



ENVIRONMENT

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

“HERE IS YOUR COUNTRY. CHERISH THESE NATURAL WONDERS, CHERISH THE NATURAL RESOURCES, CHERISH THE HISTORY AND ROMANCE AS A SACRED HERITAGE, FOR YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR CHILDREN’S CHILDREN. DO NOT LET SELFISH MEN OR GREEDY INTERESTS SKIN YOUR COUNTRY OF ITS BEAUTY, ITS RICHES OR ITS ROMANCE.”

— THEODORE ROOSEVELT

The environment is everything that makes up our surroundings and affects our ability to live on the earth—the air we breathe, the water that covers most of its surface, all flora and fauna, and the soil, minerals, and fossil fuels that exist within its crust. The environment continually changes through natural ecological processes and as a result of human actions.

Many human actions, such as deforestation, pollution, habitat destruction, the extinction of species, and the rise of atmospheric CO2 from the use of fossil fuels, have placed our world in jeopardy. There is much, however, that can be done to correct or diminish this damage.

The GFWC Environment Community Service Program encourages us to become stewards of the earth by working to preserve the world’s resources, protect wildlife and domesticated animals, live sustainably, and beautify our communities and enjoy nature.

Environmental degradation is cumulative and many scientists warn that we are at a tipping point. There is no time like the present to act. It is vitally important that we do everything within our power to care for our world.



Direct any questions regarding projects that do not involve GFWC Affiliate Organizations to the Environment Community Service Program Chairman or GFWC Programs Department at Programs@GFWC.org.



2020-2022 ENVIRONMENT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

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**CHALLENGE PROJECT:
REDUCE PLASTIC USE--REFUSE,
REUSE, REPURPOSE, RECYCLE**

Reduce the use of plastics among club and community members with a campaign to refuse, reuse, repurpose, and recycle. Get started by supporting legislation that reduces plastics in the environment, especially where they can get into the waterways or the ocean. Replace disposable plastic cups, bottles, jugs, bags, and other containers with reusable objects such as drinking bottles and cloth shopping bags. Bypass items in plastic packaging for those sold in paper, cardboard, and other containers made from renewable resources. Repurpose pill bottles and other unavoidable plastics. Get creative and make usable objects from plastic bags, such as crocheted totes and sleeping mats. Finally, be especially diligent in recycling or upcycling, ensuring every possible item is put to new use.



GROWING A “SMARTER LUNCH”

The Quitman Woman’s Club (MS) teamed up with the Quitman Lower Elementary School on its “Smarter Lunch Project” and worked with children to plant fall mustard, turnip, and collard greens, plus tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, blueberry bushes, and apple and peach trees in raised garden beds on campus. Club members donated trees and plants for the garden and helped setup the beds for planting. Students watered and cared for plants and harvested the vegetables.



KIDS FISHING DAY

The F. J. Scott Study Club (TX) partnered with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and AgriLife Extension in an annual countywide Kids Fishing Day. More than 300 children and their families enjoyed the great outdoors and participated in educational activities including water safety. Children were taught how to catch and release a fish, with prizes awarded to those who caught a tagged fish. GFWC volunteers in action served hot dogs to the hungry fishermen.



NATURE-BASED LEARNING

The GFWC Philaco Woman’s Club of Apalachicola, Inc. (FL) sponsored a program to bring a nature-based science curriculum to four first grade classes in their county school system. The Franklin County School Explorers program was developed with the School District Director of Special Programs and teachers. Classroom kits were created to study birds, insects, plants, and shells, and included lesson plans, books, and equipment for hands-on investigation. Discoveries and observations were recorded in science journals.



CLEANING THE QUAY FOR EARTH DAY

The GFWC Fuquay-Varina Junior Woman’s Club (NC) began an annual tradition of celebrating Earth Day with local citizens. The club created an event called “Clean the Quay” and publicized it through their website, social media, and word of mouth. Wearing gloves, vests, and bright pink FVJWC shirts, club members walked over two miles of road frontage collecting trash and recycling items. Over 12 bags of waste were collected from their watershed and creek system.



PROJECT IDEAS

Be inspired by this list of ideas of how GFWC clubs can support the Environment Community Service Program. Find further information about organizations named here under Resources.

PRESERVE RESOURCES

- Join the Arbor Day Foundation and receive ten free trees to plant or donate ten trees to be planted in a threatened rain forest or one of our National Forests. Visit the Foundation's website for information on its many programs, including Celebrate Arbor Day (last Friday of April), Tree City USA, Rain Forest Rescue.
- Donate to the Plant a Billion Trees campaign of the Nature Conservancy, which aims to reach the goal of major reforestation around the globe by 2025. Visit the website to access this and various other program resources, including nearby volunteer and event opportunities, information on urgent conservation issues, and a carbon footprint calculator.
- Save trees by initiating a "Go Paperless" campaign, encouraging club and community members to opt out of junk mail lists, sign up for e-statements, pay bills online, digitize documents, reconsider printed newspapers, and purge and recycle.
- Coordinate with local leaders to celebrate Earth Day (April 22) with a project designed from one of the many Earth Day Science and Education toolkits, such as the Plastic Pollution Primer and Action Toolkit or the Protect Our Species Toolkit.
- Strategize ways to reduce energy consumption and create a program to track the success of members as they put ideas into practice.
- Educate members on the dangers of poor air quality, which is the number one cause of premature death around the world. Encourage club and community members to improve air quality by planting trees, driving electric or hybrid cars, and supporting legislation that limits tailpipe and industrial emissions.
- Learn about the dangers associated with fracking, such as air and water pollution, and human health issues. Consider a program on the pros and cons of this issue or another questionable environmental practice. Consider all viewpoints and then take a blind poll (pro, con, or unsure) to hear what members think.
- Promote water conservation indoors and outdoors by sharing ways to be mindful of personal water-use practices, such as installing low-flow showerheads, using water-efficient dishwashers and washing machines, adopting xeriscape principles, adding mulch on planting beds, and planting drought-resistant grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees.
- Support wetland conservation and learn how wetlands are a deterrent to both flooding and drought, and how they filter and purify water that enters streams, rivers, and larger bodies of water.
- Hold a beach sweep on September 20 for International Coastal Cleanup Day or participate in one of the many Ocean Conservancy programs, such as Trash Free Seas or Clean Swell.
- Challenge members to learn about ocean acidification from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the effects it is having on marine life, people, and local, regional, and national economies. Promote ways to fight climate change in your community.
- Look for ways to minimize the harmful effects of stormwater runoff in your community and advocate for change, such as the establishment of bioswales, vegetated canals, or rain gardens.
- Organize a household hazardous waste collection with your local services, to ensure these dangerous materials are disposed of properly.
- Support legislation that protects our National Parks and other protected areas.
- Schedule outings to remove invasive plants from community parks and other public areas to preserve native species of plants and animals.

PROTECT WILDLIFE AND DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

- Share information with club and community members from the National Wildlife Federation about the impact of wildlife gardens, encourage the formation of personal and public wildlife gardens, and spread the news about signing up for the free electronic NWF newsletter. Consider sponsoring a subscription to National Wildlife or one of the many children's publications, such as Ranger Rick, for a shelter or family center.
- Educate club and community members about the importance of pollinators and how to create healthy habitats where they can thrive.



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- Establish a butterfly garden in the community and offer on-site programs that identify butterflies and provide information about the lifecycle of these beautiful and useful insects.
- Offer a workshop on building birdhouses and provide information on bird species, their characteristics and behaviors, and their varying habitat requirements.
- Invite a speaker from the Audubon Society to give a program on birds and birding. Or, use Audubon Society resources to learn about backyard birding, identifying birds, creating bird-friendly communities, and conservation policies.
- Provide a program for club and community members that highlights the best native plants for food and cover. Organize a planting of native flowers, shrubs, and trees on public and private lands that will nourish and sustain wildlife.
- Invite a speaker from the Department of Natural Resources to provide information about nearby Heritage Preserves and/or Wildlife Management Areas, or consider a program on hunting regulations and concerns, such as the dangers of lead shot.
- Engage with the World Wildlife Fund to learn about the world's most endangered wildlife species and programs that help their cause, such as Sign on to Stop Wildlife Crime and Adopt a Tiger.
- Advocate for and support regulations that limit light pollution, which is dangerous to nocturnal wildlife and disruptive to ecosystems.
- Build recycling bins for monofilament fishing line, which is hazardous to marine life, scuba divers, and watercraft. Install and maintain the bins in high traffic fishing areas such as boat ramps and marinas. Reel In & Recycle, a program sponsored by BoatUS, provides a how-to video and offers a source for recycling monofilament.
- Learn about ocean wildlife in peril, such as sea turtles and manatees, and organize volunteer or fundraising opportunities to help protect these species.
- Donate funds or needed items to local wildlife shelters that rehabilitate and care for injured animals. Or, hold a drive to collect needed items. Share information with club and community members on what to do if they find an injured or sick wild animal and which agency or organization to call for help.
- Establish a club relationship with a local shelter for domestic animals. Club members can volunteer at the shelter, help with fundraising events and activities, spread the word about animals that are offered for adoption, and collect needed supplies.
- Inform club and community members about the signs of animal abuse and the proper channels for reporting cases of misuse and/or cruelty.

LIVE SUSTAINABLY

- Chart a path towards zero waste in your community by using tools suggested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Find a solution for hard-to-recycle waste streams, such as fluorescent bulbs, at Terracycle, which supplies many free recycling programs, plus a variety of resources and ideas for do-it-yourself upcycling.
- Commemorate America Recycles Day (November 15), a program of Keep America Beautiful, by organizing a special event. Visit the website for toolkits, event activities, promotion ideas, and more.
- Participate in Nike's Reuse-A-Shoe Program, which accepts worn out sneakers and makes Nike Grind, a material used in sports surfaces and playgrounds.
- Donate gently-used shoes to Soles4Souls for distribution to individuals in need.
- Coordinate a children's poster contest on recycling.
- Collect materials from club and community members and hold a sewing party that produces cloth shopping bags that can be distributed with club information at a community event.
- Hold a community workshop on sustainable gardening, offering information on how to build and conserve the soil with cover crops and other methods, make a rain barrel and/or a compost bin, and garden organically.
- Create a community garden that promotes self-sufficiency and teaches principles of good gardening.
- Advocate for locally grown food and farmers' markets to serve the community.
- Learn and share information about the issues of GMO seeds (GMO=genetically modified organism) and the dwindling biodiversity in our food system.
- Explore renewable energy sources that can be utilized in your community, such as solar and wind power, and see how your club can support their use.
- Encourage club and community members to take one day a week, or one day a month, to reduce energy consumption by adjusting thermostats and shutting off lights, televisions, computers, optional appliances, and other electronics.



- Start a campaign to say “no” to disposable items and purpose reusable alternatives. Consider the life expectancy of every item purchased and resell or donate what is no longer needed.
- Hold a club yard sale to repurpose gently-used items and donate the proceeds to various charities.

BEAUTIFY COMMUNITIES AND ENJOY NATURE

- Ensure clean drinking water while hiking or during emergencies by visiting the American Hiking Society’s website to research water filters and other purifying products, and/or donate safe water to communities around the world through Water.org or other charitable organizations.
- Adopt-A-Highway through your state Department of Transportation to keep a stretch of roadside clean and build community pride.
- Plan a clean-up day in the community by coordinating groups of volunteers to clean eyesore areas and properly discard the waste.
- Organize a trash pick-up after a sporting event or community fair or festival.
- Work with pre-schools classes, or other groups of young children, to teach them to enjoy and understand nature through simple projects such as creating a bird treat, collecting colorful leaves, or going on a nature walk to spot birds, squirrels, turtles, frogs, butterflies, and bugs.
- Collect or purchase children’s books about nature and donate them to schools, libraries, shelters, and family centers. Or, host a story time at the local library, featuring a book about nature and then allow each child to choose a nature book to have for his or her own.
- Sponsor a “Yard of the Month” or other monthly beautification contest that recognizes community enhancement. Rotate judges to involve various groups: Girl Scouts, 4-H members, and assisted living residents.
- Organize a local garden tour and donate the proceeds to a community garden or conservation project. Consider providing an earth-friendly gardening or wildlife tip at each location.
- Invite a Master Gardener or another local expert to give a program on ornamental plants that grow best in your climate or on another topic of interest to members.
- Host a tree identification workshop for the community, providing information about various tree species and how they contribute (or not) to the local ecosystem.
- Plan an outing for club members to visit a botanical garden or important conservation site.
- Establish a hiking or biking trail in the community, encouraging people to learn more about nature and enjoy the outdoors. Or, help maintain or provide maintenance funding for an existing trail.
- Plan a series of 5-minute features on U.S. National Parks, providing one highlight at each club meeting throughout the year. Encourage members to join the National Parks Conservation Association and to stay at National Parks when they travel.

CONNECT WITH GFWC AFFILATE ORGANIZATIONS

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

- Heifer promotes agroecology, working with famers to integrate climate-smart agricultural practices to increase resilience and crop production (www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/caring-for-the-earth/index.html).
- At your next meeting or community event, set up a table to promote the goal of donating a bee-hive. Wear bee antennae headbands to draw attention to the project. For any donation, offer a packet of wildflower seeds to promote local bee activity. Have information about Heifer and your own club available.

UNICEF

- Is your community a child friendly city? UNICEF USA Child Friendly City Initiative brings a flexible, dynamic, child-rights focused framework, communities are improved as neighborhoods become safer, schools and health systems function better, and infrastructure is strengthened for all citizens (www.unicefusa.org/mission/usa/childfriendlycities).
- Present information and videos from UNICEF USA initiative about the need for accessible clean water and the significant difference it makes in the lives of women and children (www.unicefusa.org/mission/survival/water).



GFWC RESOURCES

Audubon Society www.audubon.org

For information on birding go to www.audubon.org/birding

American Hiking Society www.americanhiking.org

For information on water purifications go to www.americanhiking.org/resources/water-purification

America Recycles Day www.americarecyclesday.org

Arbor Day Foundation www.arborday.org

BoatUS Foundation www.boatus.org

For information on Reel In & Recycle go to www.boatus.org/monofilament

Department of Natural Resources: Google your state's name + DNR

Earth Day www.earthday.org

For information on Earth Day Science and Education Toolkits go to www.earthday.org/our-toolkits

National Parks Conservation Association www.npca.org

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration www.noaa.gov

For information on ocean acidification go to www.oceanacidification.noaa.gov

National Wildlife Federation www.nwf.org

For the free NWF newsletter go to www.support.nwf.org/page/17932/subscribe/2

Nature Conservancy www.nature.org/en-us

For information on Plant a Billion Trees go to www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/plant-a-billion

Nike Reuse-A-Shoe www.nike.com/help/a/recycle-shoes

Ocean Conservancy www.oceanconservancy.org

For information on Trash Free Seas go to www.oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas

Soles4Souls www.soles4souls.org

Terracycle www.terracycle.com/en-US

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency www.epa.gov

For information on zero waste go to www.epa.gov/transforming-waste-tool

Water.org www.water.org

World Wildlife Fund www.worldwildlife.org



Refer to the Awards section of the *Club Manual* for more information, including the Award Entry Cover Sheet guidelines.



AWARDS

GFWC recognizes State Federations for outstanding projects and clubs for creative projects in implementing effective Environment Community Service Program projects and partnership projects as follows:

- Certificate to one State Federation in each membership category
- \$50 award to one club in the nation for project creativity

Award winners will be determined by entries into the Award Program. Each State Federation may submit one State Award Entry and one Club Creativity Award Entry for the Environment Community Service Program projects. Clubs do not submit entries directly to GFWC.

RESOLUTIONS

Currently Under Review

