



FACT SHEET

Scouting and Conservation

Background

The conservation program emphasis is designed to incorporate throughout the Scouting program and activities an awareness and understanding of conservation as wise and intelligent management of natural resources.

The development of good citizens is one of Scouting's aims, and citizens need to practice sound environmental living and conservation of natural resources. There is need for an extended program that will encourage young people to

- Look at the entire process of resource use
- Analyze how actions and judgments often create problems
- Understand decision-making processes related to the environment
- Seek out commonsense methods that can be applied at home, in the community, in the state, and in the nation
- Help improve the quality of life

This emphasis is directed toward making all those active in Scouting—youth, adult members, and their families—aware of their responsibility for the future. There is an increasing awareness that Scouting members and other individuals are an integral part of their environment and that their action or inaction affects the quality of life throughout this nation and the world.

Personal experience teaches the most lasting lessons. The conservation program emphasis has been developed to create a positive commitment to improving the environment and conserving natural resources through firsthand experiences and “learning by doing.”

Program Emphasis

Because Scouting's youth generally have an active interest in the outdoors, they possess a ready curiosity that can be expanded. These young people can find their own answers, learn how to make sound judgments, and find social and environmental significance in actions that they undertake.

Every Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, and Venturer—and their units—can join in so that 100 percent of Scouting's members can become committed to the importance of conservation.

Backcountry Use

All private or publicly owned backcountry land and designated wilderness areas are included in the term “backcountry areas.” The Outdoor Code of the Boy Scouts of America applies to outdoor behavior generally, but for treks into backcountry or wilderness areas, the principles of Leave No Trace apply. Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers who complete the requirements can earn a Leave No Trace patch. A Leave No Trace Awareness Award based on frontcountry guidelines is available to Cub Scouts who complete the requirements. Within the outdoor program of the Boy Scouts of America, there are many different camping skill levels. Camping practices that are appropriate for day outings, long-term Scout camp, or short-term unit camping may not apply to wilderness areas. Wherever they go, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturers need to adopt attitudes and patterns of behavior that respect the rights of others and make it possible for others and future generations to enjoy the outdoors.

In wilderness areas, it is crucial to minimize our effect on all ecosystems, such as mountains, lakes, streams, deserts, and seashores. Since our impact varies from one season to the next, it becomes important for us to adjust to these changing conditions to avoid damaging the environment.

Conservation Good Turn

The conservation Good Turn is an opportunity for Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops, Varsity Scout teams, and Venturing crews to join with conservation and environmental organizations (federal, state, local, and private) to carry out a conservation Good Turn in their home communities. A new conservation Good Turn emphasis was launched in January 1995 and is ongoing. These organizations typically have a backlog of necessary projects that they have been unable to carry out because of lack of funding or volunteers. The list of projects is limited only by the willingness of the Scouting unit.

William T. Hornaday Award

The William T. Hornaday Award is presented to individuals or units in recognition of distinguished service in conservation. There are seven forms of the award: certificate, badge, bronze medal, silver medal, gold certificate, gold badge, and gold medal. Applicants for the awards work under the guidance of a local conservation professional or agency or with the help of a qualified layperson in conservation. The effort must meet a local or regional need and help arouse public recognition of the importance of adequate protection and management of air, soil, water, mineral, forest, grassland, wildlife, and energy resources with full consideration of environmental conservation. Young men who have earned the Eagle Scout rank should consider striving to earn a Hornaday medal. Hornaday applications may be downloaded from the BSA Web site: www.scouting.org.

World Conservation Award

The World Conservation Award provides an opportunity for individual Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers to “think globally” and “act locally” to preserve and improve our environment. This program is designed to make youth members aware that all nations are closely related through natural resources and that we are interdependent with our world environment.

Council Action

Each council should have a conservation committee. It may be a separate committee with authority, accountable to the executive board; or it may be a subcommittee of the council’s camping committee. It should include representation of three qualifications in its membership: local conservation and environmental professionals from state or federal agencies or college or university faculties; laypeople representing local environmental organizations or local chapters of national organizations; and active Scouters with an intense interest in conservation.

The conservation committee should prepare and regularly update the council’s master conservation plan. It should also supervise the ongoing activities of natural resource management called for in the plan. This includes identifying and prioritizing projects that range from individual boy or unit projects to major development needs affecting all council properties. Finally, the committee should seek ways to encourage and publicize activities by individuals and units that further the cause of conservation.