FUTURE LEADERS
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Living Document: Action Project Ideas

Put your learning into action! This document is updated regularly by the Future Leaders program of the Biosphere Institute. The following list is evolving in response to environmental and community needs.

We encourage you to draw from the resources included and replicate the projects. Find the project that connects your talents and interests to address a local environmental issue. Think global, act local!

2023 Youth for Climate Action Winners (click here for inspiration)

Types of Action Projects

For clarity, we define an Action Project as, “an initiative that takes well-informed action to address an environmental challenge”. Adapted from “Leap Into Action: Simple Steps to Environmental Action” (Staniforth, 2003), we have sorted the ways in which to take action into the following categories:

1) **Volunteering**
    a) Oftentimes, there are environmental initiatives underway in your community. The initiative, however, may require additional human power. Check in with local environmental organisations and municipal offices where you live to inquire about volunteering opportunities. For example, you can take action by volunteering with municipal park clean ups, creek rehabilitation projects, live capture fish transfers, tree planting and waste diversion projects.
2) **Political Action and Advocacy**
    a) These types of action projects are intended to increase the impact of your opinion. For example, meet with local government to discuss issues you are concerned with, speak at public meetings, collect petition signatures, submit government feedback through surveys or at public hearings or write letters to local print media outlets.

3) **Public Education and Awareness**
    a) These are projects that teach others about an issue. For example, writing and recording radio segments, composing songs, making posters, creating advertisements, social media campaigns and hosting celebrations (e.g. school Earth Day celebration)

4) **Boots-on-the-Ground**
    a) These action projects make direct changes to the environment. For example, planting native plant species in your school yard, tree planting, invasive species removal, stream cleanups and gardening.
5) **Personal Action**
    a) These action projects consider your daily habits. Look hard at what you buy, eat and wear everyday. Try to change your consumer habits towards more sustainable options. For example, try consuming less, supporting local, reusing products or upcycling garments. By first changing your behaviour, you can be a model of change for others.
6) **Social Change›**
    a) These projects are encouraging yourself and others to adopt more sustainable lifestyle choices. For example, you could organize others on your block or in your school to participate in a 'Walking School Bus', take public transport and invite others along, conduct an energy audit in your home or school to encourage responsible resource use (e.g. electricity, gas and water).

ACTION PROJECT IDEA BANK

1) **Volunteer Opportunities**

- Become a Junior Wildlife Ambassador: Do you love wild animals? Are you passionate about learning more about them AND protecting them? Bow Valley WildSmart is a local program that provides outreach education to visitors and residents of the Bow Valley about how humans can safely coexist with wildlife. Volunteer recruitment begins in March. They run outreach programs throughout the year.
- Yellow Clematis removal: this plant is an invasive species in Alberta. Help us remove the plant from the rocky hillsides along the Smith-Dorrien road, Town of Canmore land and/or roadside locations. This project involves physical labour (walking, pulling etc.) outdoors; proper clothing and footwear is required. Safety vests, gloves and additional materials are provided! Email Heidi at education@biosphereinstitute.org to participate in the Spring (May-June) and Fall

(September-October) invasive plant pull projects. (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: land, agriculture)

- Monitor air quality in the Bow Valley: Seeking community volunteers to monitor air quality! Have a look at this website and let your friends, neighbours, elderly and those with respiratory difficulties know when the air quality is at dangerous levels. https://sensor.community/en/ (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: air)
- Become a Friend of Kananaskis: Volunteers are the heart of Friends of Kananaskis Country. They are a driving force behind many of our programs and activities. Our successful trail care initiatives and many of the special events we organise or participate in are possible because individuals donate their time and energy. If you feel a special connection to nature and wish to see the future generations enjoy the wild beauty of Kananaskis Country, why not consider volunteering for our Kananaskis trail care program? You'll get out in nature, visit the parks and wild spaces of Kananaskis Country, meet new people, and make a difference to Alberta's natural landscape. Contact: info@kananaskis.org (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: land, wildlife)

2) **Political Action and Advocacy (for reference, here is the link to the Biosphere Institute Advocacy Policy)**

- Research and explain your position to government on the Clearcut Logging Planned for the Upper Highwood in Kananaskis by Spraylakes Sawmill https://spraylakesawmills.com/videos/ https://cpaws-southernalberta.org/over-1100-hecatres-of-clearcut-logging-planned-for-the-upper-highwood-in-kananaskis/ (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: water, land)
- Sign a petition: Renaming Sacred Buffalo Guardian Mountain officially within Parks Canada and Town of Banff (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: land)
- #SaveGrizzCorridor: The petition is generating signatures to advocate to the Province of Alberta to purchase the Three Sisters Mountain Village territory and designate as a provincial wildlife corridor. https://savegrizzcorridor.ca/ (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: land, wildlife)
- Advocate for the rights for natural world https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/new-zealand-river-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-being (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: water)
- Write a Letter to the Editor (Rocky Mountain Outlook): research and critically consider the implications of a cause you are concerned about. Have your peers and teacher read through a draft and submit a letter with your name(s) online with this form https://www.rmoutlook.com/submissions/letter-to-the-editor (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: water, land, air, energy)

3) **Public Education and Awareness**

- Public awareness (posters, online videos, radio content etc.). Check out the 'Trash Talks' segments recorded with Mountain FM here: https://www.biosphereinstitute.org/learning-in-action (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: land, wildlife, water, energy)
- Anti-idling sign campaign: spread awareness and educate parents about the damaging effects of idling in the school pickup area. (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: air, energy)
- Sustainable fashion: organise a school/student "Trashion Show" and learn how to upcycle clothing

4) **Boots-on-the-Ground Projects**

- Garbage cleanups (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: land)
- Site remediation (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: land)
- Local urban area greening by planting native plant species. (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: wildlife)
- Build and install bird boxes in your neighbourhood or school yard (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: wildlife, land)
- Build a rain barrel (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: water). Visit the Biosphere Institute resource here
- Yellow Fish Road project. If you are concerned about freshwater ecosystems and the health of fish populations, this project prepares you with the knowledge and materials to spread awareness that RAIN ONLY goes down the storm drain. Reach out to education@biosphereinstitute.org for the paint and printed materials.
- "No Mow May" (lawn signs and public education for residents and municipalities to promote mess lawns = HABITAT to support pollinators, bugs and birds)
    - Keen volunteer Alison Pennie (403-688-5218, alisonpennie@hotmail.com)
    - Other ways to promote stewardship in your yards (bee hotels, planted plots or gardens, yard scraps in piles)

5) **Consumer Habits**

- eSign or take note of the Nature Pledge below; change begins with you.
- *Mountain 'Peekers'* (Pledge to the Peaks) - engaging community through a commitment to the area
- *Trusted Messengers* training - having a social media presence to influence respectful trail use (mountain bikers, runners, hikers, horseback riders etc.)

- Bow Valley Isn't Disposable: bring re-usable containers when you eat out and encourage others to do the same. Check out Wild Flour Bakery in Banff and post about their reusable cup program.
- Create your very own natural laundry detergent brand and spread awareness about protecting water quality with natural cleaning products

6) Lifestyle Choices

- Visit "Our Canada Project" for inspiration on student projects https://ourcanadaproject.ca/
- Organize students on your block, class, grade or school to participate in a "Walking School Bus". Choose a day of the week where everyone walks or bikes to school together. (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: air, energy)
- Energy efficiency toolkit: Create a booklet of suggestions and resources for how parents and students can make their home more energy efficient (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: energy)
- Planet-based eating: create and test at-home recipes as well as shopping lists to reduce the reliance on livestock and increase the benefits of plant nutrients. (ENS Students, Unit Keywords: land, agriculture)
- The high school students at Mission Heights created a sustainable café with proceeds going towards local environmental organisations. They were awarded as part of the "Our Canada Project" https://ourcanadaproject.ca/place/mission-roots-cafe/
- Mission Roots cafe- IGC
- Take the Nature Pledge below
    1) I pledge to give thanks to myself, other humans and the natural world each day
    2) I pledge to take 5 deep belly breaths each morning
    3) I pledge to see, hear, taste, smell and feel with an open heart
    4) I pledge to spend 15 minutes a day exploring or sitting with the natural world
    5) I pledge to treat myself, others and the natural world with respect