

# Attachment 3 – Green Partners Youth Environmental Education Project Ideas

Hennepin County supports organizations to actively educate, engage, and motivate residents to become environmental stewards and make positive behavior changes, such as taking action to prevent waste, recycle, reduce household hazardous waste, combat climate change, care for trees, protect pollinators, and improve our air and water quality.

Hennepin County is seeking youth environmental education projects that include activities like those described below. **These are not the only project ideas that will be funded**, any project that meets the criteria listed in the Green Partners Youth Environmental Education Request for Applications (RFA) will also be considered. Visit [hennepin.us/greenpartners](https://hennepin.us/greenpartners) to read about projects funded in the previous grant round and [hennepin.us/environmentaleducation](https://hennepin.us/environmentaleducation) to access education resources.

Youth environmental education projects may include:

- **Environment-based education and cross-curricular projects:** Use environmental issues as a context for learning in various subject matters. Pair environmental science with social studies and other subjects like art, music, and more.
- **Outdoor education:** Engage youth through outdoor field experiences to study environmental topics ranging from air pollution to zebra mussels.
- **Place-based learning and service learning:** Immerse students in their local environment, history, and culture by encouraging action in community initiatives. Explore biodiversity and natural areas near where youth live, explore local green infrastructure, learn about green jobs, conduct field studies, or partner with others to develop community-based stewardship projects that benefit the environment.
- **Field trips coupled with classroom education:** Attend environmentally themed field trips, including at Hennepin County's [recommended sites](#). Use classroom curriculum, workshops, hands-on activities, or take-home lessons to reinforce what youth learn.
- **Traditional ecological knowledge and community science:** Engage youth learning about and applying traditional ecological knowledge. Involve youth in collecting scientific data related to the environment to help scientists conduct research. Engage youth in exploring environmental systems and identifying environmental consequences of different actions, and potential solutions that address root causes of environmental problems. Learn more from [University of Minnesota Extension](#), find [pollinator projects](#), and [additional opportunities](#).
- **Environmental action planning:** Identify and pursue solutions to environmental problems. Examine environmental issues, consider benefits and consequences of various actions, and create a youth-led action plan to address an issue.

County priority topics of interest include:

## Preventing waste and recycling

### Preventing waste

- **Reduce food waste:** Encourage youth to engage in meal planning, properly storing food, and preserving food before it spoils. See the Hennepin County [food waste activity guides](#), [food storage advice](#), and the [Stop Food Waste Challenge](#) for ideas. Ask youth to try [new activities to reduce food waste](#) and share challenges, creative tips, and advice for others. Utilize tools like the [FoodKeeper](#) app, Eureka Recycling's [Food Storage Tips](#), Save the Food's [interactive food storage guide](#), and the University of Minnesota Extension's guide on [preserving food safely](#).
- **Replace disposables, packaging waste, and single use plastics:** Ask youth to assess the packaging for items they purchase and the disposable, "convenience" items they commonly use. Encourage youth to purchase items with less plastic and less packaging. Provide tips and tools to replace those items with reusable items. See Hennepin County's [top 10 list of disposal items to replace with reusables](#), [the Plastic Free Challenge](#), and the [reducing waste activity guide](#) for ideas for youth to learn about the issue and engage others in taking action.
- **Reuse and repair:** Encourage youth to repair their items. Recruit fixers from your community and host a fix-it event at your school or in your community. Engage youth in researching the reuse and repair circular economy and learning about associated green jobs. See ReUse MN's [repair](#) and Hennepin County [Fix-It Clinic](#) websites for ideas.
- **Make buying used cool:** Engage youth in examining their household waste and identifying items they could purchase used. Share information about green gifts and green purchasing strategies. Host a swap event and consider a theme, such as books, collectables, electronics, clothes, or school supplies. View the county's [reducing waste activity guides](#) and learn about the [Choose to Reuse website](#).

### Recycling waste

- **Recycling:** Encourage recycling at school, at home, and on the go. Contact your city recycling coordinator to find out what the recycling trends are your area (see the list of city recycling coordinators at [hennepin.us/recycling](http://hennepin.us/recycling)). Organize a tour of Hennepin County's [Brooklyn Park drop-off facility](#) for youth to see waste management in action. See the Hennepin County [recycling presentation](#), the [Recycling Exists](#) website, and [recycling activity guide](#) for ideas.
- **Composting and organics recycling:** Educate youth about the composting process, organic waste, and how to minimize contamination. Engage youth in composting and encourage youth to sign their families' up for curbside organics recycling, build a backyard compost bin, or use a drop-off site for their organic waste. Create a community education campaign and help families sign up for curbside organics recycling in their

city, where available. See [hennepin.us/organics](https://hennepin.us/organics), [tips for getting started with organics recycling](#), and [organics recycling activity guides](#) for ideas.

## Household hazardous waste

- **Identify and choose the least hazardous options:** Educate youth about the [dangers of household hazardous waste](#). Provide samples of mock household cleaning products and read labels, have youth assess products they have at home, explore options for less hazardous products, look at side-by-side comparisons of products. Purchase supplies to make green cleaners for youth to take home. Provide information about retail drop-off sites for items such as, electronics, plastic bags, and more. Promote the [Green Disposal Guide](#) to find the best way to recycle, reuse, or dispose of items from home. See the [green cleaning recipes](#) and [hazardous waste activities guide](#) for ideas. Grantees are not allowed to collect household hazardous waste or host collection events.

## Protecting natural resources

### Environmental science

- **Traditional ecological knowledge:** Engage youth in learning about and applying traditional ecological knowledge to a current environmental issue, challenge, or opportunity in their community. Indigenous elders should be involved in ways that respect their time, culture, and knowledge.
- **Community science:** Involve youth in collecting environmental scientific data to benefit the environment by helping scientists do research and get them engaged in specific actions related to the topic they are investigating. Help youth see the connection between the environmental problem they are investigating, the scientific data they are collecting, and what changes they can make in their own life and in their community to protect the environment. [Learn more about community science opportunities](#) and [pollinator science](#).
- **Environmental systems:** Engage youth in exploring ecosystem dynamics, the interconnectedness of issues, and impacts humans have on the environment. Investigate the water cycle, food webs, carbon cycle, climate change, urban environmental issues, local ecosystems, and more. Help youth identify potential environmental consequences of our actions and solutions that address root causes. Youth-led community action projects related to what youth learn are encouraged.

### Habitat and trees

- **Protect birds, bats, and pollinators:** Educate youth about the importance of [pollinators](#) and how to help [pollinators](#). Encourage youth to [make changes](#) in their community to

protect pollinators, including creating habitat with [pollinator-friendly plants](#). Educate youth on plants, plants native to Hennepin County, and care for native plants. [Teach youth how](#) to [build and maintain a bird house](#).

- **Care for trees:** Engage youth in conducting tree inventories at school or in their neighborhood. Educate youth about the benefits of trees and provide supervised, hands-on experience with tree planting and tree care. Work with youth to get involved in or organize a community tree planting event or advocate for more tree planting in their community. See [hennepin.us/trees](https://hennepin.us/trees).

## Water

- **Adopt a storm drain:** Educate youth about local water pollution sources and impacts, see Hennepin County's environmental education activity guide on [Protecting Land and Water](#). Engage youth in learning and about implementing solutions to protect water in their community and at home, like keeping leaves and trash out of our water. [Sign your group up to adopt a storm drain](#) and receive reminders each season. Host a youth-led community clean-up event to pick-up litter around the neighborhood, school, park, or your local waterbody so that it does not enter storm drains, and ultimately our lakes and rivers. See the [maintain your drain and storm drain detectives activity guides](#) for ideas.
- **Reduce salt use to protect water:** Educate youth about water pollution sources and impacts, and the impacts of salt use on roads and sidewalks in the winter. Engage youth in learning and about implementing solutions to protect water from the overuse of salt at school, in their community, and at home. See the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's [information and education links on salt pollution](#) and Hennepin County's environmental education activity guide on [Protecting Land and Water](#).

Projects that are not a good fit include projects to address structural barriers or infrastructure changes. Learn about resources for [recycling at organizations, businesses, multifamily buildings](#), and [schools](#) and support to install projects to [protect water and natural resources](#).