). The eggs approach each other and play Rock, Paper, Scissors (RPS). The winner progresses to the chicken stage (standing up and flapping his or her arms like wings). The loser stays at the egg stage until he or she wins a match and becomes a chicken. Chickens play RPS with other chickens, with the loser starting over as an egg and the winner advancing to the dinosaur stage and leaving the game. The game ends when one player is stuck at the egg stage and one is stuck at the chicken stage so that neither can progress to the dinosaur stage.
- **Rubber Chicken Baseball:** This is a fun and energizing game featuring two teams and a rubber chicken. Divide the group into two teams. Have the teams form lines with the first person on one team standing about 10 feet from the first person on the other team. The other players then line up behind their team's leader. Give the rubber chicken to the first person in line on one team or the other. (You could choose who gets the chicken first by flipping a coin or having the leaders play Rock, Paper, Scissors.) The game starts when the team leader with the chicken throws the chicken toward the other team. The receiving team passes the chicken from person to person to the end of the line, alternating over-the-head and between-the-legs passes. When the chicken reaches the end of the line the last person yells "chicken!" While the receiving team is passing the chicken, the person who threw the chicken runs around his or her teammates. The tossing team earns one point for each lap the runner completes before the receiving team yells "chicken." The game continues with the teams taking turns being the tossing and receiving teams. The game ends when each team completes five or more rounds or when break time is over. The team with the most points wins. (Next time the group plays this game, be sure to mix up the team members.)

Recommended Resources for Team-Building Activities

Team-building activities challenge the group's communication, trust, decision-making and problem-solving skills. The following recommended activities appear in the books listed in the "Recommend Resources for Activity Ideas" section.

- Pipeline, Lap Stack and Great Egg Drop (Cavert, 1999)
- Traffic Jam, Boop and Line Up (Project Adventure, 1995)
- Buddy Ropes, Pairs Walk or Trust Walk, and Key Punch (Rohnke & Butler, 1995)
- Yurt Circle, Blindfold Square and Unblindfolded Square (Smith, 2007)

Recommended Resources for Activity Ideas

These books have get-acquainted, team-building and energizer activities. You may be able to find them in your local library or bookstore, or from online retailers.

Cavert, C. (1999). *Affordable portables: A working book of initiative activities and problem solving elements*. Oklahoma City, OK: Wood N Barnes Publishing and Distribution.

Project Adventure. (1995). *Youth leadership in action*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Rohnke, K. (1984). *Silver bullets: A guide to initiative problems, adventure games and trust activities*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Rohnke, K., & Butler, S. (1995). *Quicksilver: Adventure games, initiative problems, trust activities and a guide to effective leadership*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Smith, T. (2007). *Raccoon circles*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Recreational Activities

Recreational activities can be indoor or outdoor individual or group games, challenges or field trips. They often include physical exercise, relaxation and social time. Examples include:

- Card and table games
- Outdoor hikes at local parks and nature centers or on other public trails
- Seasonal sports such as volleyball, bowling, basketball, cross-country skiing, sledding, geocaching, canoeing and fishing
- Local events, festivals and other community activities

Tips on Leading Get-Acquainted, Team-Building & Energizer Activities

Review the following tips and the “Do, Reflect, Apply” experiential learning model information before facilitating an activity. The “Talking It Over” processing questions provided after each activity are designed to help the participants with the important “reflect” and “apply” steps.

1. Read the activity description ahead of time to become familiar with its objectives, instructions and space requirements, and to give yourself time to gather materials and equipment you will need.
2. Stand where everyone in the group can see you and you can see them. Being able to make eye contact with the group members is important.
3. Speak clearly and loudly enough so everyone in the group can hear you, but try not to yell.
4. Give the basic instructions for an activity, then ask if anyone has questions.
5. When the group actually begins the activity, remember that you’ve given the instructions and a chance to ask questions, so try to resist the temptation to repeat the instructions and answer new questions. Encourage the participants to rely on other group members to answer new questions. Listening to others and being willing to help others are important teamwork skills.
6. Facilitate discussion during any conflicts or misunderstandings that may occur during the activity. Be sure to ask people on both sides of the conflict to give their point of view and their solutions and encourage discussion and resolution. Try not to solve the problem for the group.
7. Remember the group’s success will be based as much on whether they achieve their teamwork goals (such as cooperating, listening, communicating, having fun, getting to know others), as on whether they complete the task at hand.
8. Observe the time limits for the activity.
9. At the end of the activity encourage participants to talk about their thoughts and feelings related to the group’s team-building skills.
10. After you’ve led the group through an activity, ask another teen or your adult advisor to comment on how you did leading the activity. Then talk over the following questions with the person:
 - What do you think you did well?
 - What challenges (if any) did you have leading the activity?
 - What will you do differently the next time you lead an activity?

ACTIVITY:

What's the Difference Between...?*

*Adapted with permission from MSU Extension LeadNet materials.

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Learn about the value of facilitating group discussion and the group decision-making process.
- Recognize the difference between giving a presentation, leading a meeting and facilitating a group process.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Leadership
- Communication

MATERIALS:

- 8.5-inch by 11-inch paper or index cards (about 20)
- Markers
- Masking tape (optional)

TIME:

20 minutes

SETTING:

Room with open floor space

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Reproduce each cell of the following table on 8.5-inch by 11-inch sheets of paper or index cards.

	Giving a Presentation	Leading a Meeting	Facilitating a Group Process
Goal	Share information with an audience.	Discuss agenda items and make decisions.	Help a group work toward a goal.
Your Role	An expert who knows the topic well.	An expert who knows “Robert’s Rules of Order” and other methods for getting things done in a group.	An expert who knows tools for brainstorming, prioritizing and decision-making; you encourage others to share opinions and ideas.
Your Opinions	You may choose to express informed opinions about the topic.	You express your opinions about discussion topics and encourage others to do the same.	You remain neutral and do not express your opinions about topics.
Frequently Used Materials	Electronic slides, handouts, diagrams, charts, graphs.	Agendas, minutes, data relevant to agenda items.	Flip charts, markers, tape, sticky dots, self-stick notes.

2. Clear a space on the floor in your meeting area in which the group can put together the puzzle (rebuild the table).
3. Lay the column and row header pieces on the floor in the appropriate order. If your meeting space has a big enough table, you could also set up the puzzle there. You may want to tape these pieces on the floor to protect the arrangement. Scramble the order of the remaining cards.

During the meeting:

1. Explain to the group that they're going to put a puzzle together that will help them explore the differences between several methods of sharing information and leading a group, including giving a presentation, leading a meeting and facilitating a group process. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Understanding the difference between giving a presentation, leading a meeting and facilitating a group process can be very useful for helping you become effective youth leaders in our youth conservation council. As a council, you will work together to prepare and give a presentation to a government board or committee. You'll also organize and lead our meetings. Now we're going to talk about facilitation tools that will help all of you lead group discussions and decision-making processes. I hope that as you learn to use these tools effectively, they'll also help you participate more effectively as individuals and as group members in consensus building as we work as a team toward achieving our common goals.

2. Explain that the remaining cards are the pieces that will fill in the empty squares and create the chart. Have each participant take one card. (Depending on the size of your group, some people may have to share puzzle pieces or some people may have more than one piece.) Point out the framework you've laid out with the column and header rows of the puzzle, then tell them they'll have to work together to decide how to arrange the pieces of the information puzzle so that it makes sense.
3. Ask for a volunteer to start putting the puzzle together by holding up and reading aloud the content of his or her card, then placing it in the appropriate spot in the table. Have the person explain why he or she chose to put the piece in that spot. After the explanation, ask the rest of the group whether they agree with where the person put the piece. If anyone disagrees, ask to explain their opinions. Continue this process until all of the pieces are in place. Ask the group to review the completed puzzle and make any final adjustments.
4. Finally, talk with the group about the differences between the three techniques of sharing information outlined in the puzzle.

Talking It Over:

When you've finished discussing the information in the completed puzzle, ask the group the following questions:

- Name one situation in which it would be appropriate to give a presentation. Lead a meeting? Facilitate a group process?
- Name a situation when each of these techniques would NOT be the best method of sharing information and leading a group process.
- Why is it helpful to use facilitation skills during a group decision-making process and for sharing information? How about during a disagreement between two or more individuals? Are "majority rules" and playing Rock, Paper, Scissors the only methods for making a group decision? What other techniques could a group use for consensus building for an idea, solution, disagreement or project?

ACTIVITY:

Meeting Ground Rules & Desired Outcomes*

**Adapted with permission from MSU Extension LeadNet materials.*

OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

- Create a set of ground rules that will support positive individual and group behaviors and help the group achieve their short- and long-term goals.
- Create a list of desired outcomes or short-term goals for each meeting.
- Identify long-term goals and include long-term goals in their timelines.
- Evaluate whether the group has achieved the desired outcomes at the end of the meeting.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Contributions to group effort
- Teamwork
- Self-responsibility
- Planning and organizing
- Goal setting

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking tape

TIME:

20 minutes

SETTING:

A comfortable indoor or outdoor space

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Review the activity. Write the sample list of ground rules that follow on a sheet of newsprint and display the list where everyone can see it, but cover it up for now.
2. Gather any other supplies you may need to conduct the activity.

Sample Ground Rules:

- Participate fully.
- Keep an open mind.
- Respect each other, even when you disagree.
- Give one person the chance to speak at a time.
- Keep comments short.

- Have fun!
 - Give honest, constructive feedback and receive it graciously.
 - Refrain from making incendiary comments.
 - Use constructive criticism.
 - Don't argue for the sake of arguing.
 - End meetings on time.
 - Set your cell phone on vibrate.
 - Refrain from extra talking, listening to mp3 or other music players, or using Facebook, MySpace or other social media sites during the meeting.
5. Gather any other supplies you may need for the activity.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group that now they're going to talk about two terms they're likely to hear in business meetings and training settings for the rest of their lives: "ground rules" and "desired outcomes." Explain that first they're going to create a list of ground rules to help things run smoothly as they work toward their "desired outcomes," or short-term goals, for the meeting.
2. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Ground rules are a set of guidelines for how people should behave in a specific situation, such as this meeting. Ground rules aren't magic. Even if we use them, we'll still have some problems. Yet when groups follow ground rules, they're better able to talk, solve problems and make decisions together.

3. Ask the group to create a list of ground rules for their meetings. After they've finished their list, uncover the sample list of rules. Ask the group to read and discuss the rules from the sample list and add to their list any of the rules that apply to their group. Remind the group that these are their meeting rules and they'll be expected to do their best to follow these rules for the rest of the meetings.
4. Display the list where everyone can see it, and refer to it as needed throughout the meeting. (**Note:** You may want to keep the ground rules sheets and display them at later meetings, too.)
5. Next, explain that "desired outcomes" are what your group hopes to achieve during a specific time frame, such as this meeting. Write one or two of your own desired outcomes for the meeting on a sheet of newsprint, then ask the group what they hope to accomplish at this meeting. Record their answers on the newsprint and display the sheet where everyone can see it.

(Facilitator Note: Because this may be the group's first meeting, the participants may not have a clear idea of what they could or should hope to accomplish at this meeting. You may need to suggest desired outcomes if the group is struggling, but it's important for the teens to lead the discussion.)

TALKING IT OVER:

At the end of the meeting, review the lists of ground rules and desired outcomes with the group. Ask them the following questions:

- How did we do at following the ground rules we created?
- Was it useful to have a set of ground rules to follow for the meeting? Why or why not?
- Now that we've been through an entire meeting, are there any changes you would make to our ground rules?

- How did we do at reaching our desired outcomes for the meeting? Are there any outcomes that we'll need to address at our next meeting, next month or in the next three months? (**Note:** Remind them to include in the timeline any outcomes or actions that will take longer than one meeting to accomplish.)
- Do you think having a set of desired outcomes to keep in mind helped us accomplish more than we would have without them? Why or why not?
- In what other situations might having a set of ground rules or desired outcomes be useful to you?

SAMPLE GET-ACQUAINTED ACTIVITY:

The Introduce Yourself Online Game

By Darren Bagley, M4-HYCC Advisor

(Facilitator Note: This game was originally created to encourage the teens to use the M4-HYCC e-mail discussion list. County-based programs could use the game to connect the members and share e-mail addresses, even if your group is not using an e-mail discussion list. It can be especially useful if team members are forming new friendships.)

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Exchange e-mail addresses and use e-mail to carry out group communications.
- Get to know other group members in a fun and creative way.
- Follow up with a get-acquainted activity at a face-to-face meeting using the results of this online game.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Communication
- Social skills

MATERIALS:

- Computers with Internet access
- “Introduce Yourself On-Line Game” e-mail message (one per person)
- “Human Treasure Hunt” game sheet
- Pencils

TIME:

- 15 minutes (online game)
- 15 minutes (in person)

PROCEDURES:

Before the meeting:

6. Send a blank copy of the 38-question “Introduce Yourself Online Game” list that follows to each teen and adult council member with instructions to:
 - Click on “reply all” and answer as many of the questions in the message as they are comfortable responding to.
 - E-mail the results to the rest of the group so that they can learn more about each other. Give them several days to complete the task. You may have to send reminders to those who haven’t sent their responses yet.

Introduce Yourself Online Game List

My name is: _____

- My aunt/uncle once:
- Never in my life:
- When I was 5:

- High school was/is:
- I will never forget:
- I once met:
- There's this person I know who:
- Once, at a movie:
- By noon I'm usually:
- Last night:
- If I only had:
- I would like to meet:
- I like:
- When I turn my head left, I see:
- When I turn my head right, I see:
- In grade school:
- If I were a character created by Shakespeare, I'd be:
- By this time next year:
- A better name for me would be:
- I have a hard time understanding:
- If I ever go (back) to college I'll:
- You know I like you if:
- If I won an award, the first person I'd thank would be:
- I hope that:
- Take my advice:
- My ideal breakfast is:
- A song I love, but do not own is:
- If you visit my hometown, I suggest you visit:
- Why won't anyone:
- If you visit my house:
- The world could do without:
- I'd rather lick the belly of a cockroach than:
- My favorite ice cream flavor is:
- Paper clips are more useful than:
- And by the way:
- The last time I was embarrassed, I:
- My grandmother/grandfather always:
- The world could do without:

7. After the response deadline has passed, compile a human treasure hunt sheet from the group's e-mails. Try to use two or three bits of information from each person's online responses on the sheet. A sample you could use as a guide follows.

Sample Human Treasure Hunt Sheet

_____ A song I love, but do not own is: *Hey Jude by the Beatles.*

_____ The world could do without: *War.*

_____ Take my advice: *Eat your fruits and vegetables.*

_____ When I was 5: *I played in a sandbox for hours every day.*

8. Make one photocopy of the human treasure hunt sheet for each person.
9. Review the activity and gather any other materials you may need to conduct it.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group they're going to play a human treasure hunt game to help them put faces to the names and personalities they started to learn about during the e-mail exchange. Pass out the treasure hunt sheets and pencils.
2. Ask the teens and adults to walk around the room introducing themselves and identifying the people to whom each bit of information on the sheet applies. When they do so, the other person should sign the sheet in the appropriate space. Each person should sign each sheet only once.

TALKING IT OVER:

- Did you have any trouble sending or receiving e-mail to or from the group? If you did, how did you resolve the problem?
- Name one person who surprised you with his or her answers in the e-mail introduction and tell why you were surprised.
- What did you like about the e-mail and face-to-face activities? What did you dislike?
- In what other situations might an online get-acquainted activity such as this be useful?

ACTIVITY:

Creating a Timeline & Meeting Agenda*

**Adapted with permission from MSU Extension LeadNet materials.*

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Create a timeline of tasks, activities, events and meeting dates to organize and coordinate their efforts.
- Use the timeline to create current and future meeting agendas.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Planning and organizing
- Self-discipline

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking tape
- “Create Your Own Timeline” handout (one per person)
- Pens or pencils
- Colored pencils (optional)

TIME:

20 minutes (first meeting)

5–10 minutes (updates and revisions at future meetings)

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Make one photocopy of the “Create Your Own Timeline” handout for each person.
2. Review the activity and gather any other supplies you need to carry out the activity.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group they’re going to create a timeline for tasks, deadlines, activities, events and meetings that they know they could be involved in over the next six months.
2. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

A timeline is a technique for helping organize tasks and information in chronological order. Timelines can include events that have happened in the past, such as previous accomplishments, or events that a person or group is planning for the future. Timelines can serve as part of a work plan to help keep a project on track. Companies and government agencies use timelines to plan projects before they begin, and to track their progress once they’ve started. Sometimes there are penalties if a contractor falls behind on a project’s timeline, and rewards if the contractor finishes ahead of schedule.

3. Distribute the “Create Your Own Timeline” handout and pens or pencils. Brainstorm a list of tasks and activities with the group to accomplish the eight steps for creating a 4-H youth conservation council. Write their ideas on newsprint so everyone can see the list.

4. Next, have them work as a group to arrange the tasks in the order of when they need to be accomplished. Point out that the column headings are there just as a starting point and can be changed to better fit their timeline. Note that sometimes it's helpful to color-code entries in a timeline by types of activities, such as listing scheduled meetings in one color, tasks to be completed in another, and so on. Combining everyone's suggestions while creating a group timeline for the entire youth conservation council will help guide their meeting content and help them accomplish their group goals.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- Did you have trouble thinking of events to fill in on your timeline?
- What can happen when a project falls behind its original timeline?
- When might a timeline be useful to a group? To an individual?
- Can you think of a project or series of events in your life that a timeline would help you plan and track?

HANDOUT: 

Create a Group Timeline

Use the following blank chart to create your own timeline for meeting dates, tasks, activities or events related to your 4-H youth conservation council. Write dates and tasks in each space. If you need to, change the column headings to suit your timeline.

Meeting Dates With Tasks or Activities

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.

Creating Meeting Agendas & Working Timelines

Creating a working program timeline for meeting dates, tasks and field trips is important for helping a team achieve its purpose, goals and project focus. The timeline will help the teens write meeting agendas, assess their accomplishments and identify their next steps. The timeline should be organized by meeting dates and task deadlines. The meetings can be held once or twice a month over 9 to 12 months. A typical meeting lasts for 2 or 3 hours, depending on how focused the group is and whether the agenda includes a recreational activity.

A 2.5-hour meeting agenda may include the following key components:

20 minutes	Start out with a get-acquainted or team-building activity
10 minutes	Ground rules and desired outcomes for today's meeting
45-60 minutes	Project activities
10 minutes	Snack and an energizer activity (quick movement activities used when attention starts to wane)
20 minutes	Review meeting ground rules and outcomes and check the timeline for help planning the next meeting date and agenda
30 minutes	Recreational activity and adjourn

Recommended YCC Timeline & Meeting Content

The timelines and meeting content that follow are based on holding 2- to 3-hour meetings once or twice a month and following the eight steps outlined in this guide. The content for each meeting will fill the 45- to 60-minute "project activities" segment of your overall meeting.

Meeting 1 (See "Step 1: Forming a Team and Helpful Resources")

- Review the purpose and goals of a 4-HYCC, why you should join and the benefits of participating in a YCC. Follow with discussion of your group's short- and long-term expectations.
- Watch the 4-HYCC electronic slide show on the M4-HYCC web site.
- Discuss the YCC partnership between youth and adults and the roles and responsibilities of youth and adults in YCC.
- Discuss why team communication is important to the group's success.
- Complete the youth conservation council pre-program evaluation survey.

Meeting 2 (See "Step 2: Developing the Team")

- Conduct the "What's the Difference Between . . . ?" activity to help participants understand the youth facilitator role.
- Introduce facilitation skills by encouraging a youth member to conduct the "Meeting Ground Rules and Desired Outcomes" activity, and a get-acquainted or team-building activity by referencing the "Tips on Leading Get-Acquainted, Energizer and Team-Building Activities" and the resource books listed in the "Recommended References" section.
- Begin creating a working timeline for the group. Identify dates, times and location for meetings and then discuss the purpose of your next meeting.
- Discuss evaluation tools and the participant self-evaluation process.

Meeting 3 (See “Step 3: Selecting a Conservation Issue”)

- Begin the process of selecting a conservation issue for the lesson to help understand the difference between conservation problems and issues. Ask the participants to bring their ideas to the next meeting for discussion and for selecting three top issues.
- Plan to invite one or more guest speakers or arrange a field trip for the next meeting to build awareness and understanding of the group’s three top conservation issues. Arrange for guest speakers such as government officials, agency professionals and business owners. (Participants can use the set of worksheets found in this book to take notes on such talks.)

Meetings 4 to 7 (See “Step 3: Selecting a Conservation Issue”)

- Continue the process of selecting an issue by doing the “Brainstorming” activity and going through the process of selecting three top issues.
- Conduct the “Sticky Dot Voting” activity to help the group select three priority issues.
- Continue the process of selecting an issue: plan a field trip or invite a guest speaker or panel of speakers to address the three top issues.
- Assign members to conduct independent research (such as gathering news clippings and information from the web) on one or more of the three issues identified in the Sticky Dot Voting activity to report on at next meeting.
- Do the “Types of Issues: Can You Make a Difference” activity and the “What is a Public Policy Issue” discussion activity to help the team select an issue while processing how they could affect public policy through their research and recommendations.
- Have group members report on the results of their independent research.
- Arrange for additional guest speakers or field trips if needed to build awareness and understanding of the three top issues.
- Conduct the “Quadrant Diagram” activity and “Making the Most of Our Efforts” activity. These activities help participants process how much of an impact they think they can have as a group on solving the issue and the likelihood of their finding research information, forming conclusions and making recommendations to government officials. Selecting a final issue will be partially based on the results of completing these activities.
- Conduct another round of sticky dot voting to help identify the highest-priority issue that will be the focus of the group’s efforts.
- Conduct the “Gradients of Agreement” activity if the highest rated issue isn’t supported by all of the group members.

Meetings 8 and 9 (See “Step 4: Researching a Conservation Issue”)

- Discuss the process of researching a conservation issue, including developing research skills, using the Internet and written resources, conducting and documenting face-to-face interviews and field trips, and preparing a bibliography.
- Discuss the guidelines for the written research report and electronic slide presentations.
- Discuss inviting a guest speaker or arranging a field trip to learn more about the issue the group has selected.
- Invite a guest speaker or arrange a field trip to learn more about the one issue the group has selected.
- Have the group write a focus statement and assign individual research projects.

Meetings 10 and 11 (See “Step 6: Learning About Government”)

- Learn about government processes by attending a school board, city, township or county government meeting.
- Discuss the governmental meeting the group attended last time and ask follow-up questions of government officials in letters or phone calls.
- Review the “What Is a Public Policy Issue” section.
- Conduct the “State Legislative Committee Meeting Role-Play” activity.
- Conduct the “County Commissioners Meeting Role-Play” activity. (**Note:** You also could delay this activity to a later meeting.)
- Plan and arrange the presentation visit to an appropriate school, city, county or township board.
- Write thank-you letters to all guest speakers, field trip site hosts and government officials.

Meeting 12 (See “Step 5: Creating a Group Written Report and Presentation”)

- Practice group and individual presentation skills.
- Report on individual research and share recommendations.

Meeting 13 (See “Step 5: Creating a Group Written Report and Presentation”)

- Deadline for individual written reports.
- Begin to compile the group’s written report, summary of recommendations, introduction, conclusion and electronic slide presentation.

Meetings 14 and 15

- Revise the written report and electronic slide show as needed.
- Discuss the presentation, including such information as how to dress and travel arrangements.
- Practice the presentation and write notes on index cards.
- Finalize the written report and electronic slide show.
- Create and distribute a pre-event news release about what the group is planning to present. Now is also a good time to write the post-event news release about what the group has done to send to the media after the presentation. (Sample releases appear in “Step 7: Telling Others About Your Work.”) Remember to send a copy of the pre-event news release to your county MSU Extension office.
- Identify a photographer (ideally not someone who is also presenting) to photograph the presentations and the group.

Meeting 16

- Deliver oral and written presentations to an appropriate school, city, township or county board.

Meeting 17 (See “Step 7: Telling Others About Your Work” and “Step 8: Do a Community Service Learning Project”)

- Debrief about the group’s presentation and follow-up questions for government officials.
- Send the post-event news release, along with a group photo, to the media. Be sure to identify who is in the photo, left to right and front to back. Remember to send a copy of the news release and photo to your county MSU Extension office.
- Plan a community service learning project. Decide what’s next for the group.

- Complete the program self-evaluation.
- Celebrate the group's success!

Meeting 18 & Beyond, If Necessary (See “Step 8: Do a Local Community Service Learning Project” and the “Helpful Resources” section)

- Carry out a community service project.
- Begin planning the next conservation issue project.
- Complete the post-program evaluation survey that appears in the “Helpful Resources” section.

Team Communication

Your group members need to discuss communication strategies early in the planning process. A great deal of learning and work are done during face-to-face meetings, but that's not the only way these things can happen. Talk with the participants about their preferred communication methods. Some possibilities include:

- Creating a group list of e-mail addresses and other contact information.
- Creating an e-mail discussion group using software such as Listserv.
- Developing a group web site.
- Using a dedicated profile or group space on a social media site such as Facebook, MySpace, LiveJournal, Wetpaint or Google Sites.

Whatever communication methods your group decides to use, taking the time to discuss communication guidelines with the participants will help prevent problems with understanding and participation.

Sample M4-HYCC Communication Guidelines

By Lisa Campion, M4-HYCC Teen Advisor

The successful functioning of the M4-HYCC program depends on effective communication through means such as our e-mail discussion list and web site. A few communications reminders that are designed to make the year go as smoothly as possible follow. (**Note:** Some of the address information in this list, such as in numbers 1 and 2, are specific to the state group.)

1. The M4-HYCC web address is web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/m4hycc.html. Scroll down the page until you see the section headed “Current Information.” Click on the link under that heading to go to the site created by the M4-HYCC teens. That site contains various helpful documents, tools and resources in the Members Area.
2. To send a message to the list, type m4-Hycc@list.msu.edu in the “To:” line of your message. E-mail sent to this address will go to all members, advisors and resource people on the list.
3. Please be considerate of what you send to the list. Stay on-topic. If you want to carry on an off-topic conversation, be sure you're sending it to the individual who is your intended recipient, NOT to the entire list.
4. When replying to an on-topic message, click “reply all” so that everyone can be involved in the ensuing discussion.
5. When you receive an e-mail message from a group member or teen or adult advisor, please respond to it, either with feedback or just with an acknowledgment that you received the message. This helps ensure that everyone receives the same information.
6. Please be courteous and kind when making comments or replying to questions – we all have feelings.

7. If you ever have a question, please e-mail the list and you will receive an answer from someone.
8. Don't ever feel shy about asking questions – the only stupid question is one that isn't asked.
9. If you agree to complete a task, please have it done by the date you agree to. If you cannot complete the task, please let someone know so you can get help from others in the group.
10. If you are unable to attend a meeting please notify your teen or adult advisor!

Evaluation Tools

This handbook includes three tools for evaluating a youth conservation council program's progress and outcomes:

- A youth self-evaluation worksheet
- A "Meeting Ground Rules and Desired Outcomes" activity
- Pre- and post-program evaluation surveys

The use of a youth self-evaluation worksheet, meeting assessment activities such as "Meeting Ground Rules and Desired Outcomes" and program evaluation tools are important for the success of a 4-H youth conservation council. Creating and managing a youth self-evaluation worksheet gives the teen members direction and a feeling of responsibility for the success of the program. It also reaffirms that the steps of the program process are the responsibility of the teen members, not the adult mentors.

Using a meeting assessment activity such as "Meeting Ground Rules and Desired Outcomes" gives the teens a chance to:

- Include their personal feelings and thoughts.
- Ensure that their individual needs, interests and ideas are met throughout the program
- Ensure that each member feels involved.

A pre- and post-program evaluation survey (see the "Helpful Resources" section) can be used to evaluate the program objectives for learning and the long-term benefits of the program. A sample M4-HYCC program self-evaluation tool follows.

EVALUATION TOOL:

Sample M4-HYCC Program Self-Evaluation

Write the number of points you've earned through participating in the M4-HYCC in the blank to the left of each item. The number in parentheses at the end of most items indicates the possible points. When you're done add up the points to find out your total score. 135 points (80 percent) are required to earn an M4-HYCC Participation Certificate and qualify to keep participating in M4-HYCC.

Attend scheduled meetings (10 points each):

- ___ Attended December state meeting
- ___ Attended January state meeting
- ___ Attended March state meeting
- ___ Attended April presentation
- ___ Attended _____ [insert date] regional meeting
- ___ Attended _____ [insert date] regional meeting
- ___ Attended _____ [insert date] regional meeting

Communication: (16 points)

Checked and responded to group e-mail:

- ___ Once a week (2)
- ___ More than twice a week (5)

Contacted regional advisor or other members to ask questions or share information:

- ___ Every other week (2)
- ___ Once a week (5)

Contacted the following people by phone or mail to talk about M4-HYCC, ask questions about the topic or offer a presentation on the topic (at least two):

- ___ State senator (3)
- ___ State representative (3)
- ___ County commissioner (3)
- ___ City councilperson (3)
- ___ Professional working in research topic area (3)
- ___ County 4-H staff member (3)
- ___ Other: _____ (3)

General Research – (8 points):

I researched the topic: _____

I cited:

- ___ Resources used (4)

I wrote:

- ___ Less than one page (2)

____ One page or more (4)

Final Research – (30 points):

I researched the topic: _____

I cited:

____ Asked for help in citing my resources (2)

____ All the resources used (5)

I wrote the introduction, conclusion or summary of recommendations for the written report:

____ Asked for help in writing (2)

____ Less than two pages (5)

____ Two pages or more (10)

I shared (web sites and articles) with other regional team members:

____ Some of my research findings with my regional team (1)

____ All of my research findings with my regional team (5)

I completed my research:

____ After the deadline (0)

____ Before the deadline (5)

I revised my report or completed additional research:

____ By the deadline (3)

Community presentations and other learning opportunities (35 points):

____ I will present this topic to additional audiences.

Date scheduled: _____ Audience: _____ (15)

____ I will complete a community service learning project in my community related to the conservation topic. (10)

____ Completed extra work for committees outside of state meeting time. (10)

Bonus Points:

____ Attended 4-H Capitol Experience (5)

____ Participated in 4-H Communications Day (5)

____ Attended 4-H Citizenship, Leadership and Service workshop in January (5)

____ Attended 4-H Environmental and Outdoor Education workshop in March (5)

____ Attended 4-H UP Leadermete in April (5)

____ Applied to attend 4-H Great Lakes Natural Resources Camp (5)

____ Each additional 4-HYCC topic presentation given (5)

____ Total Points Earned (suggested maximum points without bonus = 169)

Your Signature: _____ Date: _____

Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Step 3: Selecting a Conservation Issue

Introduction

Selecting a current conservation issue is a process of researching conservation issues and problems, determining where you can influence public policy and learning group consensus building. This section will help teens:

- Understand the difference between a conservation problem and a conservation issue.
- Gain a greater awareness of the many existing conservation issues in their community.
- Involve team members in a process of selecting one issue to research.

Taking hands-on, educational field trips and arranging for guest speakers are ways to learn more about specific conservation issues that can make meetings more interesting and fun.

Hands-On Educational Field Trips & Guest Speakers

Teens enjoy traveling and having new experiences. Incorporate educational field trips and guest speakers into meetings for both choosing and researching a conservation issue. Field trips and guest speakers can help participants gain a deeper understanding of the local and state issues under consideration and provide a more in-depth understanding of the conservation issue they choose to focus on. Taking field trips to learn about conservation issues helps teens learn more about their local communities and the issues facing those communities.

Facilitation Skills

Encourage participants to use the following group processes as they work to choose a conservation issue.

1. *Brainstorming* to generate a list of ideas.
2. *T-charts of pros and cons* to help evaluate the reasons for picking an issue.
3. *Sticky dot voting* to vote on and choose an issue or issues.
4. *Quadrant diagrams* to assess how great an impact the teens can have on an issue, and whether their research is likely to help them generate recommendations for influencing public policy.
5. *Making the Most of Our Efforts* to identify who is in the best position to tackle the community issues the group has identified.
6. *Gradients of agreement* activity to encourage group consensus and help participants learn about other group members' thoughts and concerns related to an issue.

A Six-Stage Process for Selecting a Conservation Issue

This process will take two or more meetings. The recommended six stages for selecting an issue follow.

Stage 1

Carry out the “Values on the Line” activity. The goal of the activity is to help the young people learn what an “issue” is and to begin to understand the importance of using science-based research to help select an issue, research it and identify workable solutions to it that consider environmental, social, educational and economic impacts.

Stage 2

Use the “Brainstorming” activity to generate a list of local community conservation issues. The ideas can come from youth conservation council members, natural resources agencies, community residents and businesses, government officials and others. It is recommended that the group gather ideas from different community residents and not just rely on youth conservation council members’ interests and ideas. Other sources include newspaper articles, township board meeting notes and interviews with residents.

Stage 3

For help with understanding types of conservation issues and what type of issue a youth conservation council should study, the “Types of Issues: Can You Make a Difference” activity and the “What is a Public Policy Issue” activity may be helpful.

Stage 4

Your group can use the “Sticky Dot Voting” activity to choose its top three priority issues. It’s important to choose three priority issues at this stage to give the teens a chance to learn more about the issues before selecting a final issue.

Consider inviting professionals, community leaders, concerned citizens or other experts to speak to a group meeting or arranging a local field trip to help the group gain further understanding of the three priority issues they have chosen.

Use the “Guest Speakers and Field Trip Presenters Worksheet” to document the talks of guest speakers at your group meetings and of presenters during your group field trips. Quality documentation is critical to maintaining the high standards necessary to claim in the group’s written reports and oral presentations that they have conducted valuable and useful scientific research.

Stage 5

Before the group chooses a final issue on which to focus, consider using the “T-Chart” activity for sorting out reasons for or against selecting a specific topic, the “Quadrant Diagram” activity or the “Making the Most of Our Efforts” activity to help decide how effective the council’s efforts are likely to be in achieving their goals of influencing public policy makers on the issue. It often becomes apparent during the issue selection process that the teens’ research and recommendations on an issue many of them are considering is not likely to make much of a difference in the public policy arena.

Stage 6

A final round of sticky dot voting will help the group select the conservation issue on which they will focus their efforts. In this round, they could stay with their previous voting method or use the “weighted voting” variation.

After the final round of voting, consider using the “Gradient of Agreement” activity to give the teens one last chance to bring up any lingering concerns they may have. If such concerns exist, or if the group is still evenly split between two issues, this activity will help them understand and take into account individual opinions and arrive at consensus.

ACTIVITY:

Values on the Line*

**Information and activity adapted from Investigating and Evaluating Environmental Issues and Actions, by H. R. Hungerford, T. L. Volk, J. M. Ramsey, R. A. Litherland, R. B. Peyton. (2003). Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing; and from Project Learning Tree.*

OBJECTIVES:

The teens will:

- Learn about the similarities and differences between environmental or conservation “problems” and “issues.”
- Discuss their own values and beliefs related to a variety of environmental or conservation issues.
- Learn about other people’s values and beliefs related to the same environmental or conservation issues.
- Begin to understand the importance of using science-based research when selecting, researching and identifying solutions for an environmental issue.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Learning to learn
- Accepting differences

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- 8.5-inch by 11-inch paper (at least three sheets)
- Markers
- Masking tape
- List of environment-related value statements
- Yarn or string (optional)

TIME:

30 minutes

SETTING:

An open space that allows participants to stand in a line and pair off for discussions

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Write the following definitions on a sheet of newsprint. Display the sheet where everyone can see it.
 - **Environmental Problem:** An environmental problem is a situation that involves an interaction between humans and the environment in which something of value is threatened or at risk.
 - **Environmental Issue:** An environmental problem about which individuals and/or groups disagree on the solution or even disagree about whether the problem is, in fact, a problem.
2. Recreate the following table on a sheet of newsprint. Cover up the sheet until it’s time to use it.

Environmental Problems	Environmental Issues
<i>Example:</i> Boat engines leaking fuel into lakes and rivers	<i>Example:</i> Impacts of petroleum spills on the ecology of lakes and rivers
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

3. Write one of the following labels on each piece of 8.5-inch by 11-inch paper.
 - 1 – Strongly Disagree
 - 5 – Neutral
 - 10 – Strongly Agree
4. Tape the labels on the floor or wall in a straight line, far enough apart that the group members have room to stand along the continuum. You may want to run a line of masking tape or yarn between the three labels to give participants a guide to line up along.
5. Review the list of environment-related value statements that follows and adapt the statements or create new ones as appropriate for use with your group.

Environment-Related Value Statements to Read to Your Group

- Natural resources should not be left untapped if using them could improve living conditions for a group of people.
- People have the responsibility to protect all life forms on earth.
- The government is doing a good job of protecting our country’s natural environment.
- People should be able to use their own land in whatever way they see fit (for example, by farming on it, by building houses on it, by logging it or by managing it as wildlife habitat).
- All people have legal rights to clean air and water.
- When a dilemma arises between protecting wildlife and protecting jobs for people, we should consider the needs of people first.
- The fate of the human race is tied to the fate of other living things. If people are to survive, we must protect all species and their habitats.
- Human overpopulation is the single greatest factor contributing to Earth’s environmental problems.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group that now they’re going to talk about environmental problems and issues, and about “beliefs” and “values.” Review with the group the definitions of “environmental problem” and “environmental issue” that you’ve written on the newsprint sheet. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two terms. Keep that sheet on display where everyone can see it, and uncover the sheet with the blank table of environmental problems and issues.
2. Now ask the group for one or two other examples of environmental problems. Record their answers in the appropriate spots on the table. If anyone names something that is an environmental issue, rather than an environmental problem, point it out and ask the group for examples of problems related to the

issue. (**Facilitator Note:** If your group is really “on a roll” with listing examples and if you have time, you may want to extend the table onto more sheets of newsprint.)

3. Next ask them to look at each environmental problem they’ve named and identify the issue it’s related to. Record their answers on the table. Note that some problems (such as leaking residential septic systems) may be related to more than one issue (such as poor water quality for swimming and fishing, management of lake weeds, and fish stocks for sportfishing). When the issues for each problem have been identified, display the table where everyone can see it.
4. Write the word “belief” on a sheet of newsprint and ask the group to define it. Record their answers on the newsprint. Now do the same with the word “value.” Now write on the appropriate sheets of newsprint the following definitions, and ask the group for examples of beliefs and value.
 - **Belief:** an idea that a person holds to be true.
 - **Value:** the worth a person or group places on something, and why you feel the way you do and just what it is that you think is important.
5. Next, discuss as a group why environmental issues exist based on the following statements and the definitions of “belief” and “values.”
 - An issue includes humans, the environment and interactions between the two.
 - An issue involves differing beliefs and values that lead to differing positions regarding its solution.
6. Explain to the group that many people form opinions on environmental issues without understanding all sides of the issues. In fact, they may never have taken the time to think about their own underlying values and beliefs related to the environment. Tell them that this activity will help them begin to think about and express their own environmental values and beliefs and become aware of different viewpoints on environmental issues.
7. Point out the markers you’ve placed in a line on the floor or wall. Tell the group that you’re going to read a series of value statements to them. As you read each statement, they should think about whether they agree, disagree or are neutral about it, then “put their values on the line” by moving to a point on the line that best represents their position.
8. Next, read a relatively noncontroversial statement to get started, such as “Ice cream is a great dessert.” After the participants have had time to move to their preferred point along the line, ask for volunteers to explain to the group their reasons for standing where they are.
9. Continue reading the statements, giving the participants time to shift their positions along the line. After they have moved, ask for volunteers to explain their values and beliefs related to the statement you have just read.
10. After you have read aloud the final statement and the participants have put their values on the line, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

When I tell you to, I want you to silently find a partner who is standing near one of the two other signs on the line. That is, if you’re standing closest to the sign that reads “1 – Strongly Disagree,” I want you to find a partner who is standing closest to either “5 – Neutral” or “10 – Strongly Agree.” Then take 5 or 10 minutes to discuss the value statement with your partner. Make sure that both of you have time to share your beliefs and values! Ready? Go find a partner!
11. Walk around the room, answering any questions the participants may have and encouraging the pairs to take turns sharing their thoughts and beliefs. After 5 or 10 minutes, or when the discussion seems to have largely died down, call the group’s attention back to you. Ask for volunteers to take turns briefly sharing the discussions they had with their partners.

(Facilitator Note: Be prepared for the possibility that some discussions may become heated. If that happens, encourage the participants to listen carefully and politely to their partners. The goal of this activity is for each person to think about what his or her own beliefs are on the issues and to learn about other viewpoints, not to convince anyone else to change his or her viewpoint.)

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions.

- What did you learn about your partner's beliefs and opinions on this issue?
- What did you learn about your own beliefs and opinions on this issue?
- What kinds of information would be most helpful in building consensus on an environmental issue? Personal opinions? Scientific research? Something else?

ACTIVITY:

Brainstorming*

**Adapted with permission from MSU Extension LeadNet materials and from the Communication Toolkit: Fun, Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids (4H1560, 2000). East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development.*

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Learn to brainstorm following several simple rules.
- Understand the value of brainstorming as an idea generating technique.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Creativity
- Sharing
- Cooperation

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking tape

TIME:

15–20 minutes

SETTING:

A room with space for the group to sit in a circle (either on chairs or on the floor)

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Write the question “What environmental issues are concerns for our community?” at the top of a sheet of newsprint. Scatter the following points around the rest of the sheet, preferably using two or three different marker colors. Keep it covered until it’s time to use it.
 - Water quality
 - Land use
 - Curbside recycling
 - Littering
 - Falling lake levels
 - Invasive species
 - Air pollution
 - Filling in wetlands
 - Energy conservation
2. Write the following on a sheet of newsprint, and keep it covered until it’s time to use it.

Rules of Brainstorming

- **Rule 1:** Do not judge ideas!
- **Rule 2:** It's okay to be far out.
- **Rule 3:** Think of as many ideas as you can.
- **Rule 4:** Piggyback on someone else's ideas.

3. Review the directions and gather any other supplies you may need to conduct the activity.

During the meeting:

1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

We'll have a lot of idea generating, decision making and problem solving to do over the next several meetings. You may have already used a helpful technique called "brainstorming" to come up with ideas or solve problems, but right now we're going to learn to use it in a bit more systematic way than you might have before. Brainstorming encourages everyone in a group to share ideas and explore as many approaches to a problem or project as possible. It's kind of a creative thinking free-for-all!

Many ideas that seem impractical at first may evolve into useful and wonderful solutions. Business people, scientists, educators and others use brainstorming all the time to create innovative, problem-solving approaches.

One rule of brainstorming is "Don't judge ideas!" That's because staying open-minded during a brainstorming session can help keep us from getting stuck on the first idea that comes up, without seriously considering any others.

Now we're going to go over some other rules of brainstorming and then give it a try.

2. Display the "Rules of Brainstorming" list where everyone can see it. Review the rules with the group and ask if anyone has any suggestions for the list.
3. Next, explain that everyone's thoughts and ideas are valid (even if they sound far-fetched or seem a bit weird). Brainstorming isn't a time for evaluating or judging ideas; the goal is to get lots of ideas on the table.
4. Now display the brainstorming chart that answered the question "What environmental issues are concerns for our community?" where everyone can see it. Tell the group they're going to brainstorm around the same question. Encourage them to follow the rules of brainstorming they've agreed on, and answer any questions they may have. Ask for a volunteer to record the group's ideas on newsprint; tell the volunteer to write the ideas in as close to the original words as possible. If your group is large or especially vocal, you may want to have two recorders working side-by-side but on separate sheets.

(Facilitator's Note: Give everyone who wants to share an idea the chance to do so. Don't let one or two people dominate the group. Let the session run long enough for all group members to share their ideas, but not so long that boredom sets in. If the group starts to critique any suggestions, remind them of the rules for brainstorming.)

5. When the idea generation has slowed down, give the group a minute or two to scan the newsprint sheets and encourage them once again to piggyback on what's already been suggested. Tell them that you'll keep the results of their brainstorming session for potential use as the starting point for the issue selection process.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- Were you tempted to start critiquing ideas before the brainstorming session was over? Why?
- What are some situations when you think brainstorming would work well? Would **not** work well?

ACTIVITY:

Types of Issues: Can You Make a Difference?

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will be able to:

- Define what latent, emerging and volatile environmental issues are and give examples of each.
- Discuss and select a final conservation issue.
- Understand that choosing to focus on controversial and complex issues can make it very challenging for them to influence public policy and make a difference.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Organizing information
- Critical thinking

MATERIALS:

- “Types of Conservation Issues” handout (one per person)
- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers (three different colors, if possible)
- Masking tape
- “What environmental issues are concerns for our community” newsprint sheet from the “Brainstorming” activity
- Typed version of “What environmental issues . . .” sheets (optional; one per person)
- Pens or pencils (optional)

TIME:

20–25 minutes

SETTING:

A comfortable room or outdoor space

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Locate the “What environmental issues are concerns for our community?” newsprint sheets from the “Brainstorming” activity. If you have time and the resources, type up the information on the sheet to create a handout for the participants.
2. Review the instructions and gather any other materials you may need to conduct the activity.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group that they’re going to learn about a system that some environmental scientists, policy makers and concerned citizens use to categorize environmental issues, then think about how to categorize each of the items on the list of environmental issues that they created during the “Brainstorming” activity.
2. Distribute the “Types of Conservation Issues” handout and ask the group to read the article. Circulate around the room as they do so, answering any questions the participants may have.

3. When everyone seems to have finished reading, display the newsprint sheets with the results of the group's earlier brainstorming session on them. Tell them that now you'd like them to look at the list of environmental issues they've already brainstormed and decide which category from the article they've just read – latent, emerging or volatile – each issue would fall into. Ask for a volunteer to mark the group's answers on the newsprint sheet using a different color marker for each category.
4. Now point out an issue from the newsprint sheet and ask the group which category it belongs in. Continue the process until all of the issues have been categorized. It's likely that there will be more issues in the emerging and volatile categories than in the latent category. Ask the group why that might be so.

TRY THIS, TOO:

If you have typed photocopies of the sheet with the results from the “Brainstorming” activity, hand out copies and pencils or pens to the participants and give them about 5 minutes to mark it up individually. Then go through the list of issues and ask for volunteers to explain why they placed each issue in a particular category.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- Why might it be harder to think of environmental issues that fall into the latent category than to think of those in the other two categories?
- Why might people disagree about which category a particular environmental issue belongs in?
- What are some factors that a person who lives near a state park in southeast Michigan might consider when deciding which category to place “overuse of public lands” into? What about someone who lives in the middle of the Upper Peninsula?
- Why might it be harder to effectively research and address latent environmental issues?
- What types of issues should a 4-H youth conservation council address? Why?
- What are the pros and cons of a 4-HYCC choosing to focus on a volatile issue?
- Why is it important to prepare to address controversial points related to any environmental issue your group is researching?

TYPES OF ISSUES HANDOUT:

Types of Conservation Issues

Written by Shari Dann, Ph.D., Michigan State University, and adapted by Lisa Campion, M4-HYCC Teen Advisor

People's awareness of conservation and environmental issues can be said to fall into three categories: latent, emerging and volatile.

- **Latent** – A latent issue is one that is “cruising below the public’s radar.” It has received little or no public or media attention, so few people have formed opinions about it. A small number of researchers or activists may have recognized the issue as a problem and have begun looking into it. Current examples of latent conservation issues include the decline of migrating animal species, plant and wildlife habitat destruction, and creation of Michigan heritage water trails.
- **Emerging** – An emerging issue is one that is just starting to receive public attention. Activists may be starting to try to focus attention on the issue and to work to address it. Legislators are starting to hear about the issue but don’t have enough information about it yet to write or support legislation related to it. Current examples of emerging conservation issues include wildlife diseases, land use and urban sprawl, groundwater use and water diversion.
- **Volatile** – A volatile issue is one that has received enough attention from the media and the public to become controversial. People have discussed the issue and formed opinions about it. Many partners – including private citizens, lobbyists, business groups, environmental activists, legislators, local governments, agencies and organizations – are involved in discussing the issue and trying to do something about it. Current examples of volatile conservation issues include global warming or climate change, alternative energy sources, recycling, expanding the scope of Michigan’s bottle deposit law, and efforts to check the spread of invasive plant and animal species.

It’s important for a youth conservation council to consider which of these three categories a conservation issue they’re considering addressing falls into. There is nothing wrong with a 4-HYCC discussing, researching or choosing a volatile or controversial topic as the focus of their work; however, if they do so, the members and adult advisors should prepare carefully to address the controversy, and understand that it may be very challenging for the group to successfully influence public policy for this type of issue.

Most environmental issues are hard to place into a single category because different aspects of them may fall into different categories, depending in part on what level of government you’re considering addressing (such as state, county, township or city). When larger environmental issues are broken down into sub-issues, they often become easier to categorize. The M4-HYCC program uses guest speaker roundtable discussions, conference calls with government professionals and brainstorming sessions to gather ideas on how these big issues can be broken down into sub-issues so the council can select an impactful and achievable issue to research.

ACTIVITY:

Sticky Dot Voting*

**Adapted with permission from MSU Extension LeadNet materials*

OBJECTIVE:

The participants will use “sticky dot voting” to express their opinions.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Decision making
- Problem solving

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking tape
- Adhesive dots or small sticky notes (several per person)

TIME:

15 minutes

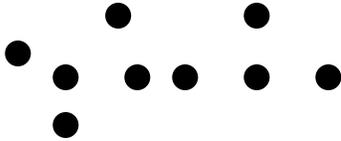
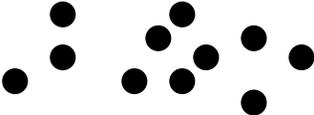
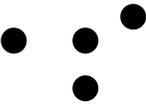
SETTING:

A room with space for participants to move around newsprint pads on easels or taped to the wall

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Reproduce the following chart on newsprint. Then create a similar chart with the environmental issues the group came up with during their brainstorming session in its own row. To simplify, group similar issues and eliminate duplicates. **(Facilitator Note:** Even so, you may need to use more than one sheet.)

<i>Three Top Conservation Issues Ballot</i>	
Voter Choices	Issue
	Water quality: non-point source pollution
	Curbside recycling
	Air quality

2. Display the newsprint “ballots” around the room. Try to leave enough room between them so that the group members can move around without being overcrowded.
3. Review the activity and gather the supplies you’ll need to conduct it.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group that they’ll be learning a new way to make group decisions called “sticky dot voting.” Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Sticky dot voting is a fun way for a group to make a decision. It gives each person a chance to be involved in the decision and to express his or her opinion. We’ll do a trial run now to help you learn the technique, so that you’ll be ready to use it later as we choose the environmental issue we’ll focus on as a group.

2. Display the sample voting chart and tell the group they’ll be using a similar “ballot” to record their opinions.
3. Give each participant a set of dots to use as “votes.” You, as the facilitator, or the group can decide how many dots each person will receive.
4. Tell the group that each person may vote by putting one or more dots next to the issue or issues on the newsprint that he or she would like to focus on as a group. Give them about 5 minutes to vote.
5. When everyone has finished voting, have the group return to their seats. Tally the votes, then circle the items with the most votes. Save the results of the voting so you can use them in the “Quadrant Diagram” activity.

TRY THIS, TOO:

Weighted voting – Give participants three dots of three different colors. Tell them that each color is worth a different number of points: 5 points, 3 points and 2 points. Have the group proceed with sticky dot voting and tally the votes accordingly.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- Is this a fair voting method? Why or why not?
- Which environmental issue received the most votes? The fewest?
- Based on the results of this voting, are you ready to choose an environmental issue to focus on?
- Whether you’re ready to choose an issue to focus on or not, what should be our group’s next steps?

ACTIVITY:

T-Chart*

**Adapted with permission from MSU Extension LeadNet materials.*

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will be able to:

- Explain why using a T-chart can be helpful in planning an event or making a decision
- Compare facts and information about two or more conservation issues as they make their final selection of a conservation issue to research.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Organizing information
- Problem solving
- Decision making

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking tape

TIME:

15 minutes

SETTING:

A comfortable room

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Reproduce one or both of the following sample T-charts on newsprint. Cover them up until it's time to use them.

Selecting the Environmental Issue of: Water Pollution Due to Non-Point Sources	
<p style="text-align: center;">PROS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Our community has many lakes and rivers.■ Lawn fertilizers are frequently used by home owners.■ Michigan DEQ web site has research information.	<p style="text-align: center;">CONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Farming is important to the local economy.■ The issue is too big to research.■ Not sure we can make an impact.

T-Shirt Fund-Raiser Task List & Timeline		
Task	Person Responsible	Deadline
Create a T-shirt design.	Sarah	May 1
Get price quotes for T-shirt printing.	Martell	May 1
Get price quotes for hoodies.	Amanda	May 1
Make sign-up sheet for fund-raiser volunteers.	Erin	May 15
Create posters and flyers for T-shirt sale.	Sarah	May 15
Set up tables for fund-raiser.	Justin	June 2

- Review the activity and gather any materials you may need to conduct it.

During the meeting:

- Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

How do you make a complex decision (one with many possible choices or repercussions)? Do you go with your first, “gut reaction”? Do you agonize for days or weeks over the choice? Ask everyone you know for advice? Wait until moments before the deadline, then flip a coin?

If you have a complex job to do, such as organizing an event, writing a paper or preparing a presentation for a governmental agency, how do you keep track of all the pieces? Do you think about it ahead of time and write a plan for getting everything done? Wait until a day or so ahead of the due date and work frantically to do everything all at once?

Right now we’re going to learn how to use a tool called “T-charts” that can help organize information such as the factors involved in making a decision or break down the smaller parts of a large, complicated task.

- Display one or both of the sample T-charts where everyone can see them. Explain that a T-chart is a way of organizing information into two or more columns so it’s easier to understand and track. They’re a great way to keep track of tasks to be completed or to lay out the pros and cons of an issue or decision that must be made.
- Point out the different parts of the sample T-chart. Explain that a T-chart can have as many columns as are needed to organize the information. Hanging newsprint horizontally provides more room for the columns. Of course if there’s a lot of information to track, they may want to use more than one sheet.
- Create three blank T-charts on newsprint with one of the three top issues under consideration as a heading on each sheet and the word “pros” on one side of the T-chart and “cons” on the other side.
- Ask the group to share facts and information they know about each issue and indicate if it should be written as a pro or con for selecting the issue.

TALKING IT OVER:

When everyone who wants to has shared their ideas for pros and cons on each issue, ask the group the following questions:

- Was thinking through what to include on the T-chart for each issue helpful? Why or why not?

- Would a T-chart be helpful in every planning or decision-making situation? Why or why not?
- What other decision-making situations could we use a T-chart to help us with? (*Laying out the timeline for preparing our presentation, evaluating the pros and cons of choosing to focus on a particular environmental issue*)

ACTIVITY:

Quadrant Diagram*

**Adapted with permission from MSU Extension LeadNet materials*

OBJECTIVE:

The participants will be able to explain how to use a quadrant diagram.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Organizing information
- Critical thinking
- Decision making
- Wise use of resources

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking tape
- Adhesive dots or sticky notes
- Results of the “Sticky Dot Voting” activity

TIME:

10 minutes

SETTING:

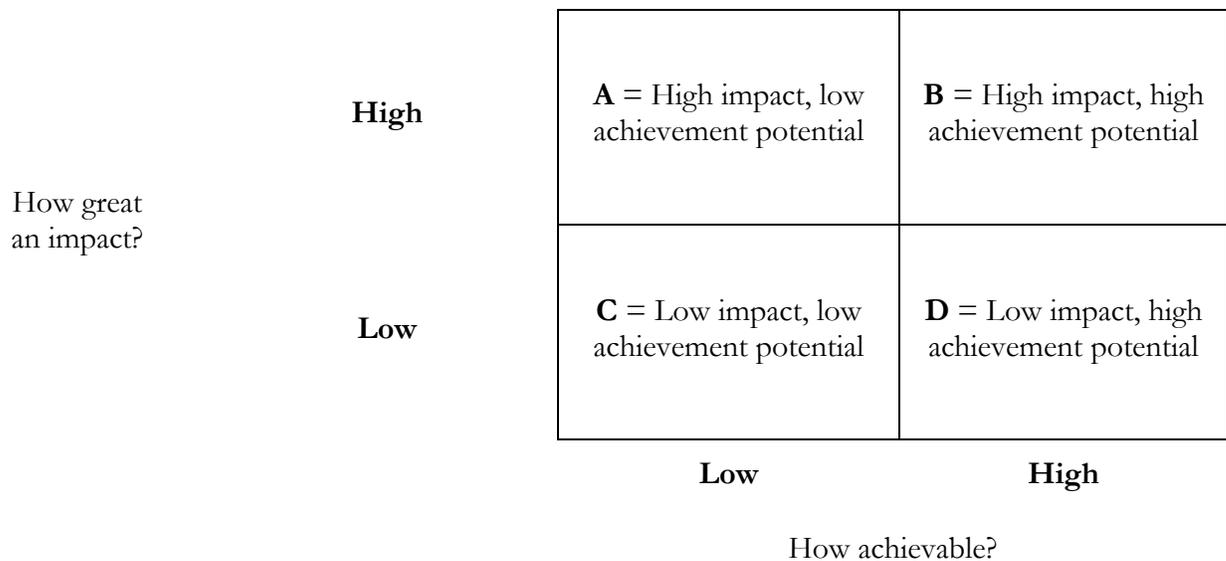
A comfortable room

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Display the newsprint sheet on which the voting was conducted in the “Sticky Dot Voting” activity.
2. Recreate the following quadrant diagram on newsprint and display the sheet where everyone can see it.

Issue: _____



3. Make three similar diagrams with only the “high” and “low” and “A =”, “B =”, “C =” and “D =” areas filled in. Fill in the “issue” space on each diagram with one of the top three vote getters in the “Sticky Dot Voting” activity. Cover the diagrams until time to use them with the group.
4. Review the activity and gather any materials you need to conduct it.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group that now they’re going to learn to use a “quadrant diagram” to arrive at a final choice as to which environmental issue they’ll focus their efforts on. Quadrant diagrams are useful tools for visually comparing two or more issues using two variables.
2. Uncover the sample diagram and review its parts and how to read it with the group. Explain that besides evaluating and comparing “how great an impact” and “how achievable,” we can also use categories such as benefits and costs, impact and effort, and interest and importance. Answer any questions they may have. Then display the quadrant diagrams that have only the issues spaces filled in. Explain that those issues at the top of the pages were the top three vote getters from the “Sticky Dot Voting” activity. Have the group brainstorm criteria to use, for example, “What is impact?” and “What is achievable?”
3. Give each participant one vote, using sticky notes, sticky dots or markers, to indicate his or her opinion about how great an impact the group can have on the issue, and how achievable the research will be for generating recommendations for influencing public policy.
4. Repeat the voting for each issue, and then compare the quadrant results to select the group’s research focus.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- How did this activity help you evaluate and compare the top issues under consideration?
- Why might our group want to concentrate on an issue that gives us “the most bang for the buck” or the greatest impact for our efforts?

ACTIVITY:

Making the Most of Our Efforts

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will begin to identify:

- Issues facing their community.
- Possible solutions to the community issues they have identified.
- Which community issues they can hope to improve and which issues others will have to tackle.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Leadership
- Contributions to group effort
- Critical thinking
- Wise use of resources

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper (two or three sheets for each small group)
- Markers
- Masking tape
- 3-inch by 3-inch sticky notes (about 10 for each small group)
- Pencils or pens (1 per person)

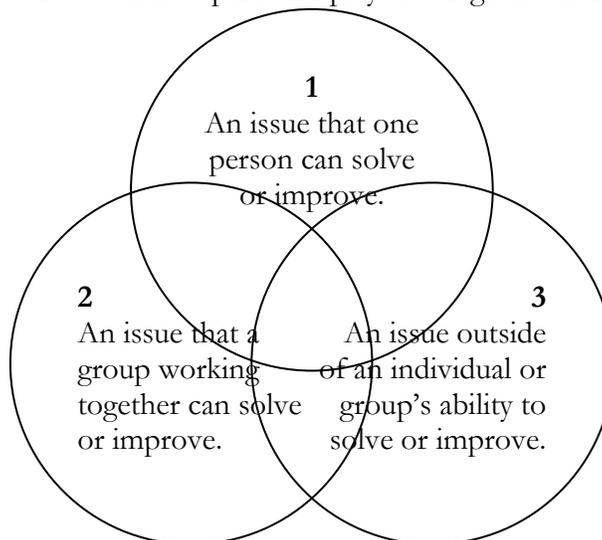
TIME:

45 minutes

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Recreate the diagram that follows on newsprint. Display the diagram where everyone can see it.



2. Review the activity and gather any other materials you will need to conduct it.

During the meeting:

1. Explain to the group that now they're going to do an activity that will help them identify some of the problems or issues facing their community, then decide who is in the best position to tackle those issues. Read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

Every community has problems, issues and challenges. Nearly every community also has a variety of governmental organizations, businesses, community groups and individuals who are willing to at least try to address these problems, issues and challenges. But not every group or individual has the power, influence, skill or ability to take on every challenge in a community. Today you're going to work in small groups to brainstorm a list of ten issues facing our community.

2. Have the group form teams of three to six people. Have each team choose a recorder and a reporter.
3. Tell them they'll have about 10 minutes to brainstorm a list of 10 needs or problems of great significance in your county or community. Pass out the markers and sticky notes. Tell them to write each need or problem their team identifies on a separate sticky note.

(Facilitator note: Encourage the participants to follow these rules while brainstorming*:

Rule 1: Do not judge ideas!

Rule 2: It's okay to be far-out.

Rule 3: Think of as many ideas as you can.

Rule 4: Piggyback on someone else's ideas.

You may want to write these rules on a sheet of newsprint and display the sheet where all the participants can see it.)

* Adapted with permission from the *Communications Toolkit: Fun, Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids* (4H1560; 2000). East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development.

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4. Give the teams time to identify and categorize the key players. Next point out the diagram labeled "1, 2, 3." you wrote on newsprint earlier. Tell the group that they can use it to identify who has the power to solve or improve a problem. Ask them to think about who in or outside of your community has the power to solve or improve each problem they brainstormed. Assign values of 1, 2 or 3 to each problem, based on who has the power to resolve it.
 5. After the teams have assigned values to each problem, have them work together to place the community problems they wrote on sticky notes earlier in the appropriate circles on the numbered diagram that someone from their team draws on a sheet of newsprint.
 6. Next, ask them to identify the two problems that are of the most significance in categories 1 and 2, and write those four problems on a separate sheet of newsprint. Then have them take a few minutes to decide which of the four problems will do the most to improve the community if it is solved.
 7. Now tell the teams they'll have about 10 minutes to develop a process for finding a solution to the problem they've identified as having the most impact if it's addressed. The process should include ways to develop:
 - Awareness
 - Buy-in to solutions
 - Ownership of the problem

8. When the teams seem to have completed creating their processes, have each person identify and share with the team one tactic that he or she can carry out as an individual to try to resolve this problem.
9. Return everyone's attention to the group as a whole. Ask for a volunteer from each group to share one problem and an individual resolution.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- Did some of the key players on your lists fit into more than one category? Why or why not?
- Did some of the key players not fit into any category and have to be placed outside the diagram? Why do you suppose that is?
- Right now, are the voices of everyone affected by the community problems your teams has identified being heard? What might be some of the factors affecting whether a group or person is or isn't listened to in relation to a particular community problem?
- Where do you fit on the diagram of your community needs? How can you make a difference in solving the problems affecting your community?

ACTIVITY:

Gradients of Agreement*

**Adapted with permission from MSU Extension LeadNet materials.*

OBJECTIVE:

The participants will be able to explain the benefits of using a “gradient of agreement” scale to negotiate the fine points of an agreement.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Negotiating
- Decision-making
- Critical thinking

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking tape
- 8.5-inch by 11-inch paper (five pieces)
- String (optional)

TIME:

10 minutes

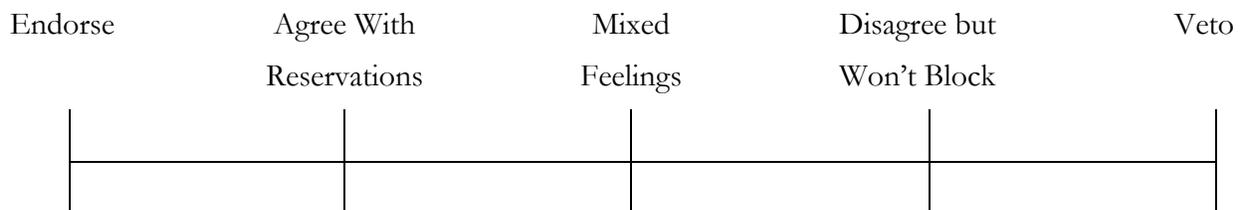
SETTING:

A comfortable room with open floor space

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Reproduce the following gradient of agreement diagram on newsprint. Display it where everyone can see it.



2. Lay out the gradient of agreement on the floor using the 8.5-inch by 11-inch paper for the labels and masking tape or string for the line.
3. Review the activity and gather any other materials you may need to conduct the activity.

During the meeting:

1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Now we're going to do an activity that will give us a chance to share our thoughts and feelings about our decision on what conservation issue to focus on. In fact, it's called a "gradient of agreement" because in using it, people arrange themselves along a continuum, or gradient, to register their thoughts and feelings. Some people have said that this tool helps a group practice moving from "the groan zone" to consensus. What does "consensus" mean? [Pause to let the group answer.] One definition is "the level of agreement necessary to move forward." Now we're going to practice using a gradient of agreement on a relatively minor issue before we talk about our own agreement about what environmental issue to focus our efforts on.

2. Point out the sample gradient of agreement on the newsprint that you created earlier. Explain that – just as an exercise – they're going to start off by using it to work out the details around the proposal "I move that we all go to the pizza place on Main Street for lunch."
3. Ask the group what level of agreement they think is necessary to reach consensus on this proposal. After they've decided that question, have them stand on the gradient of agreement to indicate their feelings about the pizza proposal.
4. If any participants are anywhere other than "endorse" on the gradient of agreement, ask each person to explain his or her vote and what changes would be necessary to make the proposal agreeable. Make the changes the group agrees with, then have the group "vote with their feet" again. Repeat the process until the group has reached consensus on the proposal.
5. After the group has worked out the sample agreement, have them go through the process again with the top conservation issue chosen through the sticky dot voting process as the proposal they're pondering. Ask the group what level of agreement they think is necessary to reach consensus on this proposal. Next have them stand on the gradient of agreement to indicate their feelings about the final conservation issue they've chosen for the youth conservation council research project.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- Did you feel as if your opinions were given a full hearing by using this process? Why or why not?
- Give an example of a situation when it would be better for a group to use a gradient of agreement process instead of a "majority rules" process to settle an issue.
- Was this activity helpful in reaching consensus on the choice of a final 4-H youth conservation issue we'll focus on? Why or why not?

Step 4: Researching a Conservation Issue

Introduction

This section engages the teens in the process of researching a conservation issue, which includes the following four actions:

- Using good research skills and methods.
- Creating a list of research questions and organizing information.
- Writing a focus statement that includes group goals and objectives.
- Splitting up the research questions and information for small group or individual research.

During this process it is important to remember that the reason for researching a conservation issue is to identify recommendations for government and citizen action to resolve the issue.

Action 1: Using Good Research Skills & Methods

By Kristen Pratt, M4-HYCC adult advisor

Throughout the research process, good research practices are very important. When you're learning new things, do your sources for information matter? *Yes!* When you're looking for facts, should you be looking at an editorial in a newspaper or something that is potentially less biased, such as an article that college professors and other experts agreed on and approved before it was published in an academic journal? *The journal article!* Here's another question. Who is more reliable: a grade school student who made a web site for a class project or a division of Michigan state government such as the Department of Natural Resources and Environment? *The state agency!*

The sources really matter when you're doing research, when you're writing a paper and when you're giving a presentation. If you want to persuade people and be believable, it's important to be able to prove that your information comes from accurate and informative, research-based sources. You do this by documenting and listing the source, especially a source that may have a biased perspective. You need to give others credit for their research, opinion and ideas, both because it's fair and because it improves your argument.

Because you'll be looking at TONS of information related to the topic you're researching over the next few months, you'll need to keep careful track of where you learned every fact so that you can include that information in your final report and presentation. Use the three research worksheets that follow to organize and document Internet sources, written resources, interviews and guest speaker information. The following are key points to remember while doing your research:

1. Keep track of where you learned facts or opinions so that you can include the source information in your paper.
2. Get the main ideas out of your sources.
3. Paraphrase the information you read or hear so that you don't accidentally copy someone else's words or information later in your paper.
4. Record direct quoted statements in quotation marks and be sure to cite the sources.
5. Select Internet, written resources, interviews and guest speakers that provide accurate, current and honest information. Use a separate worksheet for each resource you use.
6. Be sure to give others credit for their information. Place all research sources in footnotes and list them in a bibliography.

Suggestions for Using the Internet for Research

By Jennifer Vanderlaan, M4-HYCC adult advisor

1. Use Internet search engines to your advantage. Different search engines have different specialties. Try your search on several engines and compare the results. Learn to use Boolean operators and choose your keywords carefully when designing searches to help filter out less useful results. Popular search engines (listed in alphabetical order) include: altavista.com, ask.com (formerly AskJeeves.com), clusty.com, dogpile.com, google.com, snap.com, yahoo.com
2. Fully identify the web sites you've visited on a resource worksheet. For example, rather than listing just "Michigan 4-H," list the full name and URL (web address) of the site, along with the date you visited the page in your notes:

Michigan 4-H Youth Development web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/

Accessed March 1, 2012.
3. Know the common suffixes used to classify web sites.

.org – Usually designates a nonprofit, nongovernmental agency or organization, though not all .org sites are run by nonprofit agencies – anyone can buy a domain name that ends in .org.

.gov – Reserved for use by governmental agencies.

.com – Designates commercial sites.

.au, .ca, .de, .it, .jp .uk, .us – Suffixes for sites originating from specific countries (Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively). Sites in some countries use double suffixes, such as .com.uk, to designate commercial sites hosted within their borders..

.edu – reserved for educational institutions and often considered fail-safe research sites, but be careful! Individual teachers, professors, students and staff are also often allowed to use sites ending in .edu and may have personal agendas.
4. Ask yourself the following questions when you're evaluating the credibility of information you find on a web site:
 - Who is the creator of the site?
 - What is the purpose of the site?
 - Who is the main audience of this site?
 - Can you purchase products at this site?
 - Is the site affiliated with a business or university?
 - Does the site offer idiosyncratic (weird, slamming someone) information?
 - How current is the information?
 - What can you find out about the author?
 - Is there a "Works Cited" or "References" page?
 - Can you locate the source material?
 - Are there links on the page to other sites with credible information?

Off the 'Net

Remember to look beyond the Internet for research information. In addition to the list that follows, brainstorm with your group members to identify non-Internet research sources and local resources related to the conservation issue you're researching.

- Newspapers
- Reports and transcripts
- Dictionary and encyclopedias
- Informational brochures
- Newsletters (especially those of professional organizations)
- Magazines and journals
- Bibliographies of printed materials
- Elected officials
- Telephone books – The white pages are good for gathering contact information on important business leaders and the blue pages for gathering contact information on government officials
- Natural resource agencies such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment Quality, conservation districts, the National Forest Service
- Nonprofit environmental groups such as the Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club
- Local and college and university libraries (reference librarians love to help with well-crafted, interesting searches)
- Local businesses
- Colleges and universities

WORKSHEET: ★

Information From the Internet & Other Written Sources

Worksheet designed by Kristen Pratt, M4-HYCC Adult Advisor

Use the information you enter on this sheet to help create the bibliography entry in your final report. Fill out as many fields as possible.

Is this a reliable source? Yes No (*Remember that it's useful to record the dud sources you find, too, so you don't waste time rereading them.*)

Author(s) (**Note:** You need this for web sites, too – at least the name of the agency that publishes the web site, if not an individual author. Record the name exactly as it appears in the resource. That is, if the resource lists the author's full name, list that. If it uses the author's first two initials and last name, list that.)

Title: _____

Publisher: _____

Publisher's city: _____

Name of journal or periodical: _____

Volume/issue/edition: _____ Copyright/year published: _____ Page #s: _____

Web address (including the www., web1 or similar prefixes if the site uses them): _____

Date you accessed the web site: _____

These are some important points I found in this source (use other side of sheet for more space):

This is how this information relates to the topic I'm researching:

This is how I would recommend for legislators to act on this information:

This is how this research relates to my research question, my region's questions, and the council's focus statement:

FACE-TO-FACE AND PHONE INTERVIEW WORKSHEET:



Script for Phone Interview

Interview with Joe Thomas, business owner, on (date and time) _____:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am part of the [name] 4-H Youth Conservation Council. We are a group of young people who research environmental issues to identify solutions and report our recommendations to government officials. This year we are researching _____. I was wondering if you have time to answer a few questions.

- If the answer is no . . . (remember, it's not personal)
 - Is there a better time I can contact you?
 - Can I get your e-mail address/phone number/address so I can contact you later?
- If the answer is yes . . .
 - Ask your questions and repeat the person's answers for clarification.
 - Wrap up by repeating some of their answers and summarizing what they said.
 - "Is it okay if I call you at a later date if I have any more questions?"
- Either way, "Thank you for your time."

Follow up by sending a brief, handwritten thank-you note that includes the following points:

- Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions.
- Something I learned from our discussion.
- Please contact me at _____ if you have additional information.

WORKSHEET: ★

Interviews

Worksheet designed by Kristen Pratt, M4-HYCC Adult Advisor

Before the interview:

Contact information for this person:

Name: _____ Person's title: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail address: _____

Date/Time: _____ Interview location: _____

Why am I interviewing this person?

What questions do I want to MAKE SURE that I ask?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

During the interview:

Be sure to:

- Briefly introduce yourself, talk about the 4-H youth conservation council and the topic for the year. Explain why you're interviewing the person.
- Thank the person for taking the time to meet with you.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Jot down notes, but focus on what the person is saying.
- Don't be afraid to ask whether you've understood the person correctly. For example: "So, what you're saying is that (paraphrase previous statement here)?" The person will either agree or correct you – both are useful!
- Be sure to say thank you.

Take notes on a different sheet of paper – leave this page available to relate information from the interview to your questions!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

After the interview:

Looking back on this interview, this is what I think the “take home message” is:

This is what I think legislators need to do with this information:

Action 2: Creating a List of Research Questions & Categories

Introduction

In the past, M4-HYCC members have based their decision on what topic to focus their efforts on largely on the uniqueness of the conservation issue under consideration and their own willingness to try different strategies for creating a list of research questions and organizing the information. The following are a few strategies used by M4-HYCC for creating a list of research questions and categories and organizing the information:

1. Use why, what, when, how, who and where headings to generate a list of research questions.
2. Use the categories of impacts – environmental, economic, educational and social – to identify questions and categories and organize the information.
3. Use the general categories of existing and potential legislation, existing and potential educational programs, economic and social impacts and solutions, and the science behind the issue and environmental impacts to identify questions and organize information about the conservation issue.

Keep in mind that the approach should be based on the uniqueness of the conservation issue and the teen members' understanding and experiences.

HANDOUT:

Example Outline of Research Questions, Statements & Categories for Group Research

2007–08 Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council

Topic: Phosphorus Levels in Rivers & Lakes

- Funding (Economic and social impacts and solutions?)
 - Green fee – paid by Michigan residents for environmental programs
 - Bonds for clean up (Kalamazoo Gazette)
 - Including income and royalties tax?
 - State parks/license plates
 - Save money with lower phosphorus levels?
- Causes and Effects/Impact (science and environmental impacts?)
 - Sources, controls, health (groundwater) tourism
 - Fertilizers
 - Fertilizer Substitutes
 - Septic systems
 - Process
 - 11th most abundant, required for plant growth, most phosphorus comes from mineral deposits, phosphorus cycle, harmful algal blooms, muck
 - High concentrations in lakes, Bay County, cooperative lakes monitoring program
 - Eutrophication
- Education (Existing and potential education programs?)
 - Voluntary environmental programs that exist
 - MAEAP, Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program, DEQ MEECS Water Quality
 - General public, farmers, public officials, homeowners, city commissioners, MSU Extension
 - Applicator training, lawn tests
- Legislation (Existing and potential legislation?)
 - Laws, bills
 - Allegan, Bay, Muskegon and Ottawa counties as models?
 - SB362 and SB152 (dish detergent)
 - Enforcing levels, phosphorus ban in lawn fertilizers statewide
 - Laundry detergent (1972)
 - Indiana and Pennsylvania have active bills
 - Success stories: Minnesota, other examples of reversing pollution, Washington State

Action 3: Writing a Group Focus Statement

Introduction

Working as a group to determine a clear focus to your research is VERY important. Ask yourself the following questions. Writing a focus statement will help you work together on the project and identify more effective recommendations for government and citizen action. Keep these ideas in mind as you delve into your chosen topic!

What is the issue?

- _____

- _____

- _____

Why did we select this issue to research?

- _____

- _____

- _____

How do we propose to approach and solve the issue based on our research?

- _____

- _____

- _____

As a group, use these ideas to write a **focus statement**:

Sample Focus Statements:

- **Expanding Recycling & Solid Waste Reduction (2005–06)** – The focus of the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council is to encourage policy makers and stakeholders at the state and county levels to improve local recycling programs through education, innovative strategies, and incentives. This will be supported through revenue generating sources to reduce the solid waste stream in Michigan.

- **Focus Statement Sample: Land Use & Cool Cities (2006–07)** – The focus of the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council is to support the use of education, incentives and deterrents to increase government collaboration at all levels, promote smart growth and urban revitalization while discouraging green space development.
- **Focus Statement Sample: Phosphorus Levels in Lakes & Rivers (2007–08)** – The focus of the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council is to provide information on the environmental consequences of phosphorus pollution as well as advocate the reduction of harmful levels of phosphorus in bodies of water caused by human practices through education, legislation and the continuation of existing environmental management programs by using new funding plans.

Action 4: Splitting Up the Research Questions & Categories

If your group has not yet sorted the questions into categories, be sure to do so before choosing small group or individual research assignments. Use a voting activity to support individual interests and group consensus for assigning research. The weighted sticky dot voting method is good for assigning categories for small groups or individual research.

The process of splitting up the research questions and categories may require two steps, depending on how many youth members are on the council. The M4-HYCC program uses two steps to sort the research questions and categories for regional teams (small groups), and questions or subcategory topics for individual team members. Select the following course of action best suited for your council's membership and use the weighted sticky dot voting method to ensure individual interests are identified and group consensus is reached. The following worksheets are designed for use by small groups and individuals as they identify their research categories and research strategies.

WORKSHEET:

Research for Small Groups

Worksheet designed by Kristen Pratt, M4-HYCC Advisor

Working as a small group to determine a clear purpose to your research is very important. What part of the group's overall purpose is your smaller group specifically researching, and why? Take the time to discuss, clarify and add new questions and subcategories to your specific aspect of the issue. This will help each person further understand the purpose of his or her specific research aspect and identify recommendations for government and citizen action. Keep thinking: What questions will our group try to answer? How does this relate to the council's mission statement? Add more questions as they come up! This document will change as you continue your research.

What specific aspect of the issue are you researching?

■ _____

What specific questions are you addressing with your research?

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

What is the purpose of your research and how does it relate to the focus statement?

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

WORKSHEET:

Research for Individuals

Worksheet designed by Kristen Pratt, M4-HYCC Advisor

Now is the time to figure out what you're going to be researching. This may only be one small piece now, but it will grow and develop as you start researching. The questions undoubtedly will become more complex.

What is my specific research category?

■ _____

What are my specific research questions?

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

Why is my research important?

■ _____

What is the purpose of my research and how does it relate to the focus statement?

■ _____

HANDOUT:

Example M4-HYCC Focus Statement, Small Group Research Categories & Questions

Expanding Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction (2005–06): The focus of the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council is to encourage policy makers and stakeholders at the state and county levels to improve local recycling programs through education, innovative strategies and incentives. This will be supported through revenue-generating sources to reduce the solid waste stream in Michigan.

Southeast Region Metro Team: Existing Recycling Programs & Innovative Strategies

- Other states, local programs and Canada
- Bag and tag, redemption centers, composting, curbside, phoenix, and drop-off centers, pay as you throw
- Curbside
- Increase recycling rate, lowest in Great Lakes region
- Detroit largest city without curbside pickup
- Improve current centers
- Recycling background
- 32 percent of trash is from out of state
- University of Arizona garbage project (what they did)
- Pay as you go, bag 'n' tag
- California programs
- 1-800-cleanup
- earth911.org
- Composting
- Need current recycling statistics
- Mainstream recycling
- Expansion of redemption centers
- County solid waste plan (to be revised in 2007)

Central Region Team: Revenue-Generating Sources

- Penny plan, tipping fees, credit card, lottery, other innovative ideas
- Focus on funding
- Need permanent funding source
- Lottery, credit card
- Citizen reports
- 65 percent of voters will pay for comprehensive recycling

Southeast Region Saginaw Bay Team: Education, Incentive Strategies & Environmental Impacts of Solid Waste

- Educate county solid waste plan developers community
- Public education
- Why do we need to recycle?
- How and why?
- Educational marketing and awareness
- Incentives for county-based recycling programs
- In-state and out-of-state
- Creation of jobs, stimulate economy
- University of Arizona garbage project
- Education needs incentives
- Recycling incentives + standards
- Education is of huge importance
- Either decrease prices now or increase later
- People will recycle more if cheaper
- Regions should make field trips to mainstream recycling facilities

North Region Team: Legislation

- State mandates
- Existing Michigan legislation, bills not passed
- Legislation on recycling in other states
- Model legislation

Southwest Region Team: Stakeholders & Policy-Makers' Viewpoints

- Grocers, businesses, citizens, haulers, processors, landfills and manufacturers
- NIMBY (not in my backyard)
- Citizens support recycling
- State sets recycling standards (community uniqueness)
- Coke supports curbside, buyback, drop-off

Step 5. Creating a Group Written Report & Presentation

Introduction

Planning and preparing a group written report and presentation is challenging but rewarding for the youth conservation council. The written report involves merging all of the individual reports to create a logical and interesting flow of information that has an introduction, conclusion and summary of recommendations.

This section includes a sample format for the individual written report, a sample format for an electronic slide show, and guidelines for writing citations and creating a bibliography. The final group written report requires one or two youth conservation council members to take on the responsibility of compiling the entire report. It also requires one or two participants to compile the presentation for the group to use during the oral presentation.

The council participants compile their research-based recommendations for government or citizen action to help solve the conservation issue into a one-page summary that they can highlight during their presentation. Government officials can also use the summary as an easy reference.

Each youth conservation council member contributes the following to the process of creating the written report and presentation:

1. Writes a two- or three-page report.
2. Writes footnotes with correct citations.
3. Creates one or two electronic slides.
4. Summarizes the report using note cards for a one-minute presentation.
5. Identifies key recommendations based on his or her research.

Getting ready for the presentation involves practice, practice and more practice! Some of that practice takes the form of using activities from the *Communications Toolkit: Fun, Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids* (Michigan State University Extension, 4H1560, 2000) that are designed to help young people improve their presentation skills. The Communications Toolkit is on the web at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/toolkit.html.

Guidelines for Written Reports & Electronic Slide Shows

Sample Written Report:

Title of Presentation: *Guidelines for Written Presentation*

By *Kristen Pratt, M4-HYCC Advisor*

This is an example of what your paper should look like when you submit it to your presentation committee. If everyone follows the same directions, it will be much easier for this committee to assemble the paper in a way that is consistent and efficient. If all of the individual papers are single-spaced and in 12-pt Times New Roman type, it will be easier to copy and paste and bring everything together. Your paper should be 2 to 3 pages long.

To help your presentation committee keep track of who wrote which paper, please insert your name in a header in the top right corner. To insert text in a header in Microsoft Word, go to “Insert,” then “Header,” and type your name in the box that opens up.

Everyone should use the same format for footnotes, too.* If you are using Microsoft Word 2003, click on “Insert,” then “Reference.” Under “Reference,” find “Footnote” and choose the “Endnote” option. If you are using Word 2007, click on “References” then choose “Insert Endnote.”

Make sure that at the very end of your paper, you have a good, definite conclusion that includes your recommendations. Make sure that the last thing that your audience reads is what you want them to remember from your paper!

*This is where the endnote will show up. Navigate to easybib.com and follow the prompts to enter the footnote information. Copy and paste the resulting citation into this spot.

Sample M4-HYCC Written Report Timeline

2009 M4-HYCC Timeline

- March 1 – Have rough draft report, e-mail this to Troy and Nicole
- March 7 – Rough draft to Jim Bredin, DEQ, for review (Nicole and Troy)
- March 13 – Deadline for experts' comments
- March 14 – Have final individual report and PowerPoint (1 to 2 slides per person); recommend you bring it on a flash drive
- March 27 – Introduction and conclusion for report
- March 27 – Bibliography and recommendations
- April 3 – Everything to Jim Bredin, DEQ, for final review
- April 3 – Nicole and Troy final report (compiled)
- April 10 – Duncan and Dakota final PowerPoint finished
- April 17 – Final edit
- TBA/April 21 – Practice presentation in Lansing
- TBA/April 22 – Actual presentation

E-mail – insert committee members' e-mail addresses

For regional reports:

- Saginaw Bay region send to Lauren
- Central region send to Nicole
- Metro region send to Troy
- UP/North region send to Meghan
- Southwest region send to Duncan

SAMPLE ELECTRONIC SLIDE FORMAT:

Title: Guidelines for Electronic Presentation

- Slides should look like this.
- Use Times New Roman, minimum 20-pt type size.
- Individual photos or illustrations should be large enough to cover all or half of slide for good visibility from a distance.
- No backgrounds, animations or effects.
- Include your name in a text box in the bottom left corner of every slide.
- Put sources for stats as footnotes in MLA style.

(When reading the slides during the presentation you are not required to read sources.)

Kristen

Creating a Bibliography

1. While working on your research record the correct citation information on your worksheet.
2. When you're ready to prepare the bibliography, visit easybib.com and follow the prompts there.
3. Cut and paste the resulting citations into endnotes.

Improving Public Speaking & Presentation Skills

The M4-HYCC program primarily uses activities from the *4-H Communications Toolkit: Fun, Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids* (MSU Extension, 4H1560, 2000) to help teens improve their presentation skills. (The Communications Toolkit is on the web at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/toolkit.html.) The "Soap Box" activity was suggested by a teen M4-HYCC participant.

The following activities are used by M4-HYCC members to work on improving their presentation skills and have fun, too! The activities they have enjoyed the most for practicing presentation skills are:

- Soap Box
- What's Wrong With This Picture? (see pg. 51 of the Communications Toolkit)
- Show and Tell: A Demonstration Workshop (see pg. 43 of the Communications Toolkit)

ACTIVITY:

Soap Box

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Practice speaking in front of a group.
- Be evaluated by their peers while practicing public speaking skills.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILL:

- Communication and public speaking

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Masking tape
- Stable, sturdy chair (not a folding chair!), wooden box or other raised platform for speakers to stand on
- “Team Demonstration Speech Evaluation” score sheet (optional; one per person)

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

Gather the newsprint, markers, masking tape, chair and any other supplies you may need.

During the meeting:

1. Ask the group to list some great and some not-so-great public speaking skills. Record their responses on newsprint. Display the list where everyone can see it.
2. Give each person the chance to speak in front of the group for 1 minute on a topic of his or her choice.
3. After each speech ask the listeners to provide feedback about the speaker’s voice projection, hand gestures, eye content and speech patterns.

TALKING IT OVER:

After everyone has received feedback on their speaking style, ask the group the following questions:

- How did you feel while you were giving your speech?
- How did you feel while you were listening to other people speak?
- Did you notice any speaking habits or techniques in other people that you then realized you share with that person? If so, what?
- What is one benefit to giving an impromptu speech such as you just did?
- Did you learn anything about public speaking or presentation skills from this experience? What?

TRY THIS, TOO:

- Have your group try one or more of the following public speaking activities from the *Communications Toolkit: Fun, Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids*:
 - What’s Wrong With This Picture? (pgs. 51–53)
 - Show and Tell: A Demonstration Workshop (pgs. 43–45)

- Appendix 4: Skill Sheet: Delivering a Vocal Presentation (pg. 31)
- Appendix 5: Skill Sheet: Tips for Effective Demonstrations (pgs. 36–37)
- Have your group use the “Team Demonstration Speech Evaluation” score sheet.

SOAP BOX SCORE SHEET: ★

Team Demonstration Speech Evaluation*

**Adapted with permission from "Tip Sheet for Evaluating Demonstrations" in Communications Toolkit: Fun, Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids, East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development, 2000, p. 46.*

Regional Team: _____ Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____

Team Members: _____

Rating Scale:

0- not applicable

2-fair

4-excellent

1-poor

3-good

5-exceptional

Most points possible:

50

1. Spoke and was enthusiastic during the presentation.

Comments: _____

2. Used good eye contact.

Comments: _____

3. Used meaningful gestures.

Comments: _____

4. Maintained an upright posture.

Comments: _____

5. Used strong voice projection, clarity and good grammar.

Comments: _____

6. Speech was organized with an introduction (capture the audience's attention

and then explain what demonstration will be about),

body (explain key points as you go along)

and conclusion (restate your purpose).

Comments: _____

7. The presentation was between 4 and 5 minutes long.

8. Audience could see what was going on at all times.

Comments: _____

Total:

Step 6: Learning About Government

Introduction

This section provides information on how school, city, township, county and state governments work.

The M4-HYCC program requires teens to learn about Michigan's state government. County-based councils may benefit from conducting an activity from *4-H Citizenship: Government Is Us! A Civic Engagement Curriculum for Youth Groups* called "The 'Invisible' Government." The activity is designed to help young people learn about the purpose and structure of local governmental bodies. It's available online at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/cls/documents/GovernmentIsUsCurriculum.pdf.

To learn about the structure and purpose of local or state governments, consider the following methods:

1. Study the structure and purpose of a governmental body by visiting its web site, reading printed information or inviting a government official to be a guest speaker for your group.
2. Visit a public meeting or role-play one at a group meeting.
3. Learn about what conservation issues the governing board works with by reviewing their meeting agendas and other public documents or by inviting a government official to be a guest speaker at a group meeting. (Be sure to write a thank-you letter after a government official has spoken at your meeting.)
4. Write a formal letter to a government official representing your local area asking for information about a conservation or environmental issue. E-mail is an option for communicating with government officials but it is still important to write your message in a formal format.
5. Interact with your government officials one-on-one by visiting their offices or by introducing yourself to them at a meeting.

Five Methods for Learning About Government

Participants in M4-HYCC use the following five methods to learn about state government.

1. **Learn about government purpose and structure.** To learn about the structure and purpose of state government, specifically the Senate and House of Representatives standing committees, M4-HYCC participants:
 - Visit the State of Michigan web site at michigan.gov
 - View and discuss a video called "School House Rock: I'm Just A Bill."
 - Complete the "Three Branches of Michigan State Government Puzzle" activity.
2. **Experience a government meeting.** To experience state government, the M4-HYCC enjoys a role-play activity of a state legislative standing committee in action. Your group can carry out the "State Legislative Committee Role-Play" or the "County Commissioners Meeting Role-Play" activities. Participants are also encouraged to attend 4-H Capitol Experience to learn more about state government.
3. **Learn about government addressing conservation issues.** To learn about the conservation issues currently being addressed by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs and the House Committee on Great Lakes and Natural Resources, the M4-HYCC members participate in conference calls and meetings with government staff and officials. These ideas are added to the brainstorming list of conservation issues before the group selects an issue to research.

4. **Contact government officials.** All M4-HYCC members are asked to write to their state senators and representatives. The purpose of the letters is to provide information about the M4-HYCC and to request information about the current conservation issue the group is considering. Have your group do the “Who Represents You?” activity.
5. **Meet government officials.** Many M4-HYCC members will meet with their state senator or representative while in Lansing during the M4-HYCC presentation. The M4-HYCC teens practice the “Business Handshake” activity to prepare for the meeting.

Arranging a State, City, Township or County Government Presentation

Giving testimony on a current conservation issue to a state, city, township or county government board is a privilege and a tremendous hands-on opportunity to learn about the local or state democratic process. The M4-HYCC program communicates with government staff, the Senate Majority policy advisor and the clerk of the Senate Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs to schedule a date for the presentation.

A local 4-H youth conservation council needs to build relationships with government officials and support staff to arrange the opportunity to make a presentation on their specific conservation issue. Several tips for giving public testimony follow.

- Prepare testimony based on good research and understanding of the issue.
- Dress professionally for the presentation.
- Know the meeting procedures for citizen testimony.
- Speak clearly and respectfully.
- Know and follow the time limits for the group presentation.
- If asked a question that you cannot answer, tell the questioner that you will check the answer and respond at a later time. Then do so!

ACTIVITY:

Three Branches of State Government Puzzle

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Be able to explain the structure of the three branches of the Michigan state government.
- Work effectively with others in a group.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Working effectively in a small group
- Teamwork

MATERIALS:

- Blank version of the “Three Branches of Michigan State Government” handout (one copy for each two- to four-person team)
- Completed version of the “Three Branches of Michigan State Government” handout (one cut-up and one intact copy for each team)
- Pens or pencils (one per person)
- Scissors (one pair)
- Small plastic or paper bags or #10 envelopes (one for each team)

TIME:

20 minutes

SETTING:

A comfortable room

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Make two photocopies of the completed “Three Branches of Michigan Government” handout for each two- to four-person team you anticipate having in your group. Make one photocopy of the blank version of the handout for each two- to four-person team.
2. Cut apart one copy of the completed “Three Branches of Michigan Government” handout for each team and put each team’s puzzle pieces in a separate small bag or envelope.
3. Review the activity and gather any other materials you may need to conduct it.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group they’re going to put together a puzzle that will help them learn about the structure of Michigan’s state government. Divide the group into two- to four-person teams.
2. Give each team a bag full of puzzle pieces and a photocopy of the blank version of the “Three Branches of Michigan State Government” handout. Explain that the blank version will serve as the base of their puzzles. Tell the teams they’ll have about 10 minutes to put together the puzzle of how Michigan’s state government is structured.

3. After the teams have finished the puzzle, give each team a copy of the completed “Three Branches of Michigan State Government” to check their puzzles.

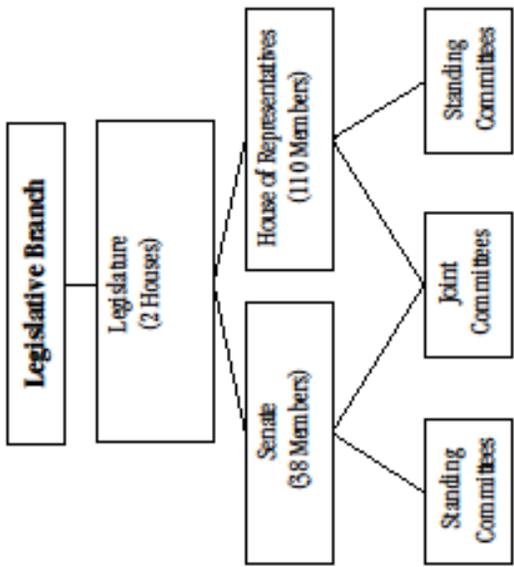
TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- Which branch of government was the hardest for your team to arrange? Why?
- Which branch and section of government will the M4-HYCC testify before on an environmental issue?
- Which branch of government oversees natural resources-related state agencies such as the Department of Natural Resources and Environment?
- How do these agencies operate within state government?
- How will the M4-HYCC interact with the state agencies?



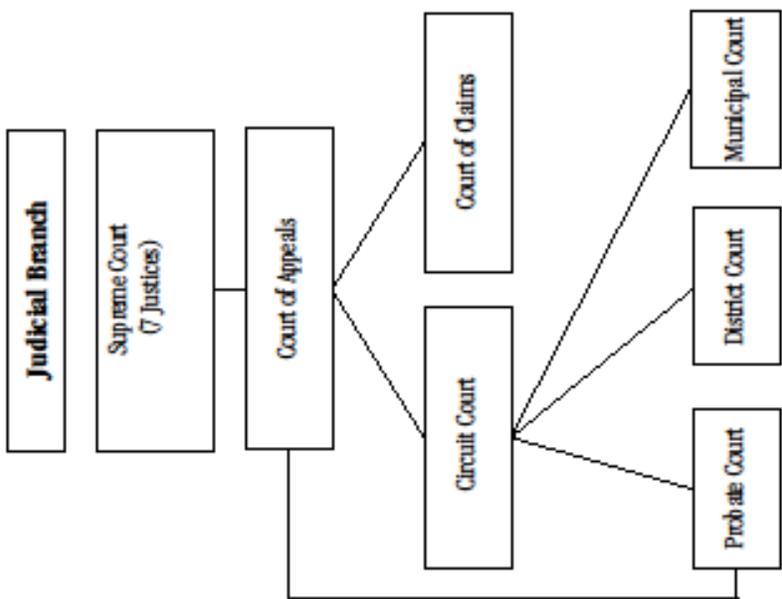
The Three Branches of Michigan State Government



Executive Branch

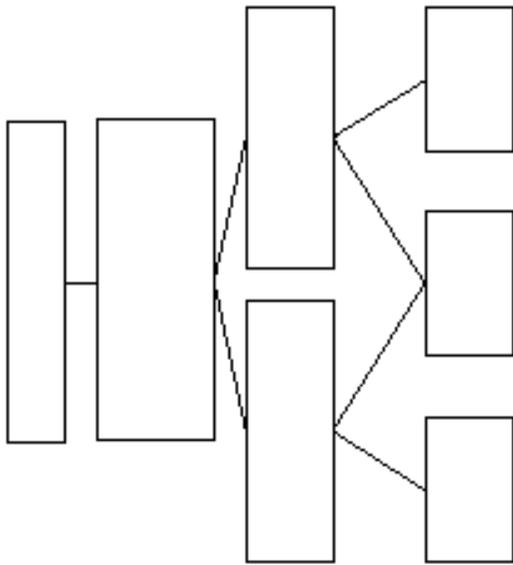
Executive Office
Governor
Lieutenant Governor

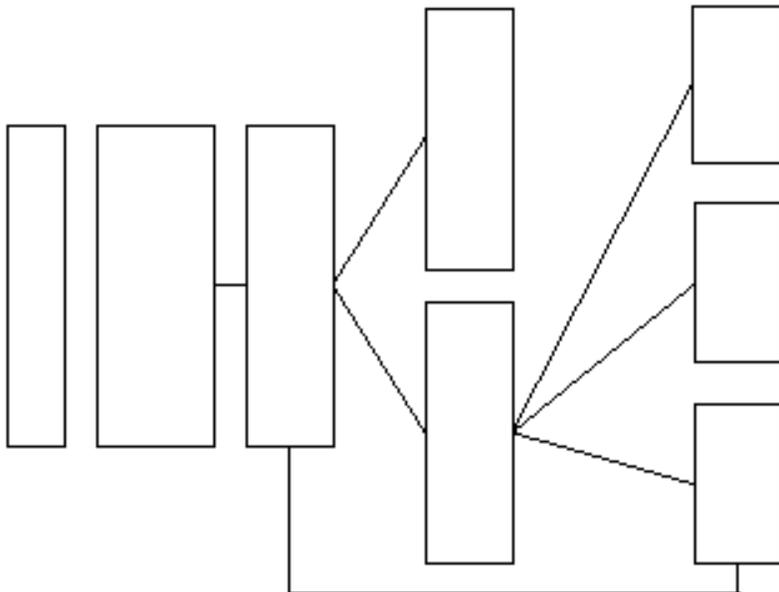
Departments	
Agriculture	Information Technology
Attorney General	Management & Budget
Civil Rights	Military & Veterans Affairs
Civil Service Commission	Natural Resources & Environment
Community Health	Secretary of State
Corrections	State Police
Education	Transportation
Energy, Labor & Economic Growth	Treasury
Human Services	





The Three Branches of Michigan State Government





What Is a Public Policy Issue?

Problems and concerns become public policy issues when the impact of actions goes beyond the individual situation. For example, arranging for child care is a private problem if there is someone within the family structure to care for a child; however, it becomes a public policy issue when the family must turn to government to provide protection in terms of quality (licensing), and to provide assistance in terms of access (such as subsidies for low-income families).

Who affects public policy issues? We all can! Involvement in programs such as 4-H Capitol Experience and the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council are designed to help participants understand the close interconnections between the various forces that influence policy decisions. Four components (out of a much larger possible array) are described here:

Community Agency

A community organization or agency can be governmental (such as a school board or domestic violence coalition) or nongovernmental (such as the landfill in Ingham County that is owned by Granger).

Lobbyist

This designation refers to an individual or organization whose main purpose is to communicate specific views on an issue to a policymaker. The term “lobbyist” is a sensitive one to some groups, often because of legal and tax constraints. The “bottom line” is that if an individual, agency or organization is working to convey their views to policy makers, then they are engaged in lobbying.

Legislative Aide

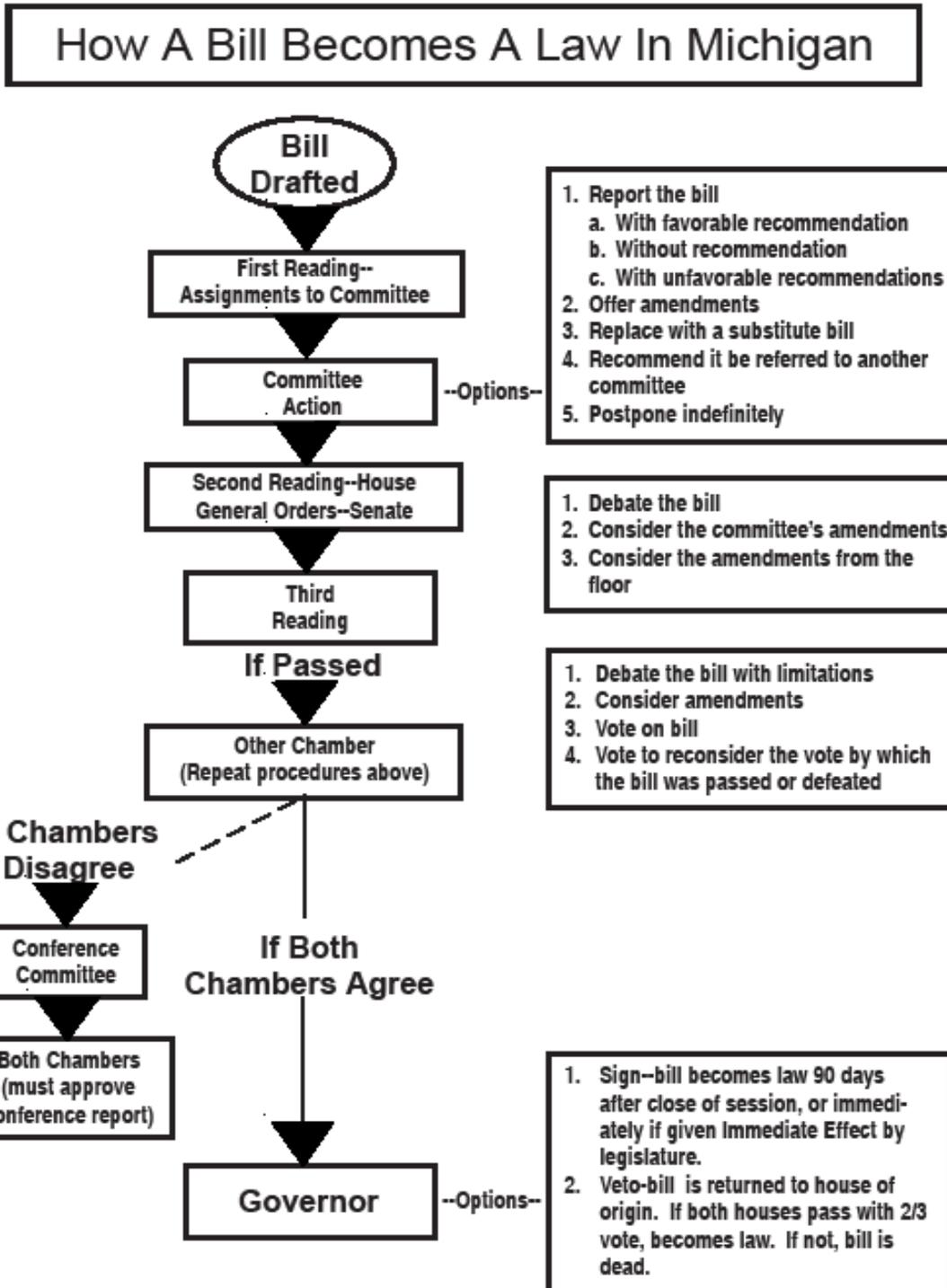
Legislative aides play an extremely important – but often-overlooked – role in the policy-making process. They serve as key resource people for legislators and they have the opportunity to focus on more specific issues than do the legislators. They are staff members who deal with the policy-making aspects of legislative activity, as opposed to the constituent relations aspects.

State Agency

Executive departments are the agencies and departments (such as the departments of Natural Resources and Environment, Corrections, Education and Agriculture) that implement the laws and policies that are approved by the legislature. These departments, along with the Governor’s office, make up the executive branch of state government. (Note: The director and a few top officials of a department may be appointed by the governor, but the rest of the department staff are in place from administration to administration and are called civil service employees.)

HANDOUT: ★

How a Bill Becomes Law in Michigan



ACTIVITY:

State Legislative Committee Meeting Role-Play

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Experience what goes on in legislative committee meetings.
- Understand the roles of legislators, legislative staffers and lobbyists and how they shape the legislative process.
- Think about the differing views different groups may have on the same issue.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Communication
- Cooperation
- Conflict resolution
- Planning and organizing
- Leadership
- Responsible citizenship
- Contributions to group effort

MATERIALS:

- “Legislative Committee Role-Play Background Information” handout (one per person)
- “Legislator and Lobbyist Roles” character slips” (one set)
- “At Issue: Should Michigan Cash in on Bottled Water?” handout (one per person)
- Small container such as a hat, basket, box or #10 envelope
- 8.5-inch by 11-inch index or card stock (one-half sheet per person acting as member of the legislative committee)
- Index cards (one per person acting as lobbyist)
- One rectangular table

TIME:

60 minutes

SETTING:

Room with space for a long rectangular table and a number of chairs

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Make one photocopy of the “Legislative Committee Role Play Background Information” handout and the “At Issue: Should Michigan Cash in on Bottled Water?” handout for each person.
2. Photocopy one set of “Legislator and Lobbyist Roles” character slips and cut them apart.
3. Review the activity and gather any other materials you need to conduct it.

- Note that there may be more or fewer roles listed than the people in your group. If you have more roles than people to play them, take out the slips marked with an asterisk instead of a number. If you have more people than roles, make up enough new roles to include everyone in your group. Cut apart the character slips and put them in a hat or other small container that the participants can reach into.
- Set up the room with a rectangular table at the front of the room with chairs for the committee members behind the table and chairs for the lobbyists and other audience members facing the table, theater-style. Place one chair for the person giving testimony between the audience chairs and the committee table, facing the committee table.

(Facilitators Note: The success of this role play is partly determined by how prepared you are for it. When the M4-HYCC group does this role play, the adult advisors serve as legislative aides, the teen advisors serve as the legislative committee chairpersons, and the teen participants fill the other roles. Depending on the makeup of your county-based council, you may need to recruit a parent to fill the adult role.)

During the meeting:

- Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Now we're going to do a role play of a state legislative committee meeting so that we can all learn about how policy is debated and shaped in the legislative process. You'll have a chance to experience what happens at legislative committee meetings and develop a better understanding of the roles of legislators, legislative staffers and lobbyists. We'll start by handing out some information sheets and drawing lots to see who will play which roles.

- Distribute and review with the group the "Legislative Committee Role Play Background Information" handout.
- Have the participants take turns drawing character slips from the small container. Tell them they have the option of trading roles if both parties to the trade are agreeable.
- Give the people who will be playing the legislators and the legislative aide index or card stock and a marker and have them make table tent name plates by folding the sheets in half and writing their own last names and their assigned role (such as Sen. X or Rep. Y). Pass out the index or card stock and markers and ask the participants who will be portraying lobbyists to write their names and affiliations (such as "Lobbyist, Michigan Farm Bureau," or "Resident, Petoskey").
- Distribute the "Legislative Committee Role Play Background Information" handout that describes the issue to each participant. Give the group about 30 minutes to think about their roles and plan their strategy. The adult playing the legislative aide should work with the lobbyists and the teen leader playing the committee chairperson should work with the committee members.
- Have the group take seats in the appropriate places for the roles they're playing. The committee chairperson and the legislative aide should sit in the middle chairs of the head table.
- Answer any questions the participants have before they start the role play. Encourage them to work through the role play without stopping to ask more questions. Tell them they'll have time to debrief after the role play.

TALKING IT OVER:

After the role play is completed, ask the group the following questions:

- Do you think such a bill is ever likely to pass the state legislature?
- Do you think that a measure to expand the scope of the bottle bill would be approved by voters if it were put on the ballot?
- What are some of the reasons that the bottle deposit law has been successful in Michigan but not in many other states?

- Do you think the recommendation to expand recycling efforts will be enough to make a difference to Michigan's environment without expanding the bottle bill, too? Why?
- Reread the list of legislator roles in this activity. Do you think the length of time a person has served in the legislature will affect the way the person feels about an issue such as expanding Michigan's bottle bill? What else might influence a legislator's decision on such a bill?
- What other details and information would you need to have if you were actually voting on this bill?

STATE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ROLE-PLAY HANDOUT:

Background Information on the Role Play

About the Roles

- **Lobbyists** – This includes anyone who expresses an opinion on the bill, including citizens, persons in governmental roles (governor’s office, executive departments) or persons representing particular groups (such as the Michigan United Conservation Clubs).
- **Legislators** – Any resemblance to current or former members of specific legislative committees in this role play is purely coincidental. The information on age, gender, location, number of terms served, occupation and possibly ethnic background, are given to help participants understand the differing viewpoints that often are represented on legislative committees.

Playing the Roles

This role play will work better if all of the participants involved really “get into” their assigned roles. There is no such thing as right or wrong with this activity. If you’re playing a “male, Democrat, age 55, from Detroit,” or a “female, Republican, age 60, from Ann Arbor” try to be true to what you think that person is likely to say and think about the issue under consideration.

(Note: The roles were chosen to provide differing viewpoints. The specific characters in the role play and in real life may not match. [For example, the MUCC may not have taken this specific stand on this issue.] As of this writing, there are usually more men than women on Michigan legislative committees. That means that, depending on the makeup of your group, some young women may have to play men.)

An adult should serve as the legislative aide to help the committee chairperson stay on track and to provide input and direction if the group struggles.

A teen advisor or teen leader should serve as the legislative committee chairperson.

About the Issues

The bill described in the role plays was chosen to give participants a realistic idea of the types of policy debate that might take place related to this issue. The information sheet for the issue gives a brief explanation of the background and current status of the proposal.

The Action

A typical committee meeting follows a process similar to that outlined here.

1. Chairperson calls meeting to order.
2. Legislative aide provides background information on bill.
3. Chairperson calls on lobbyists to testify. Lobbyists must introduce themselves before beginning testimony.
4. Chairperson may call on committee members to question lobbyists.
5. Chairperson may call a brief break midway through the committee meeting to give lobbyists informal time to persuade the legislators to support their point of view.
6. After testimony is finished, the discussion can continue and the bill can be amended (that is, changed). See “Possible Outcomes When a Bill Is in Committee.” A legislator can offer an amendment as a motion that must be seconded before being voted on separately from the main bill.
7. When the vote is taken, the committee aide calls the roll and legislators can give reasons for their votes.
8. When the vote is completed, the chairperson adjourns the legislative committee meeting, but does not dismiss the group.

Possible Outcomes When a Bill Is in Committee

The Speaker of the House or the Senate Majority Leader decides which committee (as of this writing, there are 18 committees in the Michigan Senate, 22 in the House) will consider the bill. That decision is routine, but occasionally it is motivated by interest in how a bill will be treated in a particular committee.

It is primarily the decision of the committee chairperson as to whether a bill is taken up for discussion after it has been assigned to a particular committee. If a bill is taken up for discussion by the committee, possible actions include:

- **No further action** occurs when there is discussion but not enough support to vote the bill out of committee.
- **Amending the bill** is a frequently used tactic during committee deliberations. Amendments may be brief and technical in nature (for example, word choice) or they may change major portions of the bill.
- **Substituting the bill** occurs when there are a number of amendments and the bill is essentially re-written.
- **Reporting (passing) the bill** occurs if a majority of the members on the committee approve the bill for further action by the full Senate or House.
- **Referring the bill to another committee** most frequently occurs if there are constitutional or financial issues related to it that need to be resolved.
- **Defeating a bill** occurs when the majority of members vote against it.

STATE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ROLE-PLAY HANDOUT:

At Issue: Should Michigan Cash in on Bottled Water?

Basic Policy Question for Discussion: Should the state expand the bottle bill to require deposits for juices and bottled water?*

Legislation: Senate Bill 174, Senator Moore

Committee: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs

This Bill Would: Amend the citizen-initiated “bottle bill” of 1976 to include a \$0.10 deposit on glass and plastic juice and water containers. The original law covered bottles and cans containing carbonated beverages, beer and wine. In 1989 the law was expanded to include wine cooler containers.

Background and Problem: Michigan’s bottle bill was put on the ballot in 1976 through a citizen petition process. Voters approved the measure, making this state one of ten that requires a deposit on certain containers. Michigan’s \$0.10 deposit is the highest of any of the states. As different sorts of drinks have become more popular, environmental groups and others have been urging an expansion of the law to cover these other drinks. At the same time, grocers have been raising more concerns about the realities of implementing the current law. They cite the cost in terms of staff time and equipment to handle returns. There has been some discussion about establishing regional redemption centers, which then raises concerns that this practice would make bottle redemption less convenient.

According to the requirements of Michigan’s constitution, any change to the bottle bill (because it was initiated by the citizenry rather than by the legislature) would require approval by three-fourths of both houses of the legislature.

A YES vote on this bill would be approving an expansion of the bottle law to include these other beverage containers.

A NO vote means that the law would stay as it is.

***Note:** This bill was introduced in February 2003 and no action was taken on it by the legislature.

STATE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ROLE-PLAY CHARACTER SLIPS: ★

Legislator & Lobbyist Roles

Make a photocopy of the character slips so you can cut apart the slips and have the participants draw them from a hat to choose the characters they will portray.

ROLES FOR LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Note that at the time this book was written, the Republican Party had the majority in the Michigan Senate, so Republicans chaired all committees and had more members on each committee. If the Democrats win a majority of Senate seats, and thus take control of the Senate, a Democrat will chair the committee and there will be more Democratic senators on each Senate committee.

1. Committee Chairperson: Female, Republican, first term in Senate, served three terms in House; former county treasurer; from Holland. (Sponsor of the bill.)

Suggestions for chairing the meeting: Before the meeting begins, ask the legislative committee aide (the adult advisor for your issue group) to have lobbyists who want to testify fill out information cards (the index cards). You may want to sort the cards to determine in what order the lobbyists will give testimony.

Your responsibility will be to:

- Call the meeting to order.
 - State the bill number and intent. Note that the committee is considering whether to pass the bill out of committee.
 - Request that the legislative aide begin the meeting by giving information to legislators. Ask for questions from legislators.
 - Call on lobbyists to testify. Each person has up to 5 minutes. Recognize legislators who want to ask questions of those testifying.
 - Before the vote, call on legislators who want to discuss the issue.
 - At the end of the meeting, call for the vote. Ask each legislator to state his or her name and say why they voted a specific way.
-

2. Committee Member: Male, Republican, age 50, first term in Senate, former prosecuting attorney and county commissioner in Wayne County

3. Committee Member: Male, Republican, age 55, first term, former agriculture teacher, farmer, Sturgis (St. Joseph County)

4. Committee Member: Male, Republican, age 56, first term in Senate, former school superintendent, Muskegon

5. Committee Member: Female, Democrat, age 52, first term in Senate, also served in House, former teacher and former mayor, city of Ann Arbor, environmental activist

6. Committee Member: Male, Democrat, age 56, first term, former small business owner, Warren

7. Committee Member: Female, Democrat, 36, second term, former lobbyist for environmental protection group

ROLES FOR LOBBYISTS

8. President of Michigan United Conservation Clubs – Supports the bill. Talks about how his organization coordinated the petition drive in 1976 to get the bottle bill placed on the ballot. The new law made Michigan a state that was notable nationally for controlling its litter. Now, with people drinking more juice and bottled water, it is necessary once again to take action to control the litter that is beginning to increase along roadsides.

9. Lobbyist, Michigan Farm Bureau – Supports the bill. Explains how this organization worked hard for the passage of Michigan's original bottle bill because farmers find roadside litter a real impediment to their work in the fields. Bottles and cans often cause problems with their equipment. Now, after 30 years of not having to worry much about this, it has once again become a major problem.

10. Lobbyist, Michigan Grocer's Association – Opposes the bill. Tells about the serious problems that grocery stores face with the bottles now covered by the law. She tells about how the state's new Food Code has more stringent rules in terms of cleanliness in grocery stores. Often people bring their bottles in with all sorts of debris, which puts the grocer at risk for incurring fines. Adding more bottles to this mix will only worsen the situation.

11. Chairperson, Senate Republican Task Force on Recycling – Opposes the bill. Outlines the recommendations from this task group, which favors a new solid waste fee to support recycling programs. The group feels that Michigan has fallen behind other states on recycling efforts because the most valuable commodity – aluminum – is removed from the waste stream because of the deposit on cans. He explains that the group recommends that attention be given to expanding recycling before the bottle bill is expanded.

12. Student, Michigan State University – Supports the bill. Explains how she has earned a great deal of money during her three years at MSU by making the rounds of campus classrooms collecting bottles and cans and redeeming them. She also talks about the fact that about one-half of the containers remaining in a classroom can't be redeemed because they aren't covered by the present law.

13. Lobbyist, Michigan Chamber of Commerce. Opposes the bill. Emphasizes how much this bill would hurt the business climate in Michigan as one more indication that the state is not supportive of businesses. The cost for small businesses to implement even the current law is nearly prohibitive. It is unthinkable what will happen if the law is expanded.

14. Manager, 7-11 Store in Lansing. – Opposes the bill. Tells about how his store no longer redeems bottles, which means that they simply lose the cost of the deposit. However, this loss is far less than what it costs to have enough staff to handle bottle returns. The “reverse vending machines” that take in returned bottles cost more than \$15,000 each, an expense that is simply not feasible for small stores.

15. Lobbyist, Michigan Environmental Council – Supports the bill. Feels that expanding recycling is certainly important, but that it is equally important to expand the bottle bill. Michigan has been a national leader in terms of controlling litter and we need to continue to maintain that leadership role.

16. Lobbyist, Michigan Bottlers' Association – Opposes the bill. Talks about the problems caused by Michigan's deposit law and how it increases the cost of doing business here. In the long run, the association maintains, the bottle bill costs jobs for the state's workforce.

17. Professor, Resource Development, Michigan State University – Supports the bill. Details his study of the economic and environmental impact of the bottle bill in Michigan. He explains that overall it has greatly benefited the state in terms of providing jobs and reducing litter.

18. President, Michigan Recycling Coalition – Opposes the bill. Emphasizes that Michigan ranks 28th in the nation in terms of recycling. Her group feels that this could be vastly improved if an emphasis was put on recycling plastic bottles and other containers that are not presently redeemed.

ACTIVITY:

County Commissioners Meeting Role-Play

By Jennifer Curtis, M4-HYCC Teen Advisor

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Experience what goes on in county commissioners meetings.
- Understand the roles of county commissioners and various interest groups and how they shape the decision-making process.
- Think about the differing views different groups may have on the same issue.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Communication
- Cooperation
- Conflict resolution
- Planning and organizing
- Leadership
- Responsible citizenship
- Contributions to group effort

MATERIALS:

- “Tire Disposal Ordinance 2347 Background Information” handout (one per person)
- “Tire Disposal Ordinance Role-Play Character Slips” (one set)
- Small container such as a hat, basket, box or #10 envelope
- 8.5-inch by 11-inch sheets of card or index stock (one half-sheet per person)
- Index cards (one per person acting as lobbyist)
- One rectangular table

TIME:

60 minutes

SETTING:

Room with space for a long rectangular table and a number of chairs

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Make one photocopy of the “Tire Disposal Ordinance 2347 Background Information” handout for each person.
2. Photocopy one set of “Tire Disposal Ordinance Role-Play Character Slips” and cut them apart. If you have a small group, you can omit the roles marked with an asterisk (*). Put all of the slips in a hat or other small container that the participants can reach into.

3. Set up the room with a rectangular table at the front of the room with chairs for the commissioners behind the table and chairs for the lobbyists and other audience members facing the table, theater-style. Place one chair for the person giving testimony between the audience chairs and the committee table, facing the committee table.
4. Review the activity and gather any other materials you need to conduct it.

During the meeting:

1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

We're going to do a role play of a county commission meeting at which the commissioners discuss and hear testimony on a proposed tire disposal ordinance that would:

- *Regulate how people dispose of tires.*
- *Impose a \$10 a tire disposal fee on people buying new tires to pay for the creation and maintenance of a tire recycling center where tire sellers would be required to haul the old tires they collect.*

The ordinance has been proposed because old tires are piling up in the county, polluting water supplies, attracting mosquitoes and other pests, and creating health problems for residents.

We're going to draw lots to decide who will play what roles, then you'll have time to think about your role and the issue of disposing of used tires.

2. Distribute and review the "Tire Disposal Ordinance 2347 Background Information" handout with the group.
3. Have the participants take turns drawing a character slip from the small container. Tell them they have the option of trading roles if both parties to the trade are agreeable.
4. Give the people who will be playing the county commissioners a piece of index or card stock and a marker and have them make table tent name plates by folding the sheets in half and writing their own last names and their assigned role (such as Commissioner X). Pass out the index or card stock and markers and ask the participants who will be portraying lobbyists and other audience members to write their names and affiliations (such as County Resident, Mom, or Lobbyist, Discount Tire Industry).
5. Give the group about 30 minutes to think about their roles and plan their strategy.
6. Answer any questions the participants have before they start the role play. Encourage them to work through the role play without stopping to ask more questions, if possible. Tell them they'll have time to debrief after the role play.

TALKING IT OVER:

After the vote has been taken and the role play is complete, ask the group the following questions:

- What might be the economic consequences of requiring proper tire disposal? Of not requiring it?
- What might be the environmental impacts of requiring proper tire disposal? Of not requiring it?
- Which factor in the discussion of a tire disposal ordinance – economic consequences or environmental impacts – carries the most weight in your decision-making process? Why?
- Talk about the role that interest groups would play on this issue.
- What might be the "middle ground" position on the tire disposal issue?
- What are some of the pros and cons of requiring specific products to be sent to a disposal center?
- If one county passed this ordinance but surrounding counties didn't, what are some of the possible consequences?

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROLE-PLAY HANDOUT:

Tire Disposal Ordinance 2347 Background Information

Commission Ordinance Number: 2347

Committee: Public Health and Safety

This Ordinance Would: Regulate how people dispose of tires.

Background/Problem

Old tires are piling up throughout the county, polluting water supplies and creating health problems for residents.

Basic Policy Question for Discussion

Should the county require anyone buying new tires to pay a \$10 a tire disposal fee to pay for the creation and maintenance of a tire recycling center where tire sellers would be required to haul the old tires they collect?"

Playing the Roles

A typical county commission committee meeting follows a process similar to that outlined here. The committee chair will:

1. Call the meeting to order.
2. State the ordinance number and intent and note that the committee is considering whether to pass the ordinance out of committee.
3. Call on people to testify. Give each person up to 5 minutes to testify.
4. Recognize commissioners who want to ask questions of the people who are testifying.
5. Call on commissioners who want to discuss the issue before the vote.
6. Call for the vote at the end of the meeting. Ask each commissioner to state his or her name and say why he or she voted a specific way.

Keep This in Mind

Keep the following points in mind as you prepare for the role play:

- Don't be afraid to make up explanations and questions as you go along. There is no one "right" way to perform your role.
- Commissioners should consider the needs of their own constituents.
- Commissioners should be prepared to ask questions, give testimony and discuss the issue with the committee.
- Commissioners should be able to explain their viewpoint on the issue when the committee vote is taken.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROLE-PLAY CHARACTER SLIPS:

Tire Disposal Ordinance Roles

Cut apart the character slips and put them into a small container so the participants can pull out a slip.

Committee Chairperson – Male, Independent, age 68, seventh term, retired coffee shop owner

District 1 Commissioner – Female, Republican, age 41, first term, former teacher

District 2 Commissioner – Male, Republican, age 51, third term, former tool and die maker

District 3 Commissioner – Male, Republican, age 51, first term, former police officer

District 4 Commissioner – Female, Democrat, age 45, third term, former teacher and mayor of Ann Arbor

***District 5 Commissioner** – Male, Democrat, age 27, first term, former farmer

***District 6 Commissioner** – Male, Democrat, age 47, first term, former radio disc jockey

Manager, Village Auto Sales – Opposed to ordinance. For the past 20 years business has been going strong. Feels that if tire disposal is required the debt would greatly hurt business.

Local Crop Farmer – Opposed to ordinance. Farming was already hard enough, and under this ordinance, every time a new tire is purchased the old one must be taken to a special dump, which would waste time and money.

Lobbyist, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) – Supports the ordinance. If tire disposal is required then water quality would improve and people would have cleaner drinking water. The ordinance would create jobs because there would be a need for recycling operations.

County Resident, Mom – Supports the ordinance. Worries that the runoff from an old tire dump near her home will contaminate her well and make her family sick.

Lobbyist, Automobile Manufacturer – Opposed to ordinance. Feels that requiring car dealers to pay more to have tires disposed of will harm their businesses.

County Resident, Middle-Aged Man – Opposed to ordinance. Feels that if the tire ordinance were imposed he wouldn't be able to pursue his hobby of working on old cars anymore.

Manager, Local Recycling Center – Supports the ordinance. Imposing the tire ordinance would create a larger source of income for the center and would create jobs.

County Resident, Environmentally Concerned Person – Supports the ordinance. Feels that if a tire ordinance is not put into action it will harm nature; concerned about water and air quality problems related to tires burning when stored in large piles.

Driver, NASCAR Racing Team – Opposed to ordinance. Feels that mandatory tire disposal will drive up his racing expenses, which may cause him to lose some sponsors.

Lobbyist, Discount Tire Industry – Opposed to ordinance. Thinks mandatory tire disposal would drive up her industry's costs.

Chief, Local Fire Department – Supports the ordinance. Supports mandatory tire disposal because when piles of improperly disposed of tires catch fire, the blaze is extremely difficult to extinguish.

***Superintendent, Local School System** – Supports the ordinance. Supports tire recycling because the recycled tires could be used to make a new high school track.

***Owner, Towing and Recovery Center** – Opposed to ordinance. Being required to haul away the tires they collect would be hard on their business.

ACTIVITY:

Who Represents You?

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Look up contact information for their state legislators on the Internet.
- Use Internet search engines to look up contact information for local government officials such as county, township, city and school district officials.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Problem solving
- Organizing information

MATERIALS:

- One or more computers with Internet connections
- “Suggestions for Writing to Your State Legislators” handout (one per person)

TIME:

20 minutes

SETTING:

Computer lab, library or other setting that has multiple computers with Internet connections

PROCEDURE:

Before the meeting:

1. Locate a computer lab, library, meeting room or other setting that has enough computers for your group to work on comfortably.
2. Make one photocopy of the “Suggestions for Writing to Your State Legislators” handout for each person.

During the meeting:

1. Tell the group that they’re going to look up contact information for their state legislators and local government officials on the Internet. They’ll start with their state representatives and senators.
2. Have them form small groups of three or four people and gather at a computer. Tell them to open a web browser such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera, Chrome or Safari. Walk them through the following steps:

Go to michigan.gov and click on “MI Legislature” under “Quick Links” on the right-hand side of the page. This link will take you to the main page of the Michigan Legislature site at legislature.mi.gov. Click on the “Find a Representative” link and search for your representative. Then return to the “Michigan Legislature” site and repeat the process to find your state senator.

3. Distribute the “Suggestions for Writing to Your State Legislators” handout. Read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

For M4-HYCC Participants:

The information on this handout is designed to help you write a letter to your state legislators inviting them to attend our group’s final presentation, just in case they aren’t assigned to the committee you’ll be testifying before. In addition to

inviting them to our presentation, your letter should inform them of your participation in the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council, what the council is and what your current research topic is. It's important to send these letters several weeks before our presentation so that the legislators or their aides have enough time to try to fit the event into their schedules.

For County 4-H YCC Participants:

The information on this handout is designed to help you write letters to your state legislators inviting them to attend our group's final presentation. State legislators are not usually directly involved with your local government's decision-making process, but it wouldn't hurt to invite them anyway so they're aware that the issue our group is working (The local government officials of whatever body they'll be presenting to will almost certainly be required to attend the meeting at which we'll be making our presentation.) In addition to inviting them to our presentation, your letter should inform them of your participation in our 4-H youth conservation council, what the council is and what your current research topic is. It's important to send these letters several weeks before our presentation so that the legislators or their aides have enough time to try to fit the event into their schedules.

4. County or regional 4-H YCC participants should next find contact information for their local government officials who might have information about the issue they're researching. Ask them to navigate to an Internet search engine (such as Ask.com, Bing, Clusty, Google or Yahoo). Have them start by typing in the full name of their county, plus the word "Michigan." (This will help weed out duplicates from other states.) Once they find their county government site, they can poke around those sites for links to city and township sites. Suggest that they look for links such as "Local Governments," "About the County" or "Contact Us." Tell them they'll have about 10 minutes to find and write down the contact information for the government body they're looking for. Walk around the room, answering any questions the participants may have.
5. Once most of the groups have found the information they're looking for, have them move away from the computers back to a central location. Ask for volunteers to share the information they found and the steps they followed in their search. After the groups have reported their findings, encourage them to keep the contact information so they can use it if they need to ask the government officials for help or information.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- What kind of information do you think a state legislator could provide related to our research topic? A county commissioner? A school board member?
- Were you surprised by any of the results that popped up during your web search?
- What advice would you give to someone looking for contact information for a county drain commissioner?

WHO REPRESENTS YOU? HANDOUT:

Suggestions for Writing to Your State Legislators

We suggest all M4-HYCC members write their state senators and representatives to inform them of the member's participation in the M4-HYCC and his or her current research topic, and to invite the legislators to the scheduled final presentation. We recommend that the letters go in the mail several weeks in advance. The following is a suggested format and information to include in the letters:

Letter #1 to a State Senator

Letter #2 to a State Representative

[Your inside address]

[Your inside address]

The Honorable _____

The Honorable _____

Michigan Senate

Michigan House of Representatives

State Capitol

State Capitol

P.O. Box 30036

P.O. Box 30014

Lansing, Michigan 48909

Lansing, MI. 48909

Letter #1 Dear Senator _____:

Letter #2 Dear Representative _____:

Paragraph 1: Introduce yourself. Include your age and grade plus anything else you would like your legislator to know about you (interest in government, school activities, 4-H projects and more).

Paragraph 2: Talk about your involvement in the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council (number of years, what you like about the M4-HYCC and why you have an interest in the program). Include the purpose of the M4-HYCC. *The Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council (M4-HYCC) is a state-level 4-H leadership program for teens aged 13 to 19. It is coordinated by the 4-H Youth Development Programs of Michigan State University Extension. The purpose of the program is to provide hands-on experiences for young people, with the option of participating for one to three years in the program, to learn about current conservation issues in Michigan and our state government public policy-making process. Twenty-five teens from throughout Michigan select and research an issue and prepare written and oral presentations for a Senate or House committee interested in the conservation issue.*

Paragraph 3: Talk about your conservation topic of _____ and what you are doing as research of the topic.

Paragraph 4: Invite your legislator to the *M4-HYCC presentation for the Senate Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, on _____*. Inform them that you are looking forward to meeting them and finding out more about state government.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your name, printed or typed

ACTIVITY:

The Business Handshake

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will be able to:

- Explain the importance of a business handshake.
- Demonstrate how to give a business handshake.
- Demonstrate where to affix a name tag.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Shaking hands with business and social contacts
- Placing a name tag for best visibility

MATERIALS:

None

TIME:

15 minutes

SETTING:

A comfortable space

PROCEDURE:

1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:
 - *Offer entire hand in the handshake with a firm, but not uncomfortable, hand hold.*
 - *Maintain eye contact during the handshake.*
 - *Shake hand with short up and down movements for about 3 seconds.*
 - *Share a pleasant greeting such as "Hello my name is _____, I appreciate this opportunity to meet you."*
2. Tell the group they'll have about 5 minutes to move around the room, practicing the business handshake and brief greeting with everyone else in the group.
3. After about 5 minutes or when the handshaking has died down, call the group's attention back to you.
4. Next, talk about the best placement for a name tag. Explain that most business etiquette experts recommend placing the name tags on the right upper chest area because placing it there makes it most visible to a person who is shaking your hand and trying to read the name tag. As you shake hands with someone, your eyes will travel from the person's right hand up the arm and shoulder to his or her face. The name tag can be easily observed if it is pinned on the right.

TALKING IT OVER:

Ask the group the following questions:

- Why is it important to know how to do a proper business handshake?
- Can you think of any situations when it may not be appropriate to shake hands? *(In some cultures business greetings are done by bowing, rather than shaking hands. In other cultures, it is not appropriate for men and women to shake hands. If a person has a physical disability that makes it painful to shake hands, it is not appropriate to do so with that person.)*

Step 7: Telling Others About Your Work

Introduction

After the youth conservation council completes their presentation to a government board it's important to have follow-up discussion. The government officials may or may not be able to take action on the issue immediately after the presentation, even though the youth conservation council's information and recommendations were accurate and important for the health of the environment. Carrying out these quality follow-up activities may help:

1. Debrief after the presentation to give the participant the chance to share their thoughts and feelings. Try the "Whip Around" activity.
2. Write letters to the government officials who attended the hearing, thanking them for being there and requesting information on what action they are planning to take on the issue the youth conservation council testified about.
3. Send a post-event news release to local media outlets (samples appear in this section).

ACTIVITY:

Whip Around

OBJECTIVES:

The participants will:

- Process their experience of testifying before a government body.
- Write thank-you letters to the government officials who attended their presentation.

LEARNING & LIFE SKILLS:

- Processing information and experiences
- Being courteous

MATERIALS:

- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- Computers and printers (several, depending on the size of the group; optional)

TIME:

30 minutes

SETTING:

- Room for the group to stand or sit in a circle (for the debriefing)
- Room with several computers and printers (for letter writing; optional)

PROCEDURE:

During the meeting:

1. Ask participants to form a circle, either standing or sitting. Ask each person to share a thought, feeling or reaction he or she had while addressing the following questions:
 - Did you feel the government officials were interested in your research and found it useful in increasing their understanding of the issue?
 - Did the government officials let you know what actions they plan to take using your research?
 - What public policies do you think will be revised or introduced based on your presentation?
 - What steps should the our group take to follow up with the government officials or other people to continue your work on this conservation issue?
2. Next, ask each participant to share what he or she has learned about themselves or others while working together on and delivering the presentation. What new knowledge about themselves or the group will they bring back and apply to the work place, school or home?
3. Distribute the paper and pens or pencils, or point out the computer if you have access to them. Tell the group they're going to write thank-you letters to the government officials who attended their presentation. Encourage them to draw on what they learned earlier in write letters inviting their state legislators to attend their presentation.
4. Give them about 15 minutes to at least start their letters. After that time, if they're done, collect the letters so you can mail them. If any participants are not done with their letters, encourage them to finish the letters at home and mail them directly.

Contact the Media

One way to let others know about the work your 4-HYCC is doing is to send media advisories (pre-event news releases) and post-event news releases to your local media outlets (such as newspapers, radio and television stations, and web sites that feature local events). Before you send out any news release, contact the media outlets you intend to send it to (or visit their web sites) and try to identify who the reporter or editor is who covers the type of event or activity you're reporting on. Doing this kind of prework helps increase the odds that your news will be covered. Remember to send your news releases to your county MSU Extension staff.

Media advisories (so-called because you're advising the media of an event before it happens) or pre-event news releases:

- Announce what conservation issue your group has been working on.
- Tells when and to whom the group will be presenting its findings and recommendations.

Send media advisories two to four weeks before the group presentation.

You should send post-event news releases as soon as possible after the presentation (that is, while the information is still "news"). The release should report on the presentation, including:

- The topic and purpose of the presentation
- Who gave the presentation
- Who the audience was for the presentation
- When and where the presentation was given

Send a photo of your group taken at the presentation with the post-event news release. Be sure to include a cutline or caption listing who is in the photo (from left to right and front to back) and where they live.

Samples of each type of news release follow.



MEDIA ADVISORY

[Insert state or county name] 4-H YOUTH CONSERVATION COUNCIL TO GIVE TESTIMONY

[Insert time and date]

[Insert location]

Media contact: [Insert name, phone number and e-mail address for the contact person]

Teens from the [insert name of group] 4-H Youth Conservation Council will testify before the [insert name of group] at [insert time and date] to report their findings and recommendations on [insert topic or issue]. The council members have spent more than [insert period of time in weeks or months] researching the [insert topic or issue].

The [insert name of group] M4-HYCC is a [local/countywide/regional] 4-H group established in 20?? [insert year] to engage teens ages 13 to 19 in active stewardship and citizenship work related to emerging and ongoing community-based environmental issues. This year the teen members of the council come from [insert hometown or county names]. The council presents its annual findings and proposes solutions in the spring. The council is funded in part by a grant from [insert full name(s) of funding source(s)].

This 4-H Youth Conservation Council is modeled after the statewide Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council. The state council's efforts have led to the creation of the Michigan Heritage Water Trail program and the introduction of a bill to improve marine fueling techniques and reduce environmental problems associated with marine fuel spills. It also has received numerous awards, including the 2005 Natural Resources Conservation Service Youth Environment Award and the 2003 Michigan Senate White Pine Award for Environmental Excellence.

For more information on Michigan State University Extension's Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council, visit web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/m4hycc.html. For more information on the [insert name] 4-H Conservation Council, contact the [insert county name] County MSU Extension Office at [insert phone number and e-mail address].

###

M4-HYCC POST-PRESENTATION SAMPLE FILL-IN-THE-BLANK NEWS RELEASE

04/20/07

Contact: [county staff name]
[phone number & e-mail address]

[COUNTY] COUNTY 4-H TEENS TESTIFY BEFORE MICHIGAN SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

LANSING, Mich. – [Number of teens] from [County] County spent Wednesday, April 18, speaking to several Michigan senators about the need for smart urban revitalization and growth and increased government collaboration at all levels on land-use issues. The teens were part of the 24-member Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council (M4-HYCC) that testified in front of the Michigan Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, sharing their research and recommendations for Michigan public policy.

Participating [County] County M4-HYCC members are [list member names, possibly with ages and home cities].

Senators Patricia Birkholz, Gerald Van Woerkom, Bruce Patterson, Raymond Basham and Mike Prusi listened intently and asked relevant questions as the teens offered a well-researched written report and oral presentation filled with ideas for smarter land use and reasons to consider green space preservation and reclamation.

The teens have spent the past several months researching and discussing the issue of land use and “cool cities,” which the group selected as their focus topic for this year. In past years, M4-HYCC testimony

helped create the Michigan Heritage Water Trail program and led to the introduction of a bill that would improve marine fueling techniques and reduce environmental problems associated with marine fuel spills.

Andrea Grix, M4-HYCC and 4-H educational program coordinator, says the M4-HYCC provides a youth voice in state government and helps identify real solutions to Michigan conservation issues. Participating teens have an interest in conservation, state government and leadership and are selected through an application process. Council members are encouraged to get involved in local community service projects related to the group's focus topic.

“[Include optional quote(s) from youth member(s) and/or regional advisor.]”

The Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council has received numerous awards over the years, including the 2005 Natural Resources Conservation Service Youth Environment Award, the 2004 Sea World/Busch Gardens/Fujifilm Environmental Excellence Award and the 2003 Michigan Senate White Pine Award for Environmental Excellence.

#mrl#

4-HYCC POST-PRESENTATION SAMPLE FILL-IN-THE-BLANK NEWS RELEASE



Contact: [insert county staff person's name]

[insert phone number and e-mail address]

[Insert county name] COUNTY 4-H TEENS TESTIFY BEFORE [insert name of group]

[Insert number of teens] teens from [insert county name] County spent [insert date] speaking to [insert name of governmental body or other group] about the need for [insert topic]. The teens were part of the [insert council name] 4-H Youth Conservation Council (4-HYCC) that testified and shared their research and public policy recommendations.

Participating [insert council name] 4-HYCC members are [insert member names with ages and home towns].

The teens have spent the past several months researching and discussing the issue of [insert topic], which the group selected as their focus topic for this year.

[Insert 4-H volunteer leader name and title] says the 4-HYCC provides a youth voice in local government and helps identify real solutions to Michigan conservation issues. Participating teens have an interest in conservation, government public policy and leadership, and are selected through an application

process. Council members are encouraged to become involved in local community service learning projects related to the group's focus topic.

“[Insert optional quote(s) from youth member(s) and 4-H leader.]”

This 4-H Youth Conservation Council is modeled after the statewide Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council. The state council's efforts have led to the creation of the Michigan Heritage Water Trail program and the introduction of a bill to improve marine fueling techniques and reduce environmental problems associated with marine fuel spills. It has also received several awards. For more information on the Michigan State University Extension Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council, visit web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/m4hycc.html. For more information about the [insert group name] 4-H Youth Conservation Council, contact the [insert county name] County MSU Extension Office at [insert phone number and e-mail address].

###

Step 8: Do a Local Community Service Learning Project

Introduction

Select, plan and carry out a local community service project that relates to the conservation issue your group researched. The *YEA! Youth Experiencing Action Community Service Learning Guide* (4H1553) is an excellent tool for planning and conducting such activities.

“YEA!” is available online at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/commserv/yeacurriculum.html or you can order it from the MSU Bulletin Office at web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/mainsearch.cfm.

Community Service Learning Conservation Project Ideas

Habitat Management & Improvement

Wildlife habitat projects could take place in a backyard, on a school grounds or at local businesses, parks or vacant lots. Be sure to get written permission from the landowner before starting your project. Also check with the local office of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment to obtain permission and any necessary permits. Possible habitat improvement conservation projects include:

- **Building, placing and monitoring birdhouses and feeders:** Birdhouses provide shelter for tree cavity nesting birds such as owls and songbirds, and birdfeeders provide food sources for many species of birds. Plans for building birdhouses and feeders can be found online at:
 - Cornell University birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/attracting/
 - National Wildlife Federation nwf.org
 - National Audubon Society audubon.org.

These sites provide updated resources for types of bird seed and other food sources to attract birds, and information on placing and caring for the boxes to increase the chance that birds will use them.

- **Building, placing and monitoring bat houses** can be a fun and rewarding conservation project. Bats eat many insects, including mosquitoes, and will use bat houses for shelter. For bat house construction plans and information visit the Organization for Bat Conservation at Cranbrook Institute of Science online at batconservation.org.
- **Conducting backyard or schoolyard wildlife habitat improvement** projects will turn your backyard, school grounds, or city, township or county park into a habitat that will provide food, water and shelter for many species of birds, butterflies, other insects, mammals, amphibians and reptiles. To learn how to create a backyard or schoolyard wildlife habitat, visit the National Wildlife Federation online at nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats and nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat.
- **Controlling exotic nuisance plant species** is important because of the impact these plants can have on Michigan’s native plant species and wildlife. To learn more about exotic nuisance plant species such as purple loosestrife and phragmites and find out how you can participate in control projects, visit these web sites: Michigan Sea Grant at miseagrant.umich.edu or the National Wildlife Federation at nwf.org.
- **Placing brush piles** of fallen branches within a wooded or forested area to serve as shelter for small mammals, woodland amphibians and reptiles. Contact your local Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment office (or visit the department online at michigan.gov/dnr) for information about regulations and how to build brush piles.

- **Building and maintaining community gardens projects.** Work with neighbors to turn an unused area of land into a productive community garden. Neighbors can work together on planning and developing a vegetable, flower and herb garden to provide enjoyment for local families and habitat for wildlife. Many plants attract toads, birds, butterflies and other wildlife. For information on planning a community garden contact your county Michigan State University Extension office (office contact information is online at msue.msu.edu/portal/default.cfm?pageset_id=25744&page_id=25770&msue_portal_id=25643).

Water Quality & Wildlife Management

Adult and teen volunteers can learn to use the scientific method and to perform tests, make observations and collect data for lake and river water quality monitoring and wildlife studies in their communities. Such projects usually require simple but specialized training for volunteers. The training is designed to be achievable for the volunteer and to provide accurate data that can be used in professional research studies. Such projects may require both short- and long-term volunteer commitments. Each project has a reputable management agency, university or organization providing the volunteer training, maintaining the data base of information and completing the analysis and reporting and using the results for natural resource management decisions. The following are a few projects available for Michigan volunteers:

- **Reporting wildlife observations to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment.** This project uses an online system for volunteers to report observations of specific wildlife species. To get the most updated list and use the online reporting system, visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment online at michigan.gov/dnr. (Click on “Wildlife & Habitat/Research Projects/Report Wildlife Observations”.)
- **Participating in the Michigan Frog and Toad Survey.** This dynamic, long-term volunteer monitoring program takes place each spring. Frog and toads are sensitive to changes in water quality and adjacent land use practices, so their populations serve as an index of environmental quality. Volunteers are trained through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment to recognize Michigan frog and toad species by their mating calls. Once a month in April, May and June, volunteers follow an established route of area wetlands and for a few evening hours listen for frog and toad calls and report their findings. For more information and to learn how to participate in the survey visit the MDNR online at michigan.gov/dnr.
- **Participating in the Michigan Herp Atlas Project.** This project involves volunteers in tracking the distribution of amphibians and reptiles in Michigan. (The word “herp” is an abbreviation for “herpetology,” the study of amphibians and reptiles.) The project requires adult and teen volunteers to walk in local woodlots, forests, unused city lots and parks, and around wetlands, fields and other interesting wildlife habitats to discover, photograph and identify amphibian and reptile species. Volunteers are trained to handle the animals carefully, identify the species accurately using field guides, take photographs, and report data to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment. For more information and to learn how to participate in the project visit michigan.gov/dnr. (Click on “Wildlife & Habitat/Research Projects/Herp Atlas Project.”)
- **Salmon in the Classroom** is a program that teaches young people about Michigan’s freshwater resources through an interactive, hands-on project involving the life cycle of the salmon. The program includes raising and caring for salmon from fall until spring, when the young fish are released into a local watershed that will flow into one of the Great Lakes. The project requires a time commitment, the purchase of equipment and an adult educator to teach young people about the Great Lakes ecosystem and fisheries management. For more information visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources online at michigan.gov/dnr.
- **Participating in water quality volunteer monitoring programs** such as Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program (CLMP). The program trains adult and teen volunteers to conduct water quality

tests such as phosphorus levels, turbidity and macroinvertebrate presence; to identify lake plants; and to report data from April through September on their local lakes, rivers and streams. CLMP is a key program in the Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) statewide volunteer water quality monitoring network. For more information on the program visit micorps.net. The program is a partnership between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and the Michigan Lake and Stream Associations Inc.

- **Participating in Project Feederwatch and the Big Backyard Bird Count** are both winter bird counts in which adult and teen volunteers observe and identify birds in their local communities at bird feeders as well as in area habitats. For more information and to join the bird counts visit Cornell University online at cornell.edu.

Water Quality Improvement Projects for Streams, Rivers, Lakes & Wetlands

To understand the purpose of water quality improvement projects it is helpful to understand the terms *water cycle*, *watershed* and *point-* and *non-point source pollution*. Projects that include tree or shrub plantings, placing rock riprap or creating rain gardens that can reduce soil erosion and filter polluted runoff flowing into streams, rivers and lakes are projects volunteers can do to improve water quality. All of these water quality improvement projects need guidance from natural resource based agencies or businesses. Contact your local Conservation District for more information and to assist you in planning and implementing a water quality improvement project. (Visit macd.org/macdcdds to locate your local Conservation District.) A few ideas for how volunteers can help with water quality improvement projects follow.

- **Building lake and river riparian buffer zones**, or greenbelts of vegetation around lakes and streams, can reduce water pollution caused by erosion and runoff. The vegetation serves to stabilize the soil, which may otherwise be washed into the surface water. The plants take up nutrients through their roots and prevent the nutrients from flowing into the surface water and causing plants and algae growth. Adult and teen volunteers can work with natural resource based agency professionals to plant trees and shrubs in riparian buffer zones. Contact your local Conservation District and ask if you can help with projects. (Visit macd.org/macdcdds to locate your local Conservation District.)
- **Building rain gardens to reduce storm water run-off.** A rain garden is an area landscaped with native perennial plants that is designed to direct the rain from a roof or driveway. Rain gardens are built to work like natural meadows or forest ecosystems in solving storm water pollution problems, recharging groundwater and protecting water resources by slowing the flow of rainwater from roofs and driveways. For more information about rain garden projects visit Rain Gardens of West Michigan online at raingardens.org.
- **Cleaning up a local river or beach area** can be an easy project to plan that is beneficial for your community. Have you ever walked along a river or visited a city, county or state park and been concerned about litter on the ground and along the shore of the river or lake? The trash in lakes, rivers and streams can harm wildlife and the environment and destroys the natural beauty of the waterway. It takes concerned citizens to organize or join local river or beach cleanup projects. Visit a local park that contains or borders a river or lake to evaluate the site for a possible cleanup project. Consider creatively painting litter barrels to promote the use of the containers and to discourage visitors from throwing trash on the ground and in the water. Be sure to include safety education with your planning.

Forest Conservation

Trees can improve wildlife habitat, enhance the beauty of an area, improve energy efficiency in homes and prevent erosion and sediment runoff in rivers and lakes. A forest or woodlot can be managed to balance the needs of wildlife and people. Volunteers can get involved in the following service projects that improve wildlife and forest conservation:

- **Planting a tree** where you live will benefit the environment and human health. The many benefits of trees and how to identify tree species can be an interesting study for your youth group. Before starting a tree planting project, contact your local Conservation District at macd.org/macdcds.html or your county MSU Extension office at http://www.msue.msu.edu/portal/default.cfm?pageset_id=25744&page_id=25770&msue_portal_id=25643 to get information. Ask about existing projects you could help with or how to purchase trees. Visit your local city, township, county or state park or your school to ask if they need trees planted on the property. One successful urban forest program is The Greening of Detroit (online at greeningofdetroit.com). The Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (michigan.gov/dnr) offers information and assistance on community tree plantings and educational projects such as the Forest Stewardship Program and programs with the Urban and Community Forestry Council.
- **Volunteering with an adopt-a-forest program.** These programs are designed to keep forests free from illegally dumped construction materials, appliances, furniture, and industrial and household garbage. Your youth group could form a volunteer team to pick up litter and garbage in a state or county forest. You could also hold a fund-raising event to pay for transportation costs and landfill fees to dispose of items that your group finds but can't pick up themselves. For more information, visit the Michigan Coalition for Clean Forests at cleanforests.org or the local Department of Natural Resources and Environment at michigan.gov/dnr.

Community Solid Waste Management Projects

By recycling, what we waste is cycled back into useful products. Recycling reduces the amount of waste stored in landfills and burned in incinerators. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Michigan Recycling Coalition, and many local agencies are working together to provide information that will help residents protect the environment by recycling. Most Michigan communities have a recycling program for their residents. With the increasing existence of curbside and drop-off programs, recycling is very convenient for families and individuals across the state.

- **Recycling** at your home and in your community is a beneficial conservation service project. For information about community recycling programs visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment at michigan.gov/deqrecycling or the Michigan Recycling Coalition at info@michiganrecycles.org or michiganrecycles.org. Currently, most of the waste generated in Michigan (69 percent) ends up in landfills. Of the rest, 14 percent is recycled, 6 percent is composted and 11 percent is incinerated. Supporting existing community efforts and organizing new recycling and composting projects are great ways to reduce landfill waste.
- **Composting** can reduce the amount of yard and food waste that winds up in landfills. Composting is nature's way of recycling through biodegradation. This natural process breaks down organic matter and returns nutrients to the soil, resulting in the formation of humus. Humus is rich, dark soil that provides plants with vital nutrients, improves soil drainage and allows more air to reach plant roots. If your community doesn't offer municipal composting facilities or services, see what you or your 4-H YCC can do to start one. Contact your county MSU Extension office for more information or your county or local recycling coordinator. Visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment at michigan.gov/deqrecycling. (Click on "County Recycling, Composting and Household Hazardous Waste Contacts.")
- **Participating in a community hazardous waste or electronic collection day** can reduce the amount of household hazardous waste and electronic waste sent to landfills. Automotive supplies, pesticides, fertilizers, paint products and cleansers all may contain hazardous chemicals. If the label says "toxic," "flammable," "corrosive" or "reactive," the product is hazardous. Consider buying ecologically safe alternatives instead of such products. Electronic waste is a growing part of household waste and includes computers, stereos, cell phones, mp3 music players and other electronic devices. Instead of

sending such items to a landfill, if they're usable, donate them to a community organization instead. Most importantly, always dispose of household hazardous waste properly. Improper disposal poses serious environmental threats such as hazardous materials seeping into groundwater or being ingested by wildlife. Have your club organize a hazardous waste collection day in your community, or volunteer to participate in community collection programs and educate your neighbors about household hazardous and electronic waste. Contact your local Conservation District, your county MSU Extension office or the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment for more information. Visit michigan.gov/deqrecycling and click on "County Recycling, Composting and Household Hazardous Waste Contacts."

- **Picking up roadside litter** and conducting community litter education continue to be important conservation service projects. Your club could organize a one-day litter pickup along a roadside, school property, fairgrounds, state land or other place in your community. Contact your county government office to join an adopt-a-roadside litter pickup program.

Teach Younger Youth About Conservation

The opportunity for youth aged 13 to 19 to teach younger youth about conservation is rewarding for both the teens teaching and the children learning. The projects can be held as afterschool activities, during 4-H meetings, at faith-based institutions, during day or overnight camp programs, or during community events. Teens can facilitate hands-on activities from resources such as Project Learning Tree (online at plt.org), Project WILD (online at projectwild.org), Project WET (online at projectwet.org) or the Leopold Education Project (online at lep.org) to help younger youth understand basic ecological concepts or to understand the purpose of doing conservation service projects. Training opportunities for 4-H adult and teen volunteers include the annual 4-H Environmental and Outdoor Education Volunteer Workshop at Kettunen Center near Cadillac. For more information visit Michigan 4-H Youth Development online at web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/index.html.

Celebrate Your Successes!

Involvement in a youth conservation council is a community service learning activity and citizenship in action, and should be recognized as a teen leadership achievement. The M4-HYCC program members participate in the 4-H State Awards Celebration Program during 4-H Exploration Days at MSU in June. The teens who accumulate enough points on their self-evaluation form and receive a verbal recommendation from their adult advisor are given a certificate of recognition from Michigan 4-H Youth Development Programs and have the opportunity to appear on stage during the 4-H State Awards Celebration event.

Local youth conservation councils may want to create certificates and an awards program to recognize the participants and celebrate their achievements. The adult advisors also may want to contact the county 4-H staff about recognizing the group in the county MSU Extension newsletter, on the county MSU Extension web site or at the county 4-H awards banquet.

Many other recognition ideas are outlined in the "4-H Recognition and Awards" section of the 4-H Club Resources page at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/clubs/>.

Helpful Resources

SAMPLE:



Parental Consent Form

Please complete the form that follows and return it to the 4-H Youth Conservation Council adult advisor.

I would like my child to attend the 4-H Youth Conservation Council sessions to learn about environmental, conservation, public policy and community service learning.

Young person's name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Age: _____

Parent's or Guardian's name: _____

Does your child have any allergies, take any medications or have other limitations we should know about? Please specify here (add more sheets if necessary). _____

Please read the following information and sign below to indicate your approval. Thank you for your cooperation.

Michigan State University Extension is offering a 4-H program called the 4-H Youth Conservation Council for young people aged 13 to 19 (grades 8 to 12).

4-H Youth Conservation Council Evaluation Consent

We would like your permission to allow your child to participate in the evaluation of this program. We will be asking them to fill out a survey before and after the program to see if the program makes a difference in what they know about environmental, conservation, public policy and community service learning. We would also like to see if they increase their outdoor, environmental or civic activities. The survey will take about 30 minutes to complete each time. All information collected in the evaluation will be anonymous; names will be collected only to enable us to match pre- and post-evaluation surveys. Your child's privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. If you do not want your child to participate in the evaluation her or she may still participate in the 4-HYCC program.

I agree to allow my child, _____ to participate in the evaluation of the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council program.

Parent/Guardian name (please print): _____

Parent Guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE SURVEY: 

4-H Youth Conservation Council Pre-Program Evaluation

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Even though your name is on this survey, we will not use your name when we summarize the group’s answers. We will use it only to match your pre- and post-evaluations. We would like to make the comparison to measure what each person has learned and to make this learning experience better for teens in the future!

1. What do you hope to gain from taking part in your 4-HYCC group?

2. Are there skills, abilities or personal characteristics you hope to develop?

3. What one or two areas of personal growth do you want to experience through your 4-HYCC group?

4. What strengths do you think you will bring to your 4-HYCC group?

5. What weaknesses might you have when working with the 4-HYCC group?

6. What are your main hopes and expectations for participating in your 4-HYCC group?

7. What are your current career plans?

Please check the box that best describes your involvement level with each activity.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
8. I try to buy food, clothing and other products produced in Michigan or the United States.			
9. I am riding my bike or a bus or carpooling for transportation.			
10. I recycle packaging containers in my home.			
11. I conserve energy by turning off lights and unplugging electronic appliances.			
12. I shop at second-hand stores frequently.			
13. I take less than a 5-minute shower to conserve water.			
14. Other (please specify):			

Look over the list of actions below. Think about whether you have ever done these things. If you have, please circle the number showing how many times you did the action in the past year.

	# of times in past year						
15. Asked family members to buy environmentally positive products or avoid buying products you think are environmentally negative.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
16. Asked a store to carry products with low environmental impact.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
17. Boycotted an environmentally unsafe product.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
18. Written a letter voicing concern to a company that makes a product you think is environmentally negative.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
19. Participated in a group trying to make positive environmental changes at your school or in your community.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
20. Written a letter to a local elected official (such as a township or county leader, a planning leader, a planning or zoning board member).	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
21. Written a letter to a regional or state-level elected official (such as a state legislator or the governor).	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
22. Conducted a cleanup or litter pickup.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
23. Participated in a local or regional Earth Day event.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
24. Taught others about nature, ecology or an important environmental issue.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
25. Made habitat improvements (such as building nest boxes or planting trees) on your own property.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5

SAMPLE SURVEY:

4-HYCC Post-Program Evaluation

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please take a few minutes at the end of your 4-H youth conservation council year to answer the following questions. Even though your name is on this survey, we will not use your name when we summarize the groups' answers. We'll only use it to help us match the pre- and post-evaluations.

1. What did you gain from taking part in your 4-HYCC group?

2. What skills, abilities, or personal characteristics did you develop?

3. What one or two areas of personal growth did you experience through your 4-HYCC group?

4. What strengths do you think you brought to the 4-HYCC group this year?

5. What weaknesses did you have when working with your 4-HYCC group this year?

6. Did you accomplish your hopes and expectations for participating in your 4-HYCC program?

7. What are your current career plans?

Please check the box that best describes your involvement level with each activity.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
8. I try to buy food, clothing and other products produced in Michigan or the United States.			
9. I am riding my bike or a bus or carpooling for transportation.			

	Yes	No	Not Sure
10. I recycle packaging containers in my home.			
11. I conserve energy by turning off lights and unplugging electronic appliances.			
12. I shop at second-hand stores frequently.			
13. I take less than a 5-minute shower to conserve water.			
14. Other (please specify):			

Look over the list of actions below. Think over whether you have ever done these things. If you have, please circle the number showing how many times you did the action in the past year.

	# of times in past year						
15. Asked family members to buy environmentally positive products or avoid buying products you think are environmentally negative.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
16. Asked a store to carry products with low environmental impact.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
17. Boycotted an environmentally unsafe product.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
18. Written a letter voicing concern to a company that makes a product you think is environmentally negative.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
19. Participated in a group trying to make positive environmental changes at your school or in your community.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
20. Written a letter to a local elected official (such as a township or county leader, a planning leader, a planning or zoning board member.)	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
21. Written a letter to a regional or state-level elected official (such as a state legislator or the governor).	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
22. Conducted a cleanup or litter pickup.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
23. Participated in a local or regional Earth Day event.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
24. Taught others about nature, ecology, or an important environmental issue.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
25. Made habitat improvements (such as building nest boxes or planting trees) on your own property.	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5
26. Made habitat improvements in a public area (such as a park or school grounds).	No	Yes	1	2	3	4	5

The following questions ask about the forces that affect or strongly influence the outcome of environmental problems and issues. After reading each question carefully, please circle the answer that best shows your response.

To what extent do you . . .	Not At All					A Great Deal				
27. Believe you can influence how environmental problems and issues are resolved?	1	2	3	4	5					
28. Believe that powerful people can influence how environmental issues and problems are resolved?	1	2	3	4	5					
29. That chance determines how environmental problems and issues are resolved?	1	2	3	4	5					
30. Believe that you personally, working on your own, can influence the solution of environmental issues?	1	2	3	4	5					
31. Believe that you, working with others, can influence the solution of environmental issues?	1	2	3	4	5					
32. Believe that you can influence environmental issues by communicating with local elected officials (such as township supervisors, planning boards, county commissioners)?	1	2	3	4	5					
33. Believe that you can influence environmental issues by communicating with state elected officials (such as state legislators or the governor)?	1	2	3	4	5					
34. Believe that you can influence environmental issues by communicating with state agencies such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment or the Department of Agriculture?	1	2	3	4	5					
35. Feel that you are knowledgeable about how to make a presentation to a group of elected officials about ideas you have to help prevent or solve environmental issues?	1	2	3	4	5					
36. Feel confident that you are able to make a presentation to a group of elected officials about ideas you have to help prevent or solve environmental issues?	1	2	3	4	5					