

## Virtual Program – Outdoors

Week 2



### Eco Advocate

Ambassador (11<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>)

It's called Mother Earth or Mother Nature because every living thing depends on nature to survive. What are your priorities when it comes to valuing and protecting nature? As an eco advocate, you'll learn how environmentalists work on issues from endangered species to the destruction of rain forests. Then you'll discover a nature issue important to you, find solutions, and make a difference.

### Prepare Ahead: Take the LNT Awareness Course

Before you begin this badge, go to the Leave No Trace website ([www.Int.org/learn/online-awareness-course](http://www.Int.org/learn/online-awareness-course)) and take the 30- to 60-minute awareness course that includes questions about Leave No Trace practices and techniques. (Note: The course doesn't work on a mobile device.) Learn about the Leave No Trace history and mission, and find out about visitor-created impacts in recreational areas. You can print a certificate when you complete the course.

### Step 1: Learn what eco advocates do

Either on your own, with friends and family, or through an organization YOU can make a difference for nature. You can take photographs, volunteer, do research, impact laws, fundraise, or craft a career around protecting the environment.

#### Options

1. Attend a meeting for a local environmental advocacy group (virtually) OR thoroughly research what ones does by visiting their website.
  - a. What is/are: their mission, their priority issues, and any tips they share about promoting advocacy?
2. Meet someone on your city council or a city employee with an environmental position or cause.
  - a. Email or call the councilperson to set up a meeting for you to find out how they use advocacy and their influence to tackle local environmental issues.
3. Meet with someone who works in state government or law to help the environment. This could be an environmental lobbyist or attorney, legislative advocate, or environmental policy advisor.

### Panel Interview Meeting Invite (password required)

Topic: Eco Advocate Panel Interview

Time: Apr 14, 2020 5:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/638282943?pwd=UEZydlJmSzR3K3BkZ3FyVFI6V3pYQT09>

Meeting ID: 638 282 943

Password: GSNMT20

#### New Mexico groups:

- Central New Mexico Audubon Society
- Environmental Education Association of New Mexico
- Friends of the Bosque del Apache
- Gila Conservation Coalition
- Mesilla Valley Audubon Society
- Native Plant Society of New Mexico
- Nature Conservancy of New Mexico
- New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
- Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society

- Santa Fe Conservation Trust, Sierra Club - Rio Grande Chapter
- Southwest Environmental Center
- Southwest New Mexico Audubon Society
- Taos Land Trust
- Upper Gila Watershed Alliance

### **Five Tips for Successful Advocacy**

1. Know how your audience communicates
  - Do the people you're trying to reach respond to email? SMS texts? Will radio, print and other traditional media be most effective? For many advocacy campaigns, time spent knocking on doors produces better results than a hundred emails.
2. Macala Wright, a digital marketing strategist, suggests nonprofits with limited budgets take advantage of free resources to learn about online audiences. For instance, Google Analytics can tell you what country visitors to your website are from, where on your site they're going and what devices (mobile, desktop, tablet) they're using. "That's information any organization can use to make informed decisions on how they're messaging," Wright said.
3. Figure out your messaging strategy
  - A good advocacy campaign has a core message, Wright said, and how you present that message determines how far it spreads. "There are three good ways to make your message appealing: humor, inspiration and enlightened education," Wright said. "People share things that make them happy or make them want to learn more."
4. Spur your audience to act
  - Know what it is you want your audience to do, and make sure the audience knows it too. Perhaps it is as simple as sharing your post on Facebook. Sign a petition? Attend a meeting? Vote for a candidate? If you're asking for donations, Satterwhite advises that you "think what it would take for you to actually take money out of your pocket and give it to someone. How would you want them to approach you?"
5. Move people toward engagement
  - Convincing someone to "like" your organization's page on Facebook is easy; convincing him or her to host an event at home to raise funds for your organization is hard. These are examples of the bottom and top rungs of what media strategists call the ladder of engagement. By gradually asking more of your audience as it engages with you — to opt in for email updates, to make a small donation, to attend a live event, to knock on doors for your cause — you can convert an online bystander into an enthusiastic worker for your cause.
6. Test your messages
  - Both Satterwhite and Wright stress the importance of trying different approaches and learning from the results. For a social media posting, Wright advises trying the same message starting off with a question ("Have you thought about where your food comes from?") and then again with a compelling fact ("Processed foods make up 70 percent of your community's diet.")

### **Eco Advocacy Careers to Explore**

If you're passionate about environmental advocacy, explore a major in Environmental Studies or Environmental Science. Depending on your goals, you might seek a degree in environmental law or political science with a focus on environmental politics and policy. Some eco advocacy careers to explore:

- Campaign and Grassroots Manager
- Digital Content Specialist
- Environmental Educator
- Environmental Engineer

- Environmental Lawyer
- Environmental Lobbyist
- Environmental Planner
- Environmental Writer
- Fundraiser
- Government Regulator
- Marketing and Communications Director
- Nonprofit Director
- Park Ranger or Naturalist
- Photographer and Videographer
- Policy Analyst
- Policy and Communications Director
- Sustainable Design Specialist
- Wildlife Rehabilitator

## **Step 2: Find an issue you're passionate about**

Everything in nature is important and worth protecting. Start by researching environmental issues at your local library or scroll through "Environmental Topics" on the Environmental Protection Agency website to read about issues from acid rain to ocean dumping. You can also search Wikipedia's "Index of Conservation Articles" to find what resonates most with you and your community.

Dig a little deeper:

- Read local news about the environment, specifically about an issue you're interested in.
  - Check the sources of your articles, is it a trusted news source? How do you know?
- Hold a virtual community forum or town hall with friends, troop, community members and family.
  - Find out about local environmental concerns and learn what they care about and why. Talk to attendees about solutions and ask how they would like to be involved.
  - Focus on one environmental issue to learn more about and recruit a teen action team to be involved.

## **What makes a trustworthy news source?**

When you're passionate about a cause, it's easy to believe all the information that supports it. But sometimes "facts" are misleading or downright false. That's why it's important to investigate your sources carefully before spreading information. Are your sources trustworthy and reliable? Is there scientific data to support the facts? Log on to a trusted fact-checking website to verify statements and assertions.

- Machinery of care: Good news sources have significant processes and resources dedicated to promoting accuracy, and correcting error.
- Transparency: Good news sources clearly mark opinion columns as opinion, disclose conflicts of interest, indicate in stories where information was obtained and how it was verified, and provide links to sources.
- Expertise: Good news sources hire reporters with reporting or area expertise who have been educated in the processes of ethical journalism. Where new writers with other expertise are brought in, they are educated by the organization.
- Agenda: The primary mission of a good news source is to inform its readers, not elect Democrats or Republicans, promote tax cuts, or reform schools. You should absolutely read writers with activist missions like these, but do not treat them as "pure" news sources.

## **Step 3: Come up with a solution**

You targeted a nature issue that concerns you and did the research. Now come up with a possible solution. Keep these questions in mind: How will your solution help? Is it the most practical and realistic idea? Will your solution provide a lasting impact?

Talk to an expert – a professor, scientist, ranger, biologist, environmental advocate, etc – and brainstorm solutions for your issue. Now: pick **one**.

OR

Talk with an environmentalist or group that is already working on solutions to the issue you chose. What impact are their solutions already having and can they be improved?

Feel free to work alone, with family, or with your troop.

#### **Step 4: Advocate for your issue**

When you advocate for nature, it can include volunteering with local environmental organizations, changing policy on a nature issue, gathering petition signatures, writing blogs, participating in awareness campaigns, and so much more.

Choose One:

1. Create and facilitate a campaign.
  - Pick a type of media and communicate what your issue and proposed solution are.
2. Volunteer with an existing environmental group
  - Make sure that you choose one that is working on the same or similar issue that you identified in Step 2.
3. Organize an event to advocate about your issue.
  - This could be a great platform to bring people together and further brainstorm on solutions

Is your idea too big for just one option? Find a way to combine them in a way that best utilizes your skills.

- Great at public speaking? Host a virtual rally to educate people about the issue and then break out sessions for coming up with solutions.
- Prefer to stay behind the scenes? Do the research, put together a presentation or blog, and implement an interactive campaign where people can donate money as a competition.
- Want something a little more eclectic? Invite your friends and family to write poetry about the issue and then host a (virtual) poetry slam to bring awareness to others.

#### **Types of Media**

- Music
- Painting/Drawing
- Photography
- Videos
- Spoken Word Poetry

#### **Step 5: Teach others how to advocate for your cause**

Success with advocacy often depends on the people you can rally to help support your cause. Whether you are recruiting one or many, the same skills apply: be passionate about what you're doing, share your issue and solutions articulately, and have solid goals for the future. By inspiring others to your cause, you ensure that your work will continue to make a difference.

Compile your information:

- Create a handout, poster, blog, youtube channel, instagram or facebook page.
- Make sure to include all the (reliable) resources you found relating to your cause and proposed solution.

OR

- Start a group to continue work on your identified cause.
  - This could be a group of volunteers, your troop, or a troop of younger girls.

Ways to encourage young activists:

- Create songs or games about your cause
- Brainstorm a mission and vision statement and turn it into a play or song
- Create an interactive (online) scavenger hunt for finding information
- Roleplay! Plan "mini missions" to help them learn about activism as if they're spies or pirates

Helpful things to add for information and visual appeal: statistics, graphs and charts, related websites, reading lists, peer reviewed scientific studies, and other environmental organizations.

Stay in contact with potential volunteers! Consider making a second email account or setting up a google number so that people can contact you about helping with your cause or providing new information.

## **Issue Alert**

### *National Parks & Problems*

Utah's Zion National Park recently considered requiring reservations to its already overcrowded park. If instituted, this would be a first for a national park, but others might follow suit: including Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon. Tight staff and budgets are some reasons parks may struggle to conserve nature. Besides overcrowding, parks have challenges when visitors scratch names on monuments and boulders, fly drones to take photographs, make new paths off established trails, and even wash laundry in water sources (really!).

### *Outdoor Music Festivals*

Being in a natural, outdoor setting is a cool way to watch music, but when thousands of people gather for an outdoor music festival, it leaves an enormous carbon footprint. Concert organizers have become more "green" over the years by encouraging recycling, carpooling, and offering solar energy power for established campsites. Some eco-minded festivals sell eco-friendly merchandise, compost or donate leftover food, and build performance stages from sustainable materials. What are some ways you can think of to make music

### *Tossing "Natural" Items*

Many people believe that it's ok to throw "natural" food items, like apple cores or banana peels, outdoors. In fact, some insist that it will actually help wildlife. Leave No Trace teaches that feeding wildlife damages their health, alters their natural behavior, and exposes them to predators. Leaving

behind natural food items or feeding squirrels trail mix out of your hand are examples of what *not to do* to keep nature safe. Create an awareness campaign about the dangers of discarding natural food items.