

# 4-H Youth Conservation Council January-April 2015

## Audience

This program is open to Michigan teens interested in natural resources issues and community change. This program had 18 participants. Five participants from 9th grades, two from 10th grade, three from 11th grade, six from 12 grade, and two who had started college. There were 8 males and 10 females. One participant had American Indian ancestry, one had Asian ancestry, and the rest were Caucasian.

## Funding

This program was funded in 2015 by a participant fee and with staff time provided by MSU Extension Children and Youth Institute.

## Objectives

This youth development program is designed to:

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

## Description

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

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

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

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



## Outcomes

A pre-/post-survey was used to measure participants' skills and perceptions. Below are response highlights for youth who "agreed or strongly agreed" with targeted skills. Before the event responses are shown in parentheses.

- *I know who to contact to get things done*(43%) 81%
- *I can think critically about public policy issues and suggest ways for improvement*—(50%) 100%
- *87.5% felt confident to be able to make a presentation to a group of elected officials about ideas you have to help prevent or solve environmental issues.*

## Select comments from Teen Participants

- *I believe it has given me more passion for natural resources and has made me excited to learn more.*
- *I now know more about the government processes so I can be more informed on jobs in environmental science, and their impact on the law.*

## Contact Information

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