



Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association

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Youth Education Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: October 25, 2023 **Time:** 10:00 to 12:00 **Location:** Portage County Annex/Zoom
(Portage County Annex, 1462 Strongs Ave, Stevens Point)

Youth Education Mission: Develop and maintain county and statewide Wisconsin Land+Water (WI Land+Water) programs that educate and inspire Wisconsin's youth on the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources.

- I. 10:00 Call to order: Arnold
 - a. Introductions/Roll Call (Bula)
 - Members in attendance: Tracy Arnold, Kim Warkentin, Kirstie Heidenreich, Steve Kircher, Haillie Passow, Stephanie Egner, Aleisha Miller, Megan Nasgovitz, Josh Saykally, Heather Palmquist, Lisa Burns, Sarah McDowell, Cassie Kohls, Sarah Wichman, Catherine Higley, Emily Dufleck, Stephanie Boismenu, Lily Lefebvre, John White (NRCS)
 - b. Adopt agenda/additions
 - Motion to adopt by Steve Kircher; seconded by Haillie Passow.
 - Tracy Arnold took this time to also remember Ty Larson, in his recent and unfortunate passing. Ty was passionate about youth education and we appreciate all he did.
 - Tracy also mentioned that Karen Eckhardt, who previously served as VP of the YEC, is no longer with WI Land & Water and that role is now vacant.
 - c. Approve previous meeting minutes (5/23/2023)
 - This item will be moved to the next meeting, as minutes were not able to be provided to members ahead of time.

- II. 10:05 Youth Education Area Reps
 - a. Northwestern-Lisa Burns, Washburn Co
 - Area Contest Jan 26th/Snow date Feb 2nd
 - b. West Central-Aleisha Miller, St. Croix Co
 - Heard back from all Area counties on P + S participation (everyone but Chippewa). Jan 30th is West Central Area Contest.
 - c. Western- Sarah McDowell, Vernon Co
 - Area Contest is Feb. 1st; same counties are participating as usual
 - d. Southern-Justine Bula, Sauk Co
 - Not in attendance
 - e. Southeastern-Stephanie Egner-Washington Co
 - 4 counties participating in poster contest. Cedarburg High School reached out about Envirothon – she encouraged us to reach out to teachers now to prepare for next spring.
 - f. Lake Winnebago-Cassie Kohls-Outagamie Co
 - All counties have been reached out to; waiting to hear back from several on dates at this point.

- g. Lake Michigan-Vacant
 - Mary George (previous Rep) retired mid-September; Scott from Shawano Co is taking the lead in the interim.
- h. North Central-Patty Benedict, Portage Co
 - Tracy reported that Patty has connected with most of the counties regarding dates. The Area contest is Feb. 6th. Tracy reminded us that State Posters need to come with us to the Conference.

III. 10:30 Conservation Camps

- a. Middle School Camp, Upham Woods, Baraboo
 - i. June 9-12, 2024
 - ii. Volunteers
 - Karen Eckardt is no longer on the Committee, so we need to fill that role of counselor. Last year was another successful camp. First year there were 65 students; last year was 55. Aiming for 55-65 in attendance in 2024. We are typically good on female volunteers; we tend to struggle with getting male volunteers. If there is any county staff you know of that would be interested in volunteering, please connect with Kim Warkentin. There is also a major need for someone to cover First Aid/Nurse (need first aid certifications).
- b. High School Camp, North Lakeland Discover Center, Manitowish Waters
 - i. June 17-20, 2024
 - Heather Palmquist reported that there were about 20 students in attendance (max is about 25). Camp went very well and everyone had a great time. Kim mentioned one new item this year is that all counties that offer camp scholarships are listed on the WI Land + Water website. If your county is interested in offering camp scholarships, let Kim know. 2023 set records for the amount of students utilizing scholarships. Heather explained the Brad Matson Scholarship to the Committee. Brad was really passionate about the outdoors and youth education and passed away about 5 years ago. This scholarship was created by his parents in memory of Brad.

IV. 10:40 Silent Auction Hallie Passow-Trempealeau Co/Kim Warkentin-WI L+W

- Haillie reported she sent out a “call to action” to members for donations and assistance, but she is still working on getting connected to all of the forms and the website that is used for the silent auction (many challenges here). Moving forward, if any of our members are creating materials through websites or Google, we need to make sure it’s under WI Land + Water so that when someone leaves their position, others will easily gain access to the materials.
- Haillie encouraged members to start reaching out to businesses for donations. She is working on creating a tutorial on “tips and tricks” on how to best participate in the silent auction. She is also looking for volunteers to help oversee the auction during Conference.
- Kim thanked Haillie for stepping up and taking this on after Megan left. She also reminded us that all money raised from the Silent Auction goes directly towards Youth Education Committee efforts.

V. 11:05 WI Envirothon

- a. 2024 Event-April 19, 2024
 - This date will avoid the WI Lakes & Rivers Conference this year.
- b. Current Issue- “Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future”
- c. Station Captains/Current Issue writer
 - If members have additional ideas for station captains (especially for Forestry and Wildlife), please let Tracy know.
- d. County sponsorships (\$55)
 - Last year we were just about back to pre-covid numbers for county sponsorships. Please remind your county and connect with your Areas so that it can be mentioned at meetings. North Central Area has stepped up and donated \$500 – other Areas can consider this as well.
 - Stephanie Egner suggested having a county sponsor a team; you could sponsor the team entry fee (\$140/entry per team of 4-5 students). Tracy mentioned Wood County would also sponsor teams.
- e. Other sponsorships
 - Grants and different donations from companies are pivotal. Please let Kim or Tracy know if you have any suggestions for who we can reach out to.
 - Keep in mind that companies connected to the concept of renewable energy might be interested in sponsoring due to the current issue.

VI. 11:20 Poster and Speaking Contest

- a. Local/Area
- b. State-March 6-8, 2024
 - State Speaking Contest is on Wednesday morning at 9am; the winning speakers will speak during the luncheon at Conference. Posters will be on display during Conference. All Areas need to make sure to bring winning posters to Conference.
 - The P + S Subcommittee will discuss this further, but if anyone has thoughts on who would be a good emcee for the State Contest, let Tracy or Kim know.
- c. Forms
 - Forms seem to be working ok for everyone. Everything is on the website, including participation certificates. Make sure that whoever wins local contests, before they advance to Area, that there is a parental signature on forms. This is an annual problem, so please double check this as students **cannot** advance to Area without parental consent due to legal reasons.

VII. 11:45 Conference Breakout session

- a. Survey results: going into classrooms and partnering with community members/schools
 - Kim Warkentin explained that at our Annual Conference, we save a spot for the YEC to present at a breakout session. Michael Hook from WI Land + Water conducted a SITCOM survey asking what trainings or topics members are interested in. Many members were interested in learning more about youth

education (going to classrooms and hosting farm days).

- Tracy mentioned the session that YEC did last year on conservation field days was great, and 4 different counties presented.
- Stephanie Egner said she does a classroom visit with about 500 students before they get to go on a farm tour in Washington Co, and their farmers teach as well.
- Steve Kircher said Forest Co also has an invasive species poster contest. He said he will go in to classrooms with the persona of “Buck Thorn” to teach them about invasives. He said he will partner with someone who will be “Barb Berry.”
- John White mentioned there’s lot of opportunities to reach out to students about Urban Agriculture, and NRCS has recently filled multiple positions around the state devoted to this.
- Lisa Burns mentioned a tri-county soil judging contest they do up near Washburn County (this also occurs in Western WI), and perhaps there could be a discussion with other counties about implementing a soil judging contest. John mentioned NRCS could also help by using Area Soil Scientists to help judge and coordinate the contest.
- We need a write-up sometime in November related to the session at conference – we decided no more than 3 counties should present for sake of time. It was decided it will be Lisa Burns (Washburn) on land judging, Stephanie Egner (Washington) on National Ag Day farm tours/classroom component, and the last topic will be something related to lakes if there is a 60-minute session. It will be two topics if it’s 45 minutes.
- It was suggested that it would be great to get a better handle on what youth education programs are going on around the state. It would be especially helpful for new people to learn from others on what types of things are occurring. This could be done by creating a document that can be distributed, or we could take targeted action to become better storytellers of what we are already doing (featuring stories on social media or featuring stories in the WI Land + Water Newsletter).

VIII. 11:55 Additional topics/projects/concerns

a. Next meetings

- Our next large in-person/virtual meeting will likely be in May 2024.

b. Joining Subcommittees

- New members were encouraged to consider joining a Subcommittee. The

options are: Silent Auction, Envirothon, HS Camp, MS Camp, Poster & Speaking Contest. For questions or interest, reach out to Tracy Arnold via email.

- IX. 12:00 Adjourn
 - a. Motion by Heather Palmquist, second by Josh Saykally.

[wisconsinlandwater.org/members-hub/committees/youthed](https://www.wisconsinlandwater.org/members-hub/committees/youthed)