

FINAL REPORT

December 23, 2010

for

WISCONSIN'S LAKE PLANNING GRANT Project No. SPL-197-09 Hunt Hill Youth Environmental Stewardship (YES) Project – Phase I

A Partnership between
Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary, the Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association
and the Long Lake Preservation Association

Overview: This project was conceived as a partnership, building on the strengths of three separate Washburn County-based volunteer non-profit groups and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, to provide in-depth water education (watershed - water quality - water protection) to area school students through experiential fieldtrips, at a time when many school fieldtrips are being eliminated due to school district budget constraints.

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Goals:

1. Recruit a Washburn County YES Steering Committee to oversee the promotion and development of this project
2. Recruit/train educator staff in adequate numbers to meet student educator ratio goal of 10:1
3. Secure or develop age/grade appropriate water/watershed curricula and supplies
4. Match water/watershed curricula to meet state environmental educational standards
5. Carry out an experiential school fieldtrip to Hunt Hill for each of the five school districts in Washburn County
6. Offer outreach programs going to the schools, if schools would not commit to a fieldtrip
7. Collect student and teacher evaluations of their fieldtrip classes and activities
8. Carry out stewardship projects selected by the students themselves to be carried out at school, family homes, or in their community, to meet needs in their own area
9. Report student stewardship project results to their school, school board, community organizations which helped support the fieldtrips (chambers of commerce, service clubs, PTA's, community education foundations, etc.), their own area's lake associations, the three partner non-profits sponsoring YES Project, Wisconsin DNR Lake Planning Grant officials and WAL
10. Contact other community financial resources to support future YES Project activities
11. Develop an increased awareness and appreciation among youth for clean water and nature

Results - Summary:

The expectations of all three active partners in the Youth Ecology Stewardship Project – Phase I, for helping youth to better appreciate our water resources, were fully met or exceeded as evidenced by the evaluations conducted with each school group. The positive reactions of all three active partners to the results of Phase I supported continuation of this project and applying for a Lake Planning Grant for a second year - Phase II.

There were two areas of concern, however. The Steering Committee was not successful in this first year in gathering community education foundation or corporate financial support to continue the water quality fieldtrips. Secondly, it proved difficult to collect back reports from the school classes on their stewardship projects. We believe sharing the results of these stewardship projects will help to generate community financial support.

Results - Details:

1. The YES Steering Committee was formed with volunteer representatives from the three non-profit partners, school system representatives and Hunt Hill staff. The Steering Committee met almost monthly during the first year. However, not all school districts in Washburn County participated regularly.
2. Hunt Hill staff, with input from several school district personnel, sought out curricula resources and developed specific programs to offer to school classes. Hunt Hill staff also purchased supplies, with advance approval of the Steering Committee and well within the project budget guidelines, to use with the school fieldtrip programs.
3. Exceeded our goal! Six fieldtrips resulted through the YES Project. All four public school systems in Washburn County: Spooner, Shell Lake, Northwoods – Minong area and Birchwood, one parochial school system (St. Francis De Sales, Spooner), and one charter school (Birchwood) also participated.
4. One outreach program resulted: Birchwood Charter School invited the YES Project to come out and discuss aquatic invasives before their trip to Hunt Hill. We coordinated an aquatic invasives presenter, Lisa Gabriel, to go to Birchwood in the fall of 2009.
5. Student and teacher evaluations were collected, analyzed and used by the Steering Committee to redirect program efforts for YES Project – Phase II (2010 – 2011 school year).
6. Two out of the six school classes from Washburn County school districts carried out stewardship projects: Birchwoods' storm sewer identification and labeling; and Northwood's garbage collection along the south shore of Lake Superior.
7. Disappointing results on other schools (besides Birchwood Charter and Northwood) reporting back successfully on their stewardship project; despite follow-up contacts with teachers and Steering Committee school representatives.
8. Steering Committee members contacted four community education foundations (Spooner, Shell Lake, Northwoods and Rice Lake), as well as Birchwood Best Mfg for financial support. As of the December 20, 2010, we had not received financial commitments from any of these foundations. We did discover additional busing transportation funding at the Spooner Elementary School, thanks to Principal Chris Anderson which will become available for YES – Phase II.
9. The positive evaluation results were very supportive of the program and indicated an effective recognition by teachers and students of the significance of clean of water in their lives.

Project Deliverables (see various attachments):

1. Water quality curricula used for the fieldtrip programs
2. Communications letters explaining the YES Project
3. Communications sent out to the schools in advance of their fieldtrips
4. Communications for following up the fieldtrips and reminders about the stewardship projects
5. Non-profit partners' newsletter articles explaining the YES Project to members
6. Stewardship project guidelines or suggestions
7. Steering Committee sample agendas
8. Steering Committee fieldtrip tracking – school participation, # students, busing costs
9. Written report handout distributed at the 2010 Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference, Drummond School
10. Evaluation forms used
11. Evaluation results
12. Supplies and resources list
13. Budget

Program Resources:

1. Project WET
2. Project WILD
3. Acorn Naturalists
4. HACH Chemical
5. Washburn County Soil and Land Conservation – Lisa Gabriel (AIS)
6. UW- Extension Service - John Haack (curricula, watershed facts on Washburn County)
7. UW – Extension Service – Beverly Stencil (evaluation guidelines and forms)

Future plans – Implications for YES Phase II (2010 – 2011 school year):

1. Confirm which school classes from each district will be most suitable for participation in YES – Phase II, based on their experiences in YES – Phase I (2009 – 2010 school year).
2. Better accountability for stewardship projects and reporting on them after the fieldtrips.
3. Continued Steering Committee involvement in soliciting financial support from area communities – in Phase II we will also approach service clubs.

Recommendations:

- There must be consensus within your organization or lake association(s) on the perceived areas of need in your watershed to get the best participation.
- There must be consensus on the importance of focusing efforts on youth.
- There must be consensus on the importance of the concept of stewardship or service projects to give something back unselfishly to help other people and the environment in your area.
- Support of and communications with your local Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources personnel are very important for the successful implementation of the project, as well as the application process for grants.

- Focus of the fieldtrip curricula would be expected to vary greatly – for instance organizations might also consider aquatic invasives education, or shoreline restoration, or fish stocking projects, or native species support, or underwater structure improvement, or rain gardens, or many other topics according to your prioritizes needs.
- School districts need to be consulted about which schools and/or classes should be invited to participate – by involving district administrators and teachers in the planning discussions.
- Public communications about your projects will build support for further efforts.
- Development of the budget should be the shared responsibility of the Steering Committee – not one individual.
- If an environmental education organization or nature center is not accessible in your area, educational fieldtrip programing could be accomplished by using DNR personnel perhaps, or UW-Extension personnel, or school teachers following established curricula guidelines.
- Transportation dollars might be available through fieldtrip budgets within each school district, or from parent teacher organizations.

Accessibility of the Y.E.S. Project Final Report for the general public:

The partner organizations each wrote newsletter articles to share the YES project with their members.

The Friends of Hunt Hill posted information on their website at www.hunthill.org.

The YES Project materials were also shared with two other Lake Associations in 2009, and in the summer of 2010 at the NW Wisconsin Lakes Conference in Drummond, WI.

Electronic copies of report materials are available through the FOHHAS (Friends of the Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary, Inc.) by emailing requests to: director@hunthill.org.

Attended the “2010 Wisconsin High School Conference On the Environment” at UW – Stevens Point with a display, handouts and a presentation on the Y.E.S. Project. The conference theme was “Our Wonderful Waters: Challenges and Opportunities for Wisconsin Students.”

Finally, a copy of this report will be forwarded to WAL for their use.

Submitted by:

Date: _____

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