



Spring 2024

WV Department of Environmental Protection

Message from the director . . .

North Bend to host Youth Day May 18

As was the case for many education and outreach organizations, the Youth Environmental Program took a potent punch to the chin from the pandemic.

For two years, our in-person activities had to be scrapped. Through virtual meetings, presentations and events, we managed to stay connected to you as much as possible. Of course, it wasn't the same.



Annette Hoskins
YEP Director

Today, things are returning to normal but the YEP still faces challenges. One of those is increasing participation in several of our events to match pre-COVID levels. Specifically, registrations are down for state Junior Conservation Camp and

the Youth Environmental Conference.

In fact, a contributing factor to the cancellation of the 2023 conference, which was scheduled for Cacapon State Park in October, was a decrease in registrations.

Kids are busier these days, no question. We are competing against other camps, school



Participants at state Junior Conservation Camp, Cedar Lakes in Ripley.

events, jobs, fairs and festivals, conferences and, yes, lingering concerns from parents about COVID.

Still, we believe wholeheartedly in the YEP's mission to engage young people in

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Hundreds of young people from around the state will be honored for their outstanding environmental stewardship at the 61st annual Youth Environmental Day in May.

North Bend State Park in Ritchie County will host the event beginning around 9 a.m. on May 18. Representatives from 4-H clubs, Scout troops, schools and other groups will gather for a day of recognition as the Youth Environmental Program awards close to \$15,000 in cash prizes for the notable work being done by youth organizations throughout West Virginia.

For those arriving Friday, May 17, there will be an outdoor movie at Shelter 3 beginning at 7 p.m. A free lunch will be provided on Saturday.

To reserve a campsite for the weekend, call North Bend at 304-643-2931 and ask for "camping reservations for Youth Environmental weekend, May 17-18." All campsites will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information, visit: www.dep.wv.gov and type in "Youth Environmental Day" in the search tool. There, you can register for Youth Day or download a printable registration form. The deadline to register is May 1.

It's not too late to file your report

We want to hear from you!

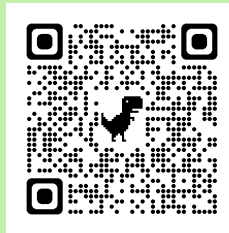
Every year, the Youth Environmental Program hands out close to \$15,000 in cash awards to youth groups and schools from around the state for their outstanding projects that benefit West Virginia.

Whether you're composting, planting trees and flowers, recycling paper, removing litter from our highways and streams or educating others about conservation, tell us about it.

To qualify for our cash prizes of up to \$500, you must fill out an electronic Summary Report Form by March 15. It's easy. You can scan the QR code on this page to access the

Electronic reporting

Scan this QR code to access the YEP webpage. Then, click on "YEP Informational Flyer" to find the electronic Summary Report Form.



form or visit www.dep.wv.gov and type "YEP" into the search bar. Once you access the YEP

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www.facebook.com/depwv

YEP News

WV Youth Environmental Program
601 57th St. S.E., Charleston WV 25304

News from the YEP districts

District 1

JoAnn Snoderly
District Coordinator



WHEN it comes to keeping trash out of our landfills, we often talk about the “three Rs,” reduce, reuse and recycle. Of those, reducing the amount of waste produced is recognized as the most effective way to not only save landfill space, but to keep trash from littering our outdoor spaces and streams.

To stress the importance of reducing the amount of trash we generate, the Monongalia County Solid Waste Authority introduced its Reduce Waste initiative last year. The county’s SWA asked residents to “take the reduce waste pledge” and published tips on reducing the amount of trash and food waste going into landfills.

In late 2023, the authority and the Youth Environmental Program partnered to take that message into schools. Following in-school lessons on the importance of waste reduction, students were

asked to create artwork to share their own ideas on how they can reduce waste for the MCSWA’s calendar contest.

In its first year, the collaboration was a success. Teachers from Eastwood Elementary, Mountaineer Middle and Suncrest Middle schools signed up to participate and 175 students created and submitted artwork showcasing their waste reduction ideas for the contest. For more information on the contest and calendar, visit monongaliacountyswa.org.

These lessons are not limited to Monongalia County students, however. If you are interested in bringing lessons on “the three Rs” or other environmental topics to your classroom or youth group or have an idea for a collaboration, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me or to the YEP coordinator for your county.

District 3

Beth Henry-Vance
District Coordinator



RANDOLPH County 4-H leaders have created an ongoing recycling effort to keep cans out of the landfill and raise a little bit of money at the same time.

Aluminum and steel cans are being collected by 4-H clubs in Randolph County following the closure of a local recycling center last year.

Randolph County’s West Virginia University Extension Office was able to set up a donation account with Elkins Metal Recycling, a scrap metal business that pays for certain types of metal and offers a “Cans for Cash” program for nonprofit groups. The company keeps track of the total weight recycled and the total amount of money earned.

Randolph County Extension Agent Hannah Fincham said they started the recycling initiative after the recycling center in Elkins closed last fall.

“This is a way for people to still recycle their aluminum and steel cans so they don’t end up in a landfill,” Fincham said. “It also helps 4-H in the process.”

She said the payment is 25 cents per pound. So far, the group has recycled roughly 80 pounds of aluminum and steel, raising \$20.

“It’s not a huge moneymaker,” Fincham said, noting it’s more of an environmental initiative.

“We plan to keep our account open indefinitely,” Fincham added, “so this will be a continual way to earn a little money and make a big environmental impact!”

Other scrap metal businesses are located throughout West Virginia and it would be great to see more groups set up recycling initiatives like this one.

District 2

Susan Carroll
District Coordinator



HAPPY Spring! I am so fortunate to work with some amazing people and organizations through the Youth Environmental Program.



I am always impressed with the knowledge and excitement a recycling or litter project can bring.

Recently, I was able to work with the Eastern Action Network, which serves the residents of Berkeley, Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Jefferson, Mineral, Morgan and Pendleton counties.

Its mission, with the help of partners, is to pursue positive solutions to fight poverty, while guiding people and communities to self-sufficiency, independence and well-being. It offers citizens a long list of services, from assisting in

work force training to nutrition classes.

The Network not only has resources to help those in need but a community place for youth to spend time learning and to have fun. I have offered entertaining, environmental programming at several of the Network’s locations.

The Eastern Action Center in Romney has hosted a number of fun youth activities including “PJs and Puzzles,” and “DIY with Dad.” There are also beautification projects in the works to add flowers and plants to outdoor spaces.

It is exciting to partner with this organization and provide youth programming for the community. Teaching youth to care for each other and their environment certainly goes hand in hand. I encourage you all to visit your local Action Network and find out ways you can help or benefit from what they have to offer.

District 4

Jessica Astley
District Coordinator



THIS winter I gave presentations to fifth-graders in Mercer and Wyoming counties on recycling. Together, we discussed waste creation, creating a circular economy, the profitability of recycling and the space that garbage takes up in the place of natural areas.

At the end of the lesson, we would play “How long does it last?” This game has students create a timeline of how long they think certain items would last in a landfill if they were left to rot and not recycled.

I noticed with all the groups that the students thought plastic water bottles, styrofoam and plastic straws would decay rather quickly. The opposite is true. The phenomenon had me thinking of the quality of single-use plastics and throwaway items we use every day. These plastics are made to break so we buy more, but the plastic doesn’t deteriorate. It just shreds into smaller pieces. This



had me thinking of how this adds to the piles of plastic in landfills.

In an effort to reduce the amount of waste I create, I have challenged myself to avoid plastic packaging in grocery stores. It’s not easy. The only items I bought that didn’t have plastic were canned foods and fresh vegetables. As we head into spring, I’d like to recognize farmers and others who are able to provide produce and goods at local markets that are free of plastic packaging. It’s just another reason to support West Virginian small businesses.

District 5

Tom Aluise
District Coordinator



WHAT better time to learn about conservation and environmental stewardship than during Earth Day week?

With that in mind, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection is planning its annual Earth Day Celebration from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on April 23 at the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences in Charleston.

Close to 20 exhibitors will be set up on the terrace outside of the Clay Center with educational presentations and activities for elementary school students.

The event, which is free, will move inside of the Clay Center if there is inclement weather.

Exhibitors will include West Virginia American Water, the USDA Forest Service and staff from the WVDEP's Division of Air Quality, Watershed Improvement Branch, Youth Environmental Program and the REAP Recycling Program, among others.

The WVDEP's popular mobile aquarium, displaying fish of



West Virginia, also is scheduled for the event.

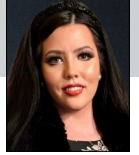
As a bonus, the Clay Center is offering participants free access to explore both the Caperton Planetarium, as well as the Avampato Discovery Museum. A short movie will be shown in the Planetarium theater.

Space for these indoor activities may be limited, so it's important to register with the Clay Center soon.

School groups can sign up for the Earth Day Celebration by going to: groupreservations@theclaycenter.org or calling the Clay Center box office at 304-561-3570.

District 6

Brooke Hinzman
District Coordinator



Hello!

My name is Brooke Hinzman and I am excited to serve as the new District 6 Coordinator for the Youth Environmental Program.

I recently relocated to the Mid-Ohio Valley Region after purchasing a home in St. Marys with my fiancé, Trent.

Prior to moving, I served as the administrative assistant to the Randolph County Commission, where I oversaw daily operations, acted as the coordinator for the Randolph County Unsafe Buildings and Lands Enforcement Agency and assisted on the completion of a number of community-oriented projects, including the construction of the Randolph County Pool and Splash Pad.

Additionally, I was previously employed as a reporter at The Inter-Mountain newspaper in Elkins, where I covered a variety of topics, including local government and court proceedings, community events and human interest stories.

In 2019, I earned a bachelor's

degree in English with a focus in creative writing and a minor in history from West Virginia Wesleyan College.

During my time at Wesleyan, I served as the campus correspondent and editor-in-chief of the WVWC chapter of Her Campus Media and was a member of Sigma Alpha Iota, a music fraternity for women.

During my free time, I enjoy exploring the outdoors and experiencing all of the natural beauty West Virginia has to offer.

I have set a goal to visit each of our state parks. I look forward to promoting the Youth Environmental Program, providing opportunities to the youth in our state and playing a hand in making West Virginia shine.

The counties in my coverage area are Jackson, Roane, Wirt, Wood, Pleasants, Ritchie, Doddridge, Gilmer and Tyler and Calhoun.

west virginia department of environmental protection

Youth Program Coordinators

JoAnn Snoderly
2031 Pleasant Valley Road
Fairmont, WV 26554
Phone: 304-333-0231
Mobile: 304-389-9179
joann.r.snoderly@wv.gov

Susan Carroll
22288 Northwestern Pike
Romney, WV 26757
Phone: 304-515-0071
Mobile: 304-541-1206
susan.j.carroll@wv.gov

Beth Henry-Vance
47 School Street, Suite 301
Philippi, WV 26416
Phone: 304-314-6097
Mobile: 304-767-0243
beth.a.henryvance@wv.gov

Jessica Astley
1159 Nick Rahall Greenway
Fayetteville, WV 25840
Phone: 304-900-0331
Mobile: 304-206-8940
jessica.l.astley@wv.gov

Tom Aluise
601 57th St. S.E.
Charleston, WV 25304
Phone: 304-414-9759
Mobile: 304-541-5929
thomas.j.aluise@wv.gov

Brooke Hinzman
76 Conservation Way
Parkersburg, WV 26104
Phone: 304-420-4635 x 50583
Mobile: 304-916-3208
brooke.a.hinzman@wv.gov

Youth Environmental Program Manager
Annette Hoskins
601 57th St. S.E.
Charleston, WV 25304
Phone: 304-414-9759
Mobile: 304-541-9403
annette.l.hoskins@wv.gov

Spotlight On.

Vote Whale Shark!



TikTok
@wehsfriends

Friends of the Earth Club

Location: Wyoming East High, Wyoming County

Number of members: 60

This past February, 10 students from Wyoming East High School participated in the Friends of the Earth Club's first Endangered Species Awareness Week contest. The students dressed up as various animals and gave interviews on TikTok. Students discussed how their respective animals benefit their ecosystems, as well as the challenges they face, such as pollution and habitat destruction. Species included red wolves, pygmy three-toed sloths, Galapagos penguins and more. To cast votes, viewers would simply hit the like button on the app. With 247 likes, the whale shark won the contest.



March 15 — YEP reports deadline.

April 1-14 — WV Make It Shine statewide cleanup.

April 18-19 — WV Envirothon at Cedar Lakes, Ripley.

April 23 — Earth Day celebration at the Clay Center, Charleston.

April 27 — Adopt-A-Highway statewide spring cleanup.

May 18 — Youth Environmental Day at North Bend State Park, Cairo.

June 17-21 — Junior Conservation Camp at Cedar Lakes, Ripley.

August 3 — Adopt-A-Highway Volunteer Appreciation Day.

September 7 — Great Kanawha River Cleanup.

** For more information about Make It Shine and Adopt-A-Highway events, call: 1-800-322-5530.*

REPORT

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page, click on "YEP Informational Flyer." There you will find a link to the Summary Report Form, plus more information about the YEP awards program, including our essay and poster contests, as well as the Rick Vecellio Memorial College Scholarship, worth \$10,000 to a graduating high school senior.

In addition to the required electronic Summary Report Form, you are welcome to submit a traditional hard copy scrapbook with photos, newspaper clippings, etc. There are guidelines on the YEP website on how best to compile a scrapbook.

If you have any questions, please contact your district coordinator or YEP Director Annette Hoskins.

MESSAGE

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environmental stewardship. Junior Conservation Camp and the Youth Environmental Conference are excellent tools for us to use to achieve our goals. We are dedicated to making certain these events, each with 40-plus years of rich history, remain strong.

To that end, we are working harder to spread the word about camp and our conference. We are exploring different ways to advertise, looking for new avenues to reach the state's youth and discussing potential changes to our events that would appeal to young people.

One change we've already implemented is moving the Youth Conference to later in the year, with hopes a new date will result in fewer conflicts for kids. This year's conference, for ages 13-18, is set for November 8-10 at Blackwater Falls State Park.

Junior Conservation Camp, for ages 11-14, is

Camp registration

Scan this QR code for easy access to Junior Conservation Camp registration. Or visit our website: www.dep.wv.gov



scheduled for June 17-21 at Cedar Lakes in Ripley.

It's not too soon to register for camp. And scholarships are available to cover the \$175 cost. To register electronically, just scan the above QR code. For more information, visit:

www.dep.wv.gov and type "Junior Conservation Camp" into the search bar.

We'd love to have you!

Finally, I'd like to welcome Brooke Hinzman as our new District 6 coordinator. Brooke will cover Jackson, Wirt, Calhoun, Roane, Wood, Gilmer, Doddridge, Ritchie, Pleasants and Tyler counties.