Track 3: Nature and Conservation

SESSION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Overview: Environmental Stewardship empowers youth to take responsibility for protecting the planet. This session focuses on conservation, sustainability, and personal actions that make a difference. Youth learn how to reduce waste, conserve resources, and become advocates for a healthier environment.

Objectives

- Understand the concept of stewardship and sustainability.
- Learn ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle.
- Take part in a small conservation project or pledge.

Supplies

- Recyclable items (for sorting activity)
- Stewardship pledge cards
- Poster board and markers
- Conservation project materials (for example, seeds, compost bins, and recycling bins)

Advisor Notes

- Keep the tone positive and action-oriented.
- Highlight youth-led environmental efforts.
- Encourage creativity and ownership of stewardship ideas.
- Optional: Partner with a local environmental organization.

SESSION OUTLINE

Welcome and Icebreaker Activity: Eco Bingo (10-15 min)

- Youth find others who've done eco-friendly actions.

Safety Moment: Safe Handling of Recyclables (2-3 min)

- Always wear sturdy gloves when handling recyclables.
- Gloves protect against sharp edges, broken glass, and germs.
- Watch for sharp objects. Be cautious of broken glass, metal cans, and jagged plastic.
- If you see sharp or dangerous items, do not pick them up with bare hands—use gloves or alert an adult.
- Sort safely. Separate recyclables (paper, plastic, and metal) carefully.
- Avoid rushing. Take time to check items before placing them in bins.
- Avoid Hazardous Materials. Do not touch chemicals, batteries, or medical waste.
- Report these items to an adult immediately.
- Even with gloves, wash hands thoroughly after the activity.

Stewardship Challenge: Youth sort recyclables, create posters, and discuss reducing waste (20-30 min)

Why Recycling Matters

- Recycling saves energy and resources.
- It reduces landfill waste and pollution.
- Ask: "What items do you recycle at home?"

Sorting Recyclables

- Explain categories: paper, plastic, metal, and glass.
- Show examples of common recyclable items.
- Emphasize checking local recycling guidelines.

Reducing Waste

- Discuss the "3 Rs": Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
- Ask: "What's one way you can reduce waste every day?"
- Examples: reusable bottles, cloth bags, and avoiding single-use plastics.

Creative Awareness

- Encourage youth to make posters with messages like: "Recycle Today for a Better Tomorrow" or "Small Actions, Big Impact"
- Posters can include drawings of recycling bins, nature scenes, or slogans.

Discussion Questions

- Why is reducing waste important for wildlife and ecosystems?
- How can we encourage others to recycle?
- What happens when recyclables end up in landfills?

Pledge or Protect (20-30 min)

- Youth write pledges or begin a conservation project.

Option 1: Write a Pledge

- Provide paper or pledge cards.
- Ask each youth to write one specific action they will commit to.
- Encourage creativity. Add drawings or decorate the pledge.

Introduce the Activity

- Explain that stewardship means taking responsibility for protecting the environment.

Share examples of pledges:

- I pledge to turn off lights when leaving a room to save energy.
- I pledge to use a reusable water bottle instead of single-use plastic bottles.
- I pledge to recycle paper, plastic, and metal whenever possible.
- I pledge to pick up litter in my neighborhood or local park.
- I pledge to plant a tree or flowers to help the environment.
- I pledge to turn off the faucet while brushing my teeth to save water.
- I pledge to use cloth shopping bags instead of plastic bags.
- I pledge to share one eco-friendly tip with my family or friends each week.
- I pledge to avoid wasting food by planning meals carefully.
- I pledge to learn more about endangered species and how to protect them.

Option 2: Begin a Conservation Project.

Ideas for quick-start projects:

- Create a recycling station at home or school.
- Start a small garden or plant a tree.
- Organize a litter cleanup in the neighborhood. Youth can brainstorm and outline steps for their project.

Share and Display

- Have youth share their pledges or project ideas with the group.
- Collect pledges to display on a "Stewardship Wall" or take photos for a digital board.

Resources and Notes

- Handout: Sustainability Tips with link to EPA or local conservation resources

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REFLECTION SECTION

Advisor note: These are sample questions. They are designed to help the participants apply what they have learned to their own interests. You are welcome to use these questions or develop your own questions.

Focusing Questions

- What stewardship action are you most excited to try?
- What did you learn about sustainability?

Analysis Questions

- How can small actions lead to big change?
- What challenges might you face in being a steward?

Generalization Questions

- How can you inspire others to care for the environment?
- Why is stewardship important for future generations?

ECO BINGO INSTRUCTIONS

Objective:

- Youth learn about eco-friendly habits and share experiences in a fun, interactive way.

How to Play:

- Give each participant an Eco Bingo card (5-by-5 grid with eco-friendly actions in each square).
- Participants mingle and find others who have done the actions listed (for example, “Recycled a plastic bottle,” “Planted a tree”).
- When they find someone, they write that person’s name or initials in the square.
- First to complete a row, column, or diagonal shouts “Eco Bingo!”
- Continue until multiple winners or time runs out.

Discussion After Game:

- Which actions were most common?
- Which actions were new or surprising?
- How can we do more of these in daily life?

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PRINTABLE HANDOUT: ECO BINGO

NAME: _____

Instructions: Participants mingle and find others who have done the actions listed below. When you find someone, write that person's name or initials in the square.

Recycled a plastic bottle	Used a cloth bag for shopping	Turned off lights when leaving a room	Used a reusable water bottle	Planted a tree or flower
Picked up litter	Rode a bike instead of driving	Turned off water while brushing teeth	Participated in a cleanup event	Donated old clothes
Learned about endangered species	Used public transportation	**FREE SPACE**	Avoided single-use plastics	Started a garden
Shared an environmental tip online	Helped save energy at home	Sorted recycling correctly	Read a book about nature	Visited a national or state park
Helped protect wildlife	Used refillable containers	Turned down thermostat to save energy	Took a nature walk	Talked to someone about recycling

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PRINTABLE HANDOUT: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABILITY TIPS

Sustainability means making choices that protect our planet for future generations. Small actions—like saving energy, reducing waste, and conserving water—can make a big difference. This handout provides simple tips and resources to help you live more sustainably.

Energy

- Turn off lights and electronics when not in use.
- Use energy-efficient bulbs and appliances.
- Adjust thermostat to save energy.

Water

- Turn off the tap while brushing teeth.
- Fix leaks promptly.
- Collect rainwater for plants.

Waste

- Reduce single-use plastics.
- Reuse containers and bags.
- Recycle paper, plastic, metal, and glass.

Transportation

- Walk, bike, or use public transit when possible.
- Carpool to reduce emissions.

Nature

- Plant trees or native plants.
- Avoid harming wildlife habitats.
- Participate in local clean-up events.

Scan or click for sustainability tips from the United States Environmental Protection Agency:

Scan or click to explore the official website of the National Wildlife Federation: