

Youth Environmental Summit (YES!)



2023 Workshops Descriptions

Be the Lorax and Speak for the Trees: Help Your School Become a Tree Campus K-12!

"I speak for the trees! Let them grow! Let them grow!" – The Lorax, Dr. Seuss

Do you want to be the Lorax for your school? Trees provide many benefits to communities from improving air quality to providing shade and providing wildlife habitat (and so much more)! In this workshop we'll explore the benefits of trees and learn about the Arbor Day Foundation's nationwide recognition program, Tree Campus K-12. Learn about the steps needed to have your school recognized and become Vermont's first Tree Campus K-12."

Presenter: Gwen Kozlowski, UVM Extension, Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program

Intro to Peecycling: Transform Waste into Resource for Clean Water and Fertile Farms

Urine contains all of the vital nutrients that plants need to thrive. Instead of flushing urine downstream, where it fertilizes harmful algal blooms, we can reclaim it to fertilize farms and support local food systems. Come learn about how peecycling can help solve some of the greatest global challenges today: watershed nutrient pollution and fertilizer shortages. The Rich Earth Institute operates the first and largest community scale urine recycling program in the US. We will present the facts about urine recycling – why it's needed, how it works, and how you can get involved. Pee the change you want to see in the world!

Presenter: Julia Cavicchi, Rich Earth Institute

Food Waste, Climate Change, and What We Can Do About It

This workshop will introduce major sources of organic wastes, including food wastes, and how organic wastes contribute to global warming and the carbon cycle as well as strategies to mitigate these impacts. The workshop will introduce anaerobic and aerobic processes that breakdown food wastes, including landfilling, anaerobic digestion, and composting. The workshop will feature a landfill bottle where students can measure methane in the gas headspace and an activity to dissect how organic wastes are converted to methane through microbial processes.

Presenter: Matthew Scarborough, University of Vermont

From Rallies to Press Conferences: How to Organize Effective Events

Youth members of the Vermont Youth Lobby will present about the process of organizing the Rally for the Planet, lessons learned in that process, and how students can organize an event of their own to get their message out and impact real change. We will look at setting effective and reachable goals, effective messaging, and more! We will also share about the Vermont Youth Lobby and how you can get involved. Join us if you are interested in event organizing to bring young people together to make an impact on climate change or any issue you are passionate about.

Presenter: Miriam Serota-Winston, Vermont Youth Lobby and Montpelier High School Student

Internship and Research in the Environment

The UVM Rubenstein School claims a storied history of preparing environmentally and socially responsible leaders, scientists, practitioners and advocates who understand the interdependence of people and healthy ecological systems. A science-based curriculum, focused on experiential learning, inspires students to apply knowledge to real world projects. Come hear from current UVM students and/or staff as they share their projects and internships in helping to solve environmental challenges. Presenter: Akol Aguek and 2-3 UVM students, UVM Rubenstein School of Environment & Natural Resources

Are You Going to Eat That? Waste Less Food to Slow Climate Change

Composting food scraps is a climate solution, but wasting less food in the first place is even more powerful. Learn how wasted food relates to climate change, how to track wasted food in a classroom or cafeteria, and how to use that information plus strategies from Community-Based Social Marketing to help more food get eaten instead of trashed.

Presenter: Alyssa Elklor Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Solid Waste Program

Climate Justice and Vermont

Join 350Vermont for an interactive workshop that explores the intersection of the climate crisis and social justice issues. Currently, Vermont is pushing hard to electrify everything as part of our "solution" to the climate crisis - but what does this mean for climate justice? Where does our electricity come from and what communities are impacted by Vermont's energy use? Work together to craft a deeper understanding of Climate Justice, hear about some of the main issues facing Vermont, and assess what it would look like to center justice in our climate work here in Vermont.

Presenter: Connor Wertz, 350Vermont

T-shirts to Totes: A Repurposing Activity

Recycling is only one of many "Rs" we can engage in to live more sustainably on the Earth. Other Rs include Reducing, Rethinking, Refusing, and Repurposing. This workshop will focus on the latter, finding a new life for an item that otherwise may be destined for the landfill. The workshop will open with an interactive slideshow of examples of items people have repurposed, then participants will be engaged in a hands-on activity, repurposing a t-shirt into a tote. Participants are encouraged to bring their own used t-shirts, but for anyone that is unable to, there will be used t-shirts made available by the presenter, so that everyone has a chance to make a tote. Note: sleeveless shirts also work for this activity.

Presenter: John Jose, Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District

Watershed Planning and Pollution Prevention for the Sustainable Development Goals

The world's water-related ecosystems are being degraded at an alarming rate. Using a hands-on, tabletop model and Lake Champlain Basin as a focus area, the workshop will teach participants about how polluted runoff impairs lakes and rivers and how watershed planning can restore waterways and reduce pollutant loading. Topics covered include the UN Sustainable Development Goals, point and nonpoint pollution sources (urban, industrial, forested, and agricultural), toxic substances, phosphorus, pollution prevention, watershed planning, and bioregional collaboration.

Presenter: Katie Darr, Lake Champlain Basin Program/ Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Network

Vermont Envirothon: An Exciting Competition on Soils, Forestry, Wildlife & Water Resources!

The Vermont Envirothon is a state-wide competition where high school students put their knowledge of forestry, wildlife, soils and water resources to the test. The Vermont Envirothon will take place in May 2024. The team that demonstrates the greatest overall knowledge is selected to represent Vermont at the North American Envirothon event held this upcoming year 2024 in Lake Geneva, New York. Envirothon provides an opportunity for students to participate in hands-on STEM learning and connect with professionals in the fields of soil & water conservation, wildlife, forestry and agriculture. Come learn about how to start a team and prepare for the event!

Presenter: Casey Spencer, Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District

Food Systems & Youth Voice: The Ins & Outs of Food Systems and How to Make School Food Better for You, Others and the Planet

In this workshop, facilitated by youth and adults together, we'll explore food systems and how they're connected to our daily lives. We'll engage in a hands on activity/model making and then hear from youth who are working to make food systems in their schools more healthy and just for all. Participants will leave inspired and with tools to deepen their learning about food systems, farm to school, and making change in their communities.

Presenter: Elyse Perambo, Green Mountain Farm to School

TAKE ACTION: Youth Taking Action on Climate in Vermont, and How You Can Too!

Are you concerned about climate change, and want to be part of climate solutions? Join us and we will walk through activities to figure out where YOU want to take action to create change in your school, town or state.

Did you know that Vermont has a Climate Action Plan, and that youth like you are helping to shape what it looks like? Lily Terry, our Youth Representative on the Vermont Climate Council will share first-hand about all the ways that youth are making a difference all over Vermont, and how you can, too.

Working with our Action Projects Advisors and Youth Climate Fellows, you will have time to consider what changes you want to see happen in your community that can make an impact on climate change. Finally, you will leave with tools, resources and contacts to get you started or support the work you are already doing to create the climate future we all need.

Presenter: Mariah Keagy, Vermont Energy Education Program, and Lily Terry, Vermont Climate Council

Cultivating Pathways to Sustainability

Cultivating Pathways (CPS) is a dynamic year-long program for youth and adults in schools and is a partnership of Shelburne Farms Institute for Sustainable Schools and UP for Learning. Join youth facilitators and two community organizations as they facilitate an engaging session that will inspire participants to dig deeper with the Sustainable Development Goals, find what they are most passionate about, and develop an action project that applies and transfers their academic skills in a real world context into their communities through Youth Participatory Action Research. These local projects will have a lasting impact not only in their community, but will also contribute to the entire world as we seek to achieve the global goals.

Presenter: Katie Ingraham and Youth Facilitators, UP for Learning

Community Science: Contribute Important Climate Data from your Backyard or Neighborhood!

How is climate change impacting your neighborhood, community, and state in real time? Usually we're encouraged to put our phones away in nature, but contributing data through community science apps helps scientists understand the impacts of climate change in your area. In this workshop we'll learn about several apps you can use anywhere: Audubon Bird Guide, eBird, iNaturalist/Seek, and Nature's Notebook. These apps collect data on bird populations, the presence of wildlife and plants, and the timing of life cycle events for plants and wildlife. The data you submit is used by conservation biologists, ornithologists, botanists, policymakers, and more to inform climate action! Participants will leave as fully fledged community scientists!

Presenter: Sarah Hooghuis, Audubon Vermont

MSMS_Sustain: Sustainability and Leadership in the Classroom

Sustainability and climate action require the development of leadership skills and activities that help students take action. MSMS_Sustain students and instructors will share how leadership planning can be integrated into school curriculum and how that leadership contributes to building sustainable communities. We will identify curriculum strands, project based learning activities and how leadership in the classroom evolves into community action.

Presenter: Don Taylor and students, Main Street Middle School

Teens Reaching Youth (TRY) for the Environment

TRY stands for Teens Reaching Youth and is an environmental leadership opportunity for students in grades 7-12. It is an environmental education program taught by teens and designed to increase environmental literacy and responsibility in younger youth. TRY for the Environment includes five different program areas to connect young people to real-world environmental problems allowing them to be key change agents contributing to real-world solutions. The program areas include: renewable energy, waste solutions, food systems, forests & trees, and water. Come to this workshop to learn how YOU can become a teen teacher and make a difference!

Presenter: Lauren Traister, UVM Extension 4-H, and past TRY teen teachers

Stormwater Solutions: Learn How to Slow the Flow

Stormwater is water from rainfall and melting snow or ice that moves over the land and collects pollutants as it makes its way to lakes, ponds, streams, and other surface waters. In urban areas, stormwater reaches surface waters more quickly and in larger volumes during and immediately following rain events than it does in natural areas. This workshop will explore what stormwater is, how it impacts water quality and engage in a hands-on slow the flow experiment to learn how to reduce and treat stormwater on site.

Presenter: Ashley Eaton, UVM Extension - Lake Champlain Sea Grant