

# Strategic Plan

## Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress

Submitted by  
**Mark LaBarbera**  
March 31, 2017



**Outdoor celebrity Dan Small, host of “Outdoor Wisconsin” TV and Dan Small Outdoors Radio syndicate is willing to help WYCC youth delegates improve their communications skills.**

**Special thanks** to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress and Friends of Wisconsin Conservation Congress, as well as DNR Liaison Kari Lee-Zimmerman, and the many conservation partners, educators, DNR professionals and outdoor enthusiasts who participated in shaping this strategic plan.

#### **WCC District Leadership Council**

Joe Weiss (District 1; WCC Historian)  
 Rick Olson (District 1)  
 Al Brown (District 2)  
 Dave Larson (District 2)  
 Mike Riggle (District 3)  
 Ken Anderson (District 3)  
 Bob Ellingson (District 4)  
 Ronn Krueger, Sr. (District 4)  
 Kevin Smaby (District 5)  
 Al Suchla (District 5)  
 Stan Brownell (District 6)  
 Al Lobner (District 6)  
 Dale Maas (District 7; WCC Secretary)  
 Arlyn Splitt (District 7)  
 Staush Gruszynski (District 8)  
 Larry Bonde (District 8; WCC Chair)  
 Lee Fahrney (District 9; WCC Outreach/PR)  
 Mike Rogers (District 9)  
 Kenneth Risley (District 10)  
 Jayne Meyer (District 10)  
 Al Shook (District 11; WCC Vice-Chair)  
 Scott Gunderson (District 11)

#### **Friends of the WCC**

Rob Bohmann (Chair)  
 Tim Andryk  
 Ed Harvey, Jr.

#### **Plan Review Team**

Trent Tonn  
 Terri Roehrig  
 Kevin Smaby  
 Ed Harvey  
 Rob Bohmann  
 Tim Andryk

#### **WCC YCC Oversight Committee**

Trent Tonn, Chair  
 Rob Bohmann  
 Donald Dukerschein  
 Jim Heffner  
 Tashina Peplinski  
 Terri Roehrig  
 Kevin Smaby  
 Jim Thompson  
 Ron Waller

**2016-2017 WCC District Leadership Council** Back row (from left): Al Brown, Ken Risley, Bob Ellingson, Al Suchla, Joe Weiss, Al Shook, and Staush Gruszynski. Second row: Mike Riggle, Dale Maas, Stan Brownell, Jayne Meyer, Dave Larson, Rick Olson, and Lee Fahrney. Front row: Ronn Krueger, Mike Rogers, Al Lobner, Larry Bonde, Arlyn Splitt, Ken Anderson, and Scott Gunderson. (Not pictured: Kevin Smaby.)

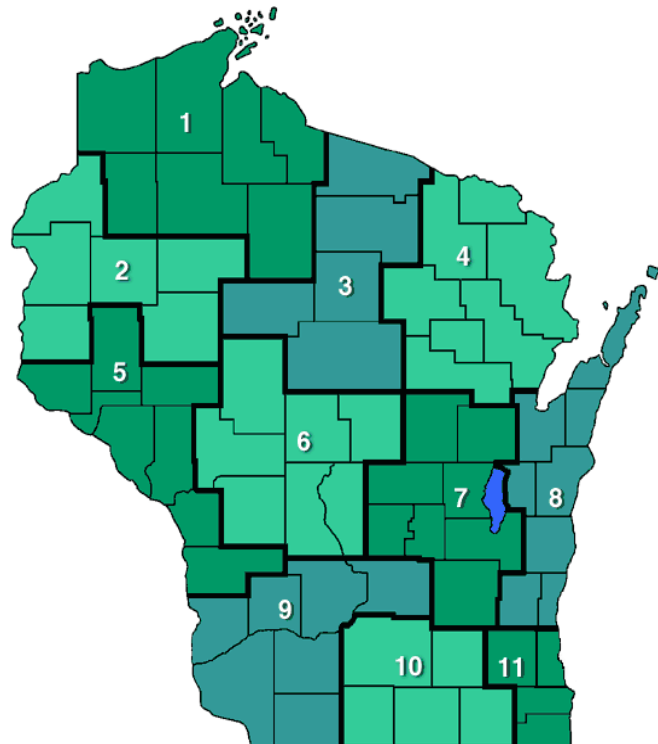


## Overview

Citizens in Wisconsin's 72 counties elect delegates to advise the policy-setting Wisconsin Natural Resources Board and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on how to responsibly manage Wisconsin's natural resources for present and future generations. Those elected individuals are delegates to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, an entity created in 1934 and recognized in 1972 by state statute. As WCC Chair Larry Bonde pointed out, "It is the only statutorily authorized body of its kind in the state charged with this advisory capacity."

The WCC includes a District Leadership Council with two delegates elected from each of the 11 districts as seen on this map.

Throughout the year, county delegates receive input from county residents who lend their voices to conservation efforts. Delegates also meet each April with residents attending official "Spring Hearings" in each county "to share ideas and strengthen Wisconsin's outdoor opportunities." Citizens introduce ideas and resolutions that are then voted on at the county level. If passed, they come up for a vote by WCC delegates at the annual convention in May. If passed, they go to the Natural Resources Board for consideration.



The idea of a Youth Conservation Congress worked its way through this process. On the 2009 Spring Hearing Questionnaire, citizens in each county were asked, "Would you support the concept of establishing a Youth Conservation Congress?" Overwhelmingly, citizens voted in favor of creating a YCC, and the NRB led by Chairman Preston Cole asked the Wisconsin Conservation Congress chaired by Rob Bohmann to launch the youth program "to instill a sense of ownership, civic pride, involvement and advocacy in the future stewards of our state's natural resources and sporting heritage."

From the beginning, the stated intent has been consistent for YCC "to be a hands-on opportunity to involve youth in natural resources management, citizen-based science, and provide them an avenue to engage in policy-making. The YCC may fulfill independent study requirements or service-learning hours/credits for some schools. Educators may also use this program to complement their course curriculum for interested students."

2016-17 WCC Youth Conservation Congress Delegates					
Dist.	County	First Name	Last Name	Committee Assignment	Mentor
D1	Washburn	Joshua	Winstrom		Larry Damman
D2	Barron	Hunter	Denison	Deer & Elk	Jay Koenig
D2	Barron	Eric	Klefstad		
D2	Chippewa	Emily	Flaten	Outdoor Heritage & Ed.	Don Dukerschein
D2	Chippewa	Caleb	Smithberg	Outdoor Heritage & Ed.	Don Dukerschein
D3	Lincoln	Macey	Loka	Fur Harvest	Mark Loka
D3	Lincoln	Maegan	Loka	Fur Harvest	Mark Loka
D3	Lincoln	Hailey	Schaper		
D3	Oneida	Ethan	Snyder	Rule Simplification	Jim Heffner
D5	Eau Claire	Mitchell	Koenig	Trout	Dennis Vanden Bloomen
D5	La Crosse	Alex	Duren	Environmental / Mississippi River	Marc Schultz
D5	Pierce	Kylie	Tschumperlin	Fur Harvest / Mississippi River	Hugh Hatch
D6	Portage	Eric	Wuthrich	Fur Harvest	Mike Nicholson
D7	Waupaca	Seth	Korb	Outdoor Heritage & Ed.	Scott Bestul
D7	Winnebago	Kyle	Boucher	Outdoor Heritage & Ed.	Douglas Nelson
D7	Winnebago	Garrett	Zinecker	Outdoor Heritage & Ed.	Douglas Nelson
D7	Waushara	Karen	Stainbrook		James Binder
D8	Door	Dillon	Ploor	Rules & Resolutions	Richard Baudhuin
D8	Manitowoc	Zach	Thede	Deer & Elk / Rules & Resolutions	Larry Bonde
D8	Ozaukee	Hunter	Bault		Ben Siehoff
D8	Washington	Courtney	Froemming	Legislative / Outdoor Heritage & Education	Tashina Peplinski
D9	Grant	Hope	Schier	Deer & Elk	Larrie Hazen
D10	Green	Amanda	Lettman	Turkey and Upland Game	Ken Risley
D10	Rock	Seth	Oren	Deer & Elk/ Shooting Range Ad Hoc	Charlie Brown
D10	Rock	Amanda	Rumppe	Legislative / Outdoor Heritage & Education	Kathleen Tober
D11	Waukesha	Rosa	Koehnlein		Al Shook
D11	Racine	Madeline	Damon	Outdoor Heritage & Ed.	Trent Tonn
D11	Racine	Reed	Miller	Outdoor Heritage & Ed.	Trent Tonn
D11	Milwaukee	Aren	Feuling		
D11	Milwaukee	Devan	Jenkins	Deer & Elk / Trout	Rob Bohmann

WCC's YCC vision and objectives are described in this italicized excerpt from initial YCC plan documents that established the foundation and vision for the Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress.

*The YCC will teach youth delegates about:*

- (1) Natural resource management and careers through a variety of service-learning opportunities throughout the year and an all-day "field day" held in each DNR region;*
- (2) The process by which Wisconsin's natural resource policy is determined;*
- (3) The role and history of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC), a statutorily created citizen advisory group; and*
- (4) The YCC will provide youth delegates with the opportunity to strengthen valuable transferable skills such as problem solving, communication, teamwork, and leadership skills through working with other Youth Conservation Congress delegates, WCC delegates, and DNR staff. The YCC will afford participants the opportunity to network with youth from around the state that are interested in natural resources as well as DNR professionals and policy makers.*

*Activities to meet objectives:*

*1. The DNR will host an all-day field day in each DNR region that will expose YCC delegates to the many facets and factors involved in natural resource management, to various career options in natural resource related fields and afford them the opportunity to interact with professionals in those fields. It will also enable them to participate in typical work done by natural resource professionals. YCC delegates will have the opportunity to work with DNR staff on a wide variety of volunteer opportunities (depending on youth interests, season and opportunities available) such as fish netting or wildlife surveys, tagging or marking fish at a hatchery facility, assisting with habitat assessments, air monitoring, ride-alongs, or water quality sampling. In addition, YCC delegates will receive a complimentary Natural Resources Foundation membership and will have an opportunity to attend Natural Resources Foundation educational field trips at a reduced rate.*

*2-3. Youth delegates will have access to DNR policy makers and will participate in WCC meetings such as the district meeting, advisory committee meetings, the DNR and WCC Spring Hearings, and the WCC annual convention in May. The Youth Congress will afford young adults with an interest in natural resource and sporting heritage related issues a voice in the management of those resources and activities. YCC delegates may work with the Conservation Congress county delegation and district councilors to introduce a resolution to effect change at the annual Spring Hearings, which they can follow through the WCC process.*

*4. Participants can make an oral and/or poster presentation on their service-learning project at the annual Wisconsin Conservation Congress' convention, thereby*



*strengthening communication and presentation skills. YCC delegates will also participate in breakout sessions at the annual convention that will require the delegates to work in groups to discuss current natural resource issues facing the state and determine potential problem-solving options. Youth will also work together to mold and shape the YCC program moving forward.*

To build upon the considerable efforts, thoughtful planning and strategic thinking that went into the original YCC plans, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress determined that the Youth Conservation Congress program needed help in achieving what was originally intended. Concerns were raised about potential costs, liability and demands on volunteer time and resources.

During 2015 and 2016, WCC and Friends of WCC began searching for solutions to help YCC achieve its short-term and long-term objectives. Some called it a “re-launch,” while others referred to “re-invigorating” the youth program to make YCC more “robust.”

At the same time, the Wisconsin DNR, which had been building a national leadership role in recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters and anglers, was seeking new ideas, partners and systems to train, develop and educate new adult hunters and those that effectively train mentors to commit to new hunters for a period of years through multiple introductions and educational experiences in

hunting. WCC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Friends of WCC, which applied for, and received, a DNR Hunter Recruitment, Development, Training and Education Grant.

The Friends group wanted to test a pilot project designed to help slow, stop and hopefully reverse the decline in hunting participation and loss of hunting license revenue. Its work is not limited to hunting and shooting sports. The benefits will extend to fishing, boating, trapping, birding, trail riding and other outdoor activities. This Strategic Plan for the Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress program is intended to help the Friends of WCC fulfill its grant and achieve the goals set by the WCC in its MOU.



## Strategic Goals

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress and Friends of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress established the following goals to guide this 2017-2025 plan and efforts to “achieve a more robust, multi-faceted Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress” as WCC and its partners recruit outdoor participants and mentors. While the focus is on recruitment, this plan should also help engage, reactivate and retain hunters, anglers, trappers and other outdoor participants.

- A. Increase youth participation in the WYCC and youth knowledge about the WCC;
- B. Develop mentors who can help recruit and train new safe, ethical hunters;
- C. Recruit and train future conservation leaders who can effectively communicate, inspire, and recruit their peers into conservation programs;
- D. Promote opportunities for participants to be conservation ambassadors/educators to build support and recruit mentors among existing conservation groups; and
- E. Connect participants with opportunities to learn about conservation and future professional opportunities, including volunteer and job-shadowing experiences.

## Recommended Actions

The following recommendations include specific tactics or actions to help achieve the stated goals and build a more robust and sustainable Youth Conservation Congress in Wisconsin. They are based on hours of input from educators, mentors, administrators, conservation leaders, WCC members, students, fish and wildlife professionals and Wisconsin hunters, anglers, birders and trappers.

Some of the recommended actions could fit under more than one goal because they help fulfill multiple objectives, but they are listed under only one of the goals A-through-E on the following pages (in order to keep things streamlined and avoid redundancy). Research identified programs in other states that also want to engage youth, increase ongoing participation and create future conservation leaders. That research helped inform recommendations for this plan. You can find in Appendix A samples of what some other states do to build future conservation leaders.



**1. Establish the YCC Coordinator.** To achieve significant results, we recommend what may be the most important and overarching tactic or action that would impact success or failure. That is to establish a position of YCC Coordinator (or whatever title is needed), with appropriate skills and sufficient time throughout the year to guide implementation of this plan. That person should be accountable to the WCC and Friends of the WCC.

This Coordinator should help find ways to make it easy for students, parents, partners and WCC delegates to participate more than they currently do.

Identifying the volunteer, contractor or employee who will be the “go to” person focused solely on YCC is a critical first step. Clearly defining, funding and empowering the person who will oversee implementation of the following tactics/actions identified under A through E must be the top priority.

**2. Collaborate.** An important key to long-term success will be for YCC to work with other existing programs, organizations and institutions that offer resources, infrastructure, staff and facilities. Its importance should not be understated. It will require appropriate attention to establish, coordinate and maintain the relationships with those partners and programs. During research and creation of this plan, a number of contacts for potential collaborators were compiled and included here to help jumpstart implementation.

**3. Embrace the plan.** Build upon the valuable investment of time and talent that created the Youth Conservation Congress and its plans. Adapt to changing conditions and current realities that have surfaced during initial implementation. Use this new plan hand-in-hand with YCC’s original plans with the common goal of creating the best possible conservation leaders for the good of all Wisconsin residents, our sporting heritage, future generations and the natural resources we all cherish.



## Strategies & Tactics

These actions are not ranked; they can be implemented in any order that makes sense for the Plan Review Team, WCC leadership and the WCC Coordinator.

### A. We recommend the following tactics/actions to increase youth participation in the YCC and youth knowledge about the WCC:

**1. Identify Benefits.** Enhance, create, clarify and communicate key benefits of interest to prospective youth delegates. Know concretely what is being offered to motivate students to participate. Involve current and former delegates, plus other youth, in developing these benefits and spreading the word about why there is value in being part of YCC. Here's a potential list to help begin the discussion:

- a. Receive academic credit toward graduation;
- b. Participate in fun outdoor-related experiences;
- c. Make new friends who share your interests;
- d. Develop life-long leadership and media skills;
- e. Get the inside track on free scholarship money;
- f. Discover cool places nearby, plus travel to great Wisconsin destinations;
- g. Enjoy rare behind-the-scenes access;
- h. Enhance your communication skills, including on-camera and behind the camera;
- i. Build your resume for college applications and future careers;
- j. Expand your network of future professional contacts;
- k. Meet and learn from conservation leaders of yesterday, today and tomorrow;
- l. Learn about great outdoor job opportunities;
- m. Find new ways to fuel your passion for the outdoors;
- n. Receive a frameable Conservation Congress Certificate of Achievement;
- o. Discover sources of funding for your favorite project/activity;
- p. Receive free membership in the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin;
- q. Enjoy Youth Conservation Congress discounts on NRF Field Trips; and
- r. Receive free YCC-logo clothing courtesy of Outdoor Heritage Education Center.

**2. Make It Fun.** Engage youth to help shape activities and direction. Sitting in most meetings is not cool or fun. Assign current youth delegates the task of identifying activities that will appeal to more of their peers. We expect they will suggest more hands-on participatory experiences and less sitting in meeting rooms.

**3. Keep It Close and Easy.** Hold down expenses for WCC members, youth delegates, parents and others. Minimize meals, mileage, lodging and other costs. Three ways to do that are to look for opportunities:

- a. Centrally located;
- b. Regionally in multiple locations covering the same thing (e.g. TV station visits);
- c. That can be done in less than a day, even with travel time, to avoid hotel bills.

- 4. Involve Parents/Guardians.** Wherever possible, lessen the burden on WCC delegate mentors by having the YCC delegate's parent(s) escort the youth. This has side benefits. First, it engages additional adults in conservation. Second, it helps train and inspire the people who live day-to-day with the youth and who have more opportunities to reinforce an interest in these activities. Third, it reduces concerns expressed by some WCC members about potential liability issues. And fourth, it will probably reduce WCC delegate expenses as they often are inclined to pay for meals, snacks and other expenses when they are mentoring youth delegates without parents in attendance.
- 5. Create a Buzz.** Use multiple communication tools to create a "buzz" or excitement about YCC. Generate and disseminate enthusiastic messages to prospective YCC delegates, partners, current WCC and YCC delegates, media and the public with the goal of increasing youth participation in the YCC and youth knowledge about WCC.

  - a. Use social media and word-of-mouth for youth target audiences.
  - b. For adult audiences, in addition to social media, include traditional radio, TV and print. Dan Small Outdoors Radio has offered to help spread the news. *SCI Hunters* magazine agreed to help create a buzz. Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association is open to working with YCC. WOCA's current contact is President Patrick Durkin.
- 6. Team Up With Wisconsin Land + Water,** and its network of county government resources throughout the state. During development of this plan, the author laid the groundwork for this collaboration through Kim Warkenton, Operations Manager/Youth Education Director, 131 W. Wilson Street Suite 601, Madison, WI 53703. Her contact information is phone 608-441-2677 and email [kim@wisconsinlandwater.org](mailto:kim@wisconsinlandwater.org) and the organization's website [wisconsinlandwater.org](http://wisconsinlandwater.org) can provide additional background information.
- 7. Create an Advisory Council,** formal or informal, that includes the Education or Youth Program Director from all willing partner organizations that the YCC Coordinator can locate with help from WCC delegates. Invite Muskies, Inc., Wisconsin Trappers, National Wild Turkey Federation, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, Safari Club, Izaak Walton League of America, National Rifle Association, BASS Conservation Federation, and dozens of others to participate in YCC advisory council brainstorming and implementation sessions. Focus should be on increasing youth participation.
- 8. Collaborate with Big Brothers & Big Sisters** in available counties. The author invited the founder of Pass It On—Outdoor Mentors to help Wisconsin connect with Big Brothers & Big Sisters here like he did in Kansas and elsewhere. The initial

meeting at the Badger Den at MacKenzie Center included BB & BS leaders from Washington County and Jackson County, who confirmed that there are young people



(Little Brothers & Little Sisters) of all ages in most counties with BB & BS programs looking for opportunities to be mentored and to one day possibly be mentors. Michael Christensen's contact info is [mchristensen@outdoormentors.org](mailto:mchristensen@outdoormentors.org) at Pass It On - Outdoor Mentors, Inc., 310 E 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Wichita, KS 67202, Phone: 316-290-8883. The author's hunting buddy, Ryan Bronson from Minnesota, who is the Conservation Director for Vista Outdoor, the parent company of Federal Premium Ammunition, Bushnell, Savage Arms and others, recommends teaming up with BB & BS because they have a proven mentoring model with a

strong, existing infrastructure and resources, and they can deliver young people in need of what WCC and YCC can offer. You can hear Ryan's interview on this R3 subject at <https://soundcloud.com/mike-christensen-23366361/r3podast-08-08-16> or visit Pass It On's site at [www.outdoormentors.org](http://www.outdoormentors.org) and click on the link.

**9. Tweet It Well.** Have current youth delegates engage their school's audio-visual/media resources team to create youth-to-youth social media recruitment messages for YCC. This can also be accomplished by simply asking the youth delegates and their friends to create YCC messages for YouTube, Twitter, SnapChat, Facebook and emerging or trending social media. And then have them post, tweet or disseminate their work to help achieve the goal of increasing youth participation in the YCC and youth knowledge about the WCC.

**B. We recommend the following tactics/actions to develop mentors who can help recruit and train new safe, ethical hunters:**

**1. Work with WHEIA.** Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructors Association, spelling out details of a collaboration that will help develop YCC ambassador mentors as well as WHEIA Junior Instructors. During development of this YCC Strategic Plan, Mark LaBarbera reached out to Ray Anderson, Mike Hay and Monica Kamal of WHEIA to set the stage for implementation. Now there will be a panel and group discussion at the May 2017 WHEIA State Convention, to begin the exploration process of WHEIA and WCC/YCC possibly formally collaborating to achieve these objectives.

2. **Collaborate with 4-H Shooting Sports, Scouts, K.A.M.O. and Others.** Kids And Mentors Outdoors welcomes partners. Ben Gruber of K.A.M.O. expressed interest in working with WCC and YCC to develop mentors who can help recruit and train new safe, ethical hunters.
  3. **Collaborate with Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation/Scholastic Clay Target and Scholastic Action Shooting Sports Programs.** The contact is Tom Wondrash of Burlington, Wisconsin, at [twondrash@sssfonline.com](mailto:twondrash@sssfonline.com).
- C. We recommend the following tactics/actions to recruit and train future conservation leaders who can effectively communicate, inspire, and recruit their peers into conservation programs:**
1. **See A.** Do all that is listed for strategies and tactics under the first item. These two goals and strategies overlap;
  2. **Practice at Shows.** Approach decision-makers at the Wisconsin Hunting Expo, Deerfest, Deer & Turkey Expo, Wisconsin Fishing Expo, Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel Sportshow and similar events throughout the state to offer YCC delegates as seminar speakers who can be ambassadors for conservation and help show promoters attract a younger audience; and
  3. **Provide Media Training.** Engage willing professionals to volunteer their time or find sponsors to underwrite their discounted fees. Teach students how to develop talking points, identify key messages, and plan their opening and closing arguments. Give them time in front of the camera and microphone. Include social media Dos & Don'ts, plus writing assignments for the Wisconsin Outdoor News & Outdoor Writers Assoc. of America Youth Writing Contests.
    - a. Dave Roll of Figaro Productions in Eau Claire expressed a willingness to help train YCC delegates;
    - b. Jeff Engel of Engel Outdoors in Waukesha has offered in the past to share his knowledge and experience as a photographer, TV host and executive producer;
    - c. Dan Small, once again, has offered to help;
    - d. The YCC Coordinator can contact the Wisc. Outdoor Communicators Assoc. about training opportunities from WOCA members like Paul Smith, Tim Eisele, Kevin Naze, Kristen Monroe, Lisa Gaumnitz, Bob Haase, Dave Carlson,

Laurel Steffes, Joe Knight, Dan Durbin, Patrick Durkin, Dean Bortz and others; and

- e. Mary Cardona, Executive Director of Wisconsin Community Media, the association for public access TV stations, is willing to help WCC and YCC team up with community media professionals throughout the state who offer training, facilities and equipment.

**D. We recommend the following tactics/actions to promote opportunities for participants to be conservation ambassadors/educators to build support and recruit mentors among existing conservation groups:**

1. Have YCC youth do a presentation about their experiences at the WHEIA convention as part of the collaboration mentioned earlier. Include language or “wording” suggestions *created by youth* on handouts and the YCC website that hunter education instructors can use to recruit junior instructors and mentors;
2. Assign each YCC delegate the task of presenting the WCC/YCC story to youth groups in their area, such as Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, FFA, 4-H or others, with the intent of recruiting mentors;

4. Reach out to state and local chapters of national conservation groups like SCI, Muskies, Inc., National Wild Turkey Federation, Trout Unlimited, Wisconsin Trappers Assoc., Rocky Mtn. Elk Fdn., QDMA, Whitetails Unlimited, BASS and others, to offer YCC delegates as speakers at their meetings. Members of Safari Club Chapters in Wisconsin have expressed a willingness to host the students;



5. Do the same as D3 but for local fishing or conservation clubs. The Southwest Wisconsin Chapter of Izaak Walton League of America, for example, said they would welcome hearing from YCC delegates;

6. Do the same as D3 for rifle & pistol clubs, shooting ranges owned and operated by groups seeking a connection with youth who could become future members;

**E. We recommend the following tactics/actions to connect participants with opportunities to learn about conservation and future professional opportunities, including through volunteer and job-shadowing experiences:**

1. Ask Wisconsin Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus members to host YCC delegates from their district for a day of shadowing the elected official.
2. Have the YCC Coordinator create and maintain a list of individual professionals willing to host a specified number of students to teach them about outdoor careers, similar to the WOCA strategy C3d. For example, Dan Small and Mark LaBarbera are willing to host 5-10 students and parents/guardians/mentors on-location during taping of "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" and other television productions and talk about outdoor media careers;
3. Work with conservation groups, DNR and others to allow YCC delegates to job-shadow at their offices or while working youth events, such as the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo at DNR's MacKenzie Center each May, so professionals can help delegates enhance their teaching and mentoring abilities by practicing with students attending such events;
4. Approach local TV stations throughout Wisconsin to request behind-the-scenes tours, field trips or job-shadowing opportunities; and
5. Ask the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin's new Communications Director Nora Simmons about mutually beneficial ways for NRF and WCC/YCC to collaborate on projects that will help youth delegates learn about conservation and potential future professional opportunities.

## Step-by-Step Guide To Begin Implementation

To facilitate implementation and avoid the feeling of being overwhelmed by all the opportunities and options, here is one possible course of action.

**Step 1:** Find a volunteer or existing staff member who will be the WYCC Coordinator accountable to the WCC, then **skip to Step 2.**

**Step 1a:** If existing staff is not available and nobody is willing to volunteer, then identify potential contractors as well as how much funding is needed to hire a contractor to perform this critical coordination and leadership role.

**Step 1b:** Identify and approach potential sources of funding for a multi-year commitment. This can be a single source or multiple contributors.

**Step 1c:** When necessary funding is pledged and sufficient funding is received, hire the contractor.

**Step 2:** Volunteer or contractor should create a plan implementation budget with deadlines assigned to plan elements. Budget assumptions should be footnoted.

**Step 3:** Volunteer or contractor should begin implementing appropriate plan elements that do not require additional funding, while at the same time asking potential funders to contribute toward the amount needed for the other elements in the plan implementation budget.

### About the Author

Mark LaBarbera, CEO of ML&A Inc. and ML&A LLC, founded Outdoor Heritage Education Center charitable non-profit group nearly 20 years ago and has a history of bring together people and resources.

Since graduating from UW-Milwaukee in 1978, he has worked in the public sector and private business. He is Treasurer of Natural Resources Fdn. of WI, organizer of Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo, member of WI Sporting Heritage Council, Co-Chair of Hunting Works for WI, Editor & Publisher of SCI *Hunters* magazine and Partner with Dan Small in “*Deer Hunt Wisconsin*” and TV/social media productions.

He is former Communications Director and Chief of Information & Education for MN DNR, co-founder of Wildlife Forever, Benefactor of Becoming An Outdoors-Woman and former Director of Marketing & Communications at SCI World HQ in Tucson. He is a national award winning writer, editor, photographer and producer, and former Host of “Touch of the Wild” TV on Twin Cities Public TV, who served as Chairman & President of Outdoor Writers Assoc. of America and Assoc. of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers.

He was a Federal Duck Stamp Judge and the only person to serve on Boards of both National Shooting Sports Fdn. and American Sportfishing Assoc. trade groups, plus Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation the founding Board of Recreational Boating & Fishing Fdn. His work with youth outdoor education began as a teen-worker at Milwaukee County Zoo and West Allis Parks & Rec. and as an archery instructor at Camp Rio Vista in Ingram, TX. He organized the first two National Shooting Sports Summits, helped launch the Mule Deer Foundation’s M.U.L.E.Y. youth program and bring National Archery in the Schools Program to the American Wilderness Leadership School in Jackson, WY, and schools in MN and WI.

**Appendix A: Samples of What Some Other States Offer** as copied, pasted or excerpted from their materials and websites to save WCC members time in searching for relevant samples. These are representative samples but not all-inclusive.

**Pennsylvania** offers one of the most extensive programs of any state. It is



called the Wildlife Leadership Academy. We are including here more information for this program than from any other state's programs. (For more information, contact WLA at 116 Market Street, Lewisburg PA 17837 570-245-8518.)

The mission of the Wildlife Leadership Academy is to engage and empower high school age youth to become Conservation Ambassadors to ensure a sustained wildlife, fisheries and natural resource legacy for future generations.

A year round program, the Academy begins with rigorous summer field schools that focus on wildlife/fisheries biology and conservation as well as leadership skills development and continues with community outreach through education, service, media engagement, creative arts, and outdoor mentorship.

Once completing the program students will be a certified Conservation Ambassador.

As a graduate of the Wildlife Leadership Academy program students will receive:

- A letter of recommendation for college applications;
- An official document that acknowledges time spent on community outreach;
- A certificate that designates student as a Conservation Ambassador; and
- The opportunity to obtain three college credits through Cedar Crest College.

Plus, students will be eligible to:

- Apply to return to the program the following year as a youth mentor tuition free;
- Attend a professional wildlife or fisheries conference;
- Compete for college scholarships;
- Attend college visit days to schools that have wildlife/fisheries and conservation programs; and
- Join an Academy Alumni Network of over 100+ wildlife, fisheries, and conservation professionals.

The journey to become a Conservation Ambassador begins by attending one of the 5-day residential summer field schools. They had six 2016 field school focuses: white-tailed deer, brook trout, ruffed grouse, black bear, bass, and turkey.





At each field school students:

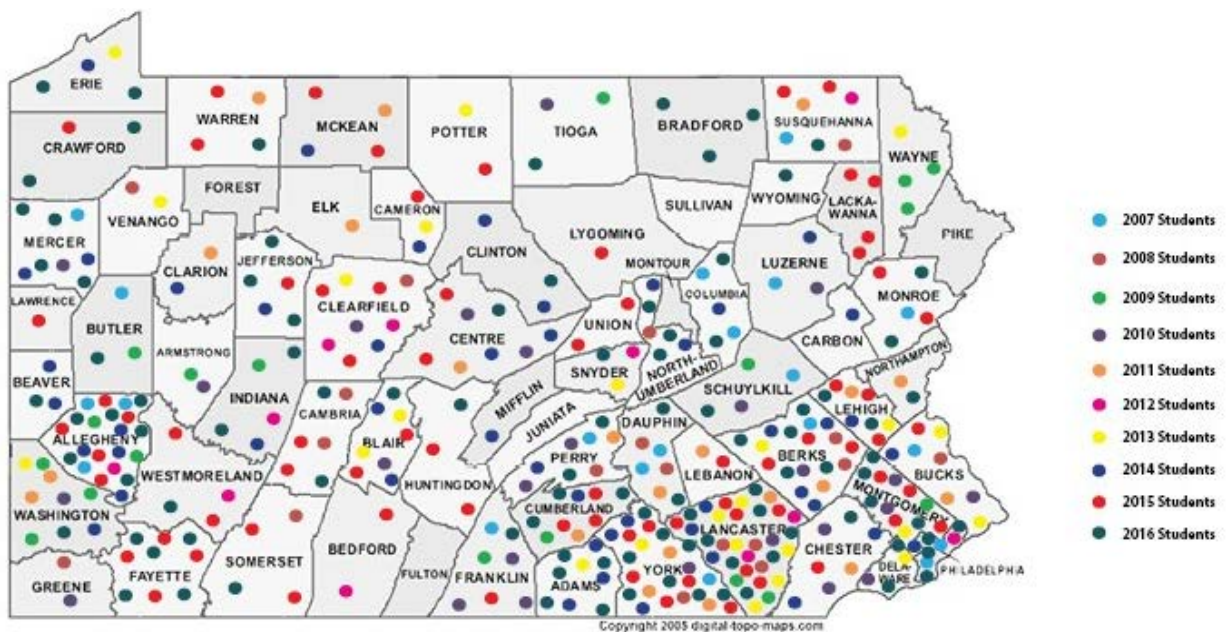
- Learn hands-on about wildlife, habitat management and conservation in an enriching environment from over 20+ wildlife professionals from the PA Game Commission, the PA Fish and Boat Commission, and more;
- Hone their leadership and communications skills; and
- Leave prepared to use these skills to become an ambassador for conservation in their community.

After field school, their Program and Outreach Coordinator helps students be successful with their community outreach by:

- Giving clear guidelines for how to complete the outreach;
- Sending monthly outreach opportunities only available to Ambassadors; and
- Being available to answers questions or help by phone and/or email five days a week.

Anyone can nominate a student in Pennsylvania or other states for this program. Their invitation says, "Please consider helping us continue to build a network of inspired and dedicated young leaders for conservation to ensure a sustained wildlife legacy for future generations. We are looking for highly motivated students between the ages of 14 and 17 to join one of our 5-day residential summer wildlife/fisheries focused field schools to begin their journey to become Conservation Ambassadors. Students should have demonstrated interest in the outdoors and in wildlife and/or fisheries conservation."

While Wisconsin may begin on a small scale to work out the kinks and not overwhelm the budget or the WCC mentors, make no mistake that the cumulative long-term effect can be big. Pennsylvania's youth ambassadors have reached more than 32,000 people across the commonwealth with their outreach. The Academy has graduated 371 high achieving youth from 62 counties across the state as well as students from Ohio, West Virginia, Maryland, Texas, North Carolina, New Jersey and Vermont.



Academy Conservation Ambassadors conducted 1,840 conservation education, service, communication and art projects and engaged in 7,600 contact hours with the public.

In order to ensure the success of students after the field school, a Program and Outreach Coordinator works to engage, empower and mentor students. Engagement and enrichment opportunities include:

- A Monthly E-newsletter: A monthly e-newsletter is sent to all participants including tips for community outreach, a “student of the month” and timely engagement opportunities.
- Video Conference Workshops: Three video conference calls are offered to all participants on mentoring, volunteering and a community outreach wrap up/how to stay involved with the Academy.
- NextGen Blog Correspondent Opportunities: Students are recruited to write for the Academy’s weekly NextGen Blog each year. Nine students were recruited from the class of 2016 to write as Monthly Blog Correspondents. To date, 130 youth-written blog’s have been published focusing on varying conservation subjects from national park visits to how to take a good nature photo.
- College Visit Days: The Academy partners with several universities on college tours created exclusively for Academy students (i.e. bird banding, fisheries lab) to see the unique opportunities these colleges offer.
- Professional Meeting Attendance: Students are offered the opportunity to attend various professional meetings. This November, four students attended the *Pennsylvania Botany Symposium* at Penn State University. Students, who have submitted their Outreach Record Books for check-in this November, will be invited to attend The Wildlife Society, PA Chapter conference in the spring.

Students have worked with conservation organizations including:

- Audubon PA
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Clear Water Conservancy
- Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Ruffed Grouse Society
- Trout Unlimited
- Quality Deer Management Association
- The Wildlife Society, PA Chapter.

They have also worked with conservation agencies including:

- Local and state parks
- Conservation districts
- Pennsylvania Game Commission.
- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

In total, for the 2016 Wildlife Leadership Academy field school in Pennsylvania:

- 117 youth participants attended five field schools (97 new students; 20 returning youth mentors) from 50 counties across the commonwealth;
- 20 adults participated as adult mentors, 12 of these adults were school teachers, 1 principal and 2 environmental educators;
- 8 third year students (high school age) served as apprentices, supporting field school logistics;
- 5 Alumni (college age) worked as Academy Support Team members supporting field school logistics at various field schools;
- 1 alumni worked as the Lead Program Coordinator for PA Ursids; and
- 4 students and 4 adult mentors received 3 college credits from Cedar Crest College for their participation in the field school.

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**Virginia** offers a **Youth Conservation Leadership Program** <http://vaswcd.org/ycli> made possible with support from the Virginia Environmental Endowment.



The Youth Conservation Leadership Institute is a student recognition program that focuses on volunteer service and environmental stewardship. YCLI began as an expansion of Youth Conservation Camp in an effort to keep students engaged in the environmental topics introduced at camp.

Students may submit applications to the VASWCD in July. Those accepted into the program will be notified of acceptance by September. Program participants are required to complete a minimum of 20 hours of community service with a conservation focus. The hours may be done as part of a single project or a series of projects but all projects must be approved by the VASWCD.

Participants need to acquire a program sponsor such as a local Soil & Water Conservation District or other similar conservation related organization. The YCLI sponsor assists the participant with finding a service project that fits their interest and the needs of the community. The sponsor also serves as a mentor for the participant to report to and receive guidance along the way.

There is one in-person meeting at the beginning of the program to allow all participants a chance to meet and brainstorm for their projects.

The program concludes with an awards and recognition ceremony in February. The recognition program agenda includes time for participants to speak about their work and hear from key speakers in the conservation field. YCLI is an opportunity for high school students to receive experience and engage in networking opportunities to prepare them for future education and career paths.

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**Hawaii** has a Conservation Leadership Development Program that creates rigorous, entry-level work opportunities for young professionals that want to commit to a career in conservation. Wisconsin's YCC plan does not envision such a heavy work emphasis or labor-intensive program.

The program is best suited for youth ages 17 and over. Participants are placed at an environmental organization for about one year where they assist with projects. Host groups equip them with job skills and leadership growth opportunities to move ahead in their career. In addition to gaining insight in the conservation field, members also receive a living allowance and an AmeriCorps education award for their time.

The Conservation Leadership Development Program is built for individuals looking for an intensive entry-level experience in preparation for a career in the conservation field. Participants work with a single Host Site/agency that best matches the individual's interests. Applicants must be comfortable working in outdoor environments, and be able to perform physically demanding work.

**Illinois** works with the Field Museum in Chicago on a program called **Youth Conservation Action**

The YCA talks about cultivating the next generation of conservation leaders, explaining that today's young people are tomorrow's environmental leaders.



Photo: Kirk Anne Taylor

As childhood has changed to spend more time indoors, there is an increased need to connect kids to nature –for their health and for the planet. The Field Museum's Youth Conservation Action team supports a diverse next generation of conservation leaders by providing hands-on, locally focused environmental education opportunities that translate science into conservation action.

The museum's Science Action Center's interdisciplinary team of ecologists, social scientists, educators, and geospatial analysts use museum science to build an environmentally literate next generation that has the know-how and inspiration to take care of nature in their communities.

Youth Conservation Action programs translate science into action. Programs have grown to be a nationally recognized model of conservation education that directly reaches more than 3,800 students, 130 teachers, and impacts 19 natural areas each year. Students participate in a consecutive ladder of conservation education programs, linking and building skills and knowledge grade level upon grade level.

The Field Museum's Youth Conservation Action programs that form a "Ladder of Environmental Education" have grown out of its successful Calumet Environmental Education Program (CEEP). Conservation education programs, Mighty Acorns (grades 3-5), Earth Force (grades 6-8), and Calumet Is My Back Yard (grades 9-12), engage young people in scientific, hands-on learning about biodiversity and conservation, resulting in action projects in their own community. In addition, they build capacity throughout the region to involve youth in conservation work through partnerships in order to have an even broader reach.

### Ladder of Environmental Education



**Mighty Acorns** helps students develop a personal connection to natural areas in their community while building important science skills. Mighty Acorns students visit a local natural area three times a year, participating in exploration of biodiversity, educational activities that illustrate basic ecological concepts, and stewardship activities, such as removing invasive species and spreading native seeds. The Field Museum directly provides the Mighty Acorns to schools on Chicago's south side and also houses the Mighty Acorns Partnership that supports more than 13,000 Mighty Acorns students each year throughout the Chicago region.

**Earth Force** students develop the skills needed to create long-term solutions to environmental issues in their community. Using a six-step problem-solving curriculum, students choose a local environmental issue — such as toxic cleaning solutions in schools or air pollution — and implement a conservation-action project to address it.

**CIMBY** is a joint program of Chicago Public Schools and The Field Museum. It builds scientific and leadership skills for high school students in the Calumet region. CIMBY students participate in a variety of difference activities throughout the school year, from ecological restoration at an adopted natural area to classroom activities and leadership training workshops that help students to take action to protect local

**Green Ambassadors** is carried out in partnership with community organizations at The Field Museum. Interns from Pilsen, Bronzeville, Little Village and other surrounding neighborhoods learn biological and social science research methods and serve as community liaisons to local organizations.

## The Green Ambassadors

More than half of the world's people now live in cities. Cities rely on the many benefits provided by nature - food, clean air and water, recreational opportunities, beauty, and space for reflection. Urban landscapes provide habitat niches, efficient use of energy and materials, and concentrate creative,

resilient people and cultures. So now, more than ever, conservation efforts must flourish in metropolitan areas. The Youth Conservation Action programs primarily take place on Chicago's south side and in the Calumet region. Critical remnant natural areas, heavy industrial activity and contamination, and strong and diverse communities characterize both areas. By connecting these communities to cultural and natural assets they are supporting a diverse generation of conservation leaders

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**Illinois also has the Center for Conservation Leadership (CCL)** that develops and empowers high school students from diverse backgrounds who have a keen interest in the environment and a passion for the outdoors. It has a Wisconsin summer session.

CCL's comprehensive environmental education programs help students understand the significance of human interaction with the environment and the need to take responsibility for its care and preservation.

To foster future conservation leaders, CCL combines environmental education, a residential summer experience, leadership training, mentored internships and community service. CCL immerses teens in the natural world, instills in them an understanding of environmental issues and encourages them to become stewards of those resources on a local, regional, national and global level.

CCL is an educational initiative of Lake Forest Open Lands Association, a nationally recognized and accredited land trust that is an independently funded conservation and educational organization devoted to the acquisition and stewardship of our natural landscapes, and to ensuring all generations have a meaningful, lasting connection to nature and our land.

The **Certificate Program** for students completing 8th and 9th Grades is designed to help them:

- ✓ Learn about conservation while gaining leadership skills
- ✓ Be inspired by the natural beauty of our region and beyond
- ✓ Challenge yourself in the outdoors with a group of new friends
- ✓ Make a difference in your community

The Center for Conservation Leadership Program is a year-long environmental education program to help students develop an understanding of important conservation issues while having fun with new friends in activities that include canoeing, hiking, kayaking, scientific research, team-building, naturalist skills and leadership training.

CCL participants are motivated and enthusiastic high school students with an interest in the natural world and a passion for the environment.

There are three primary components to the Certificate Program:

- ✓ Three-week residential Summer Experience
- ✓ A mentored group or individual Stewardship Project
- ✓ School year educational workshops, workdays, field trips and gatherings focused on a variety of environmental issues

### **Summer Experience**

During the Summer Experience in June, students travel with staff to northern Wisconsin for three weeks of new experiences in the great outdoors. CCL participants hike, canoe and kayak through the region, learning about conservation while becoming immersed in nature away from home. During the Summer Experience, the group connects with the natural environment, develops leadership skills and works together as a team with a common interest in conservation.

They visit several different places during these three weeks and work with naturalists, professors, scientists, and other conservation experts. Each week has a specific focus as the program builds on the lessons learned throughout the three weeks so that by the time the students return home the trip becomes an integrated learning experience.

Students spend the first week gaining environmental literacy and an understanding of conservation and the connections in nature between northern Wisconsin, their homes in northern Illinois and elsewhere. Students begin to work together toward a common goal as they bring their individual experiences and perspectives to the activities and lessons. Friendships and bonds are solidified during the second week as students focus on leadership, team skills and strengthening of naturalist skills. The week culminates in a three-day camping and hiking trip through the beautiful and remote Porcupine Mountains in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Students apply their newfound knowledge, understanding and confidence in the third week as they explore issues of environmental justice. This piece of the program incorporates sessions with tribal leaders, citizen action groups and professors who are doing cutting edge research in conservation and the environment. Students are introduced to the concept of stewardship and begin to formulate ideas for their own stewardship project on which they will work during the upcoming school year. During the Summer Experience students live in both cabins and dorms. Students also participate in a two to three night camping experience. Camping equipment is available upon request.

The learning process incorporates hands-on experimentation, evaluation and inquiry. The students actively participate in thought-provoking discussion with those delivering the information. Through this, CCL Certificate Program participants are able to understand more fully environmental issues and conservation principles and to formulate their own responses to these issues.

### **Stewardship Project**

An important part of the CCL program is Stewardship. Upon their return from the summer experience, CCL participants begin a stewardship project in their own community, devoting a minimum of 20 hours to the project over the course of the school year.

Students are paired with adult mentors who guide them through the project, giving advice and encouragement when needed. It is important that each student take ownership of the project, planning, researching and completing the service hours.

At the end of the certificate program, in May, the students present their projects to the CCL

group, their families, Lake Forest Open Lands Association Board members, friends and funders. This presentation not only reinforces leadership skills as students present in front of a group of adults but also underscores the impact of the projects in the students' communities.

### **Educational Workshops**

Student learning does not end with the last day of the summer experience. Through field trips, seminars and workshops, students in the Certificate Program explore environmental topics throughout the following school year.

Students have attended lectures, seminars and presentations on a variety of environmental and conservation subjects. They have had a chance to actively debate issues of environmental justice before experienced environmental lawyers, to hear from passionate environmentalists who have followed their passion to action, to cook healthy meals from local organic agricultural sources, to tour a LEED certified corporate headquarters with the award-winning architect, and to work alongside scientists conducting research on a vessel on Lake Michigan.

Students from previous CCL programs are also invited to these events as opportunities to continue their environmental education.

Since students have different interests and passions, CCL encourages students to identify workdays that hold meaning for them. Student initiated ideas often result in rewarding workdays for the whole group.

Students also participate in other relevant educational events. This can be accomplished by attending anything from a presentation on coyote habits and habitats, or an information session on local food sourcing, to a Youth Environmental Symposium. It is left to the student to choose an area of personal interest.

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