

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



CASE STUDY

Leaders of the Pack in Climate Resilience - The Wild Center Trains Adirondack Youth

The Wild Center is the natural history center for the six million acre Adirondack Park in northern New York State. The mission of The Wild Center is to “ignite an enduring passion for the Adirondacks where people and nature thrive together and set an example for the world.” The Center’s indoor space is filled with a variety of learning experiences and opportunities highlighting important scientific research. The Center has been working with schools across the region for the last seven years to learn about climate science and mitigation actions that schools can take. The Wild Center has been invited to advise organizers of other Youth Climate Summits and has already developed a working toolkit to assist in all areas of planning a Youth Climate Summit demonstrating broad impact and replicability.

Challenge

The Adirondacks is a critically under served area in both climate literacy and stewardship, making addressing the need of these sites critical in order to minimize the impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems as well as work towards climate resilience so they are adaptive and proactive in the face of climate change. The tourism-based economy may also suffer if Adirondack ecosystems lose the iconic high-elevation flora, fauna, and alpine ecosystems found on its peaks; change is already impacting winter conditions, decreasing winter tourism and recreation activities.

Youth today are uniquely suited to raising awareness because they are constantly connected to each other and have a greater network through digital resources, exert considerable influence on their peers and family, are active and eager to have an impact outside of school, and are confident that they can make a difference. Their generation is uniquely suited to raising awareness, educating others, and organizing for a greater impact and action on climate change issues. There is a need to increase their climate literacy and engagement and create a support network of teachers to bolster their efforts. Addressing climate literacy for youth is currently a pressing issue in the United States. Only 25 percent of American teens were recently able to demonstrate a basic understanding of climate change and even fewer are willing to say that they are “well informed” on the subject. However, three-fourths of those students tested wanted to learn more. Capitalizing on this desire to become more literate is critical not only from a scientific point of view, but also from a global one and educational youth programs have proven to be sound avenues for addressing all of these issues.

Solutions

The Wild Center implemented the Convening Young Leaders for Climate Resilience project, also known as the Adirondack Youth Climate Program. It is a year round project that engages youth ages 14-21 across northern New York State to take action in their schools and communities regarding climate change. The project focuses on increasing participants’ climate literacy through workshops and presentations with leaders in climate science, pollution reduction, resiliency; and moving participants to stewardship through creating and implementing a Climate Action Plan (CAP) - a framework for reducing emissions and climate impacts in one’s community. The Adirondack Youth Climate Program has long-standing relationships and strong support from regional school districts and is working in partnership with the Alliance for Climate Education (ACE), a nationally recognized organization that works on climate literacy and youth leadership.

CHALLENGE

- The Adirondacks is an under served area in both climate literacy and stewardship, making addressing the need of these sites critical in order to minimize the impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems

SOLUTION

- The Wild Center implemented the Adirondack Youth Climate Program - a project that focuses on increasing participants’ climate literacy through workshops and presentations on pollution reduction and resiliency
- The Climate Program has longstanding relationships and strong support from regional school districts and is in a working partnership with the Alliance for Climate Education (ACE)

RESULTS

- Held the 9th Annual Youth Climate Summit at the Wild Center with 254 participants
- 35 school teams from Northern New York completed Climate Action Plans to take back to their schools and communities
- The Wild Center held two youth leadership retreats - one in the Catskill region with 80 attendees, and one in the Adirondacks
- The Adirondack Youth Climate Program established a monthly AYCP Newsflash allowing students to develop communication skills

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Results

The Wild Center successfully hosted the 9th Annual Youth Climate Summit at the Wild Center in November 2017 with 254 participants. Thirty-five school teams attended from across Northern New York. Each of the teams successfully completed Climate Action Plans during the summit to take back to their schools and communities. One of three geographic hubs contingent to the Youth Climate Literacy & Leadership Practicum was established in the Saranac Lake/Lake Placid region. The original goal of three hubs was found to be unrealistic because of the geographic distance between schools and communities. Instead, because of extensive feedback from their youth climate alumni, existing students and teachers the Wild Center initiated and supported two youth leadership retreats – one in the Catskill region (80 students in attendance for 2 days) and one in the Adirondacks (3 days). In addition, the Wild Center youth climate program coordinator presented at festivals and engaged with local leaders.

The last element regarding students, was a communication component developing participants' ability to communicate climate impacts and resiliency efforts as well as disseminate project results. The Adirondack Youth Climate Program established a monthly AYCP Newsflash to improve communication with participants. Student leaders ran social media channels for events and programs. During planning meetings students created videos demonstrating one commitment they would make each week to protect the environment. They developed a Google site to house the youth climate related material.

In addition, The Wild Center provided 2-4 hour teacher trainings through New York State Master Teacher Program, Environthon and Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation Teacher Institute reaching 140 teachers. They also worked directly with the 42 teachers that participated in the youth Climate Summit to provide the Alliance for Climate Education program: Our Climate, Our Future, an award winning climate education program, to use for unlimited training in classrooms.



Looking Forward

As a result of the work the Wild Center did this previous year, they received a NOAA Office of Education – Environmental Literacy Grant – one of only two awarded to 170 applicants. This 3.5 year award will allow the Wild Center to build on the work they have done with NYSP2I in new and exciting ways. With their three project sites, they intend on supporting youth climate summits, teacher trainings, youth leadership, as well as creating dialogue opportunities with civic leaders and decision makers so students can share with them why climate change resiliency, through education mitigation and adaption, matters for a just and sustainable future.

Online Media:

- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)



TESTIMONIAL

“NYSP2I’s support of The Wild Center’s Convening Young Leaders for Climate Resilience project has enabled our project to increase our impact- not only through reaching more young people – but by providing more depth, understanding, and awareness regarding the impact of climate change on our future. Young people impacted by this initiative have a better understanding of the impact of their day to day actions on the environment. In particular, NYS-P2I increased our capacity to reach teachers and forge new partnerships across New York State to help seed youth climate summits in other communities, and helped our program think about waste in a completely different way. We are so grateful for the support for our program.”

– Jen Kretser, Director of Programs
The Wild Center

NYSP2I PARTNERS



New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership

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