

Youth Conservation Congress



Individual Focus Opportunity Handbook



Career Exploration



Leadership



Skill Building



Individual Study

YCC Individual Focus Opportunity

What: Each YCC delegate will identify a conservation topic or outdoor skill they would like to learn more about. This will be a self-driven focus project, supported by the YCC coordinator and YCC mentors. The YCC Oversight Committee will receive updates on projects throughout the year. This project should reflect an interest, or a topic/field each YCC delegate wants to explore further.

Why: Youth participating in the YCC focus opportunity will gain valuable knowledge related to natural resource management, advocacy, leadership, and outdoor skills.

How: YCC delegates will work with the YCC Coordinator to develop a plan to:

- Identify a learning goal and project
- Connect with partners and identify a timeline
- Share experience

Following initial plan development, the YCC coordinator will assist youth in developing a timeline and connect youth with DNR staff and other partners. All projects will be unique, and the time commitment for each project will vary based on the interest and availability of each YCC delegate.

YCC delegates may check with their school district to see if an independent credit option exists for this type of focus project. (All school districts have unique requirements for independent study projects)

When: The project timeline will run from September 1st through August 31st each year.

September through November – Identify a learning goal and submit a proposal to the YCC Coordinator.

December through April – YCC delegates will gather information, meet with partners, complete hands on learning activities, participate in field days, and ultimately plan a virtual, written or in-person skill sharing opportunity to present to YCC peers.

May – Present final projects/learning at the WCC Convention. Presentations can be a poster, photo display or video.



Think about why you joined the YCC...

This individual focus opportunity is designed to help guide you as you explore your conservation interests and set a yearly learning goal. You will be supported in this focus opportunity by mentors, partners and the YCC Coordinator.

YCC Individual Focus Opportunity - Steps to Success

Step 1: Choose a category

☒ Individual Study

This is a broad category and can include any conservation topic you want to learn more about, explore or research further. This category could also include reading a book related to conservation.

☒ Leadership

Are you interested in sharing your skills with others as an instructor or mentor? Options include presenting to a class or organization, becoming a junior hunters safety instructor, teaching an outdoor skill, or other leadership based project.

☒ Skill Building

Do you want to learn archery skills, or learn how to fish or hunt? In this category, you could also gain skills related to wildlife photography, wild edible plant identification, or similar outdoor skills.

☒ Career Exploration

Spend time learning about conservation careers by job shadowing a conservation professional.

Step 2: Identify a learning goal and project

Ask yourself—what do you want to learn and how will you learn it? Is this learning goal something you can accomplish in a short amount of time, or will it be an extended project? Talk with your mentor and the YCC Coordinator to review your plans and discuss additional ideas to support your project.



Step 3: Connect with partners and develop timeline

Identify individuals or groups that can help you with your focus opportunity. Will you have one or more partners? Do you plan to work with DNR staff, conservation professionals, non-profit conservation groups, your school, or others? Develop a timeline to guide your project and work towards your goal.



Step 4: Share your experience

How do you plan to share what you have learned? This part of the project is important because it provides an opportunity for others to learn from your experiences. Sharing can happen in a variety of ways - be creative. Photographs or video are always helpful in telling your story. Projects will be shared with your peers, the YCC Oversight Committee and the WI Conservation Congress.



YCC Individual Focus Opportunity - Frequently asked questions

Where do I start?

What was the main reason you joined the YCC? Did you want to learn a new skill? Enjoy outdoor activities with friends and mentors? Explore conservation careers? Participate in hands-on habitat projects? Develop leadership skills?

Think about a topic or career you want to explore or a new skill you would like to develop. It can be anything related to conservation in Wisconsin. If you are just starting out, make it a small attainable goal.

You can always talk to your mentor or the YCC Coordinator for help generating ideas.

I don't have personal connections with any conservation professionals or organizations.

Will you help me find partners?

After you identify your learning goal, the YCC Coordinator and your mentor will work with you to identify local or statewide partners.

I'm busy with school, sports, work and extra curricular activities and I don't have a lot of extra time. How big of a commitment is this?

As a YCC delegate, we want you to learn and grow through your connection to conservation. This individual focus opportunity can be as big or small as you want it to be. It can span one day or several months.

Ultimately, we want you to identify a learning goal and find a way to share what you have learned. Steps outlined in the process will help guide your way.

Do I have to give a presentation to share what I have learned?

Giving a presentation online or in person is one way to share your experience, but there are many other options. Feel free to be creative! You could put together a short video, photo collage, poster, written description of your experience, or plan a hands-on field day or demonstration for other YCC delegates.

What if I don't complete my learning goal?

There is no penalty for not completing the Individual Focus Opportunity.

As a YCC delegate you have unique access and support to participate in some amazing conservation experiences. The goal of this opportunity is to give you a chance to expand your knowledge and skills related to conservation. The YCC Coordinator will help you along the way. Don't hesitate to reach out.

Youth Conservation Congress - Individual Focus Project Examples

Category	Learning Goal (examples)	Potential Projects	Partners	Desired Outcomes	Skill Sharing
Career Exploration	Learn about a career as a wildlife biologist.	Job shadow with wildlife biologists (deer aging, pheasant release, duck banding, etc.)	DNR wildlife biologists/technicians, staff from: Pheasants Forever, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Turkey Federation, etc.	Expand knowledge related to daily operations of a wildlife biologist, participate in field work, learn about desired education and skills needed for a career.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Partner with a local wildlife biologist to host a regional field day. •Record experiences with pictures and video to share at WCC convention.
Leadership	Share your skills and knowledge as a safety instructor.	Become a junior volunteer instructor and help teach safety education courses.	DNR safety instructors	Gain experience as a junior volunteer instructor, learn teaching techniques, coaching, and mentoring skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Encourage other YCC delegates to become junior instructors and share information through a virtual presentation. •Set up a display informing WCC delegates about the junior instructor process.
Leadership	Teach others about the Youth Conservation Congress and the WI Conservation Congress.	Present a program to a school class or local organization.	WCC delegates, YCC Coordinator.	Share information about the YCC and help recruit new YCC delegates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Share a poster and photos at the WCC convention about presentations and outreach.
Skill Building	Learn about pheasant ecology and hunting techniques.	Assist the DNR or private sporting clubs with pheasant releases, attend a field day to learn more about pheasant hunting and field dressing.	DNR wildlife biologists, Pheasants Forever local chapters, Friends of Poynette Game Farm.	Participate in a field day to learn hands on skills related to hunter safety, hunting techniques, field dressing, and wild game cooking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Help plan a YCC pheasant hunt field day. •Share a poster or video at the WCC convention about lessons learned related to pheasant hunting.
Skill Building	Learn how to shoot a bow.	Participate in a school program, 4-H, or join a local archery club.	National Archery in the School program (NASP), 4-H Shooting Sports, Archery Clubs, experienced mentor.	Develop archery skills and confidence with a bow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Share information about archery skills learned, and share how others can participate in archery programs.
Skill Building	Learn about trapping as a management and harvest tool.	Complete trappers education class, attend future trappers camp, learn how to set and maintain traps.	DNR wildlife biologists, WI Trappers Association, Future Trappers of WI, trapping mentors.	Learn about the history of trapping, become familiar with regulations, trapping ethics, animal habits and biology, and trap maintenance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Help host a regional trappers education field day for peers. •Create a video or poster display for the WCC convention showing skills learned.
Individual Study	Understand the impacts of invasive plants on the ecosystem.	Help work with property managers (local, county, state) to remove buckthorn, garlic mustard, etc.	Property managers, park managers, foresters, biologists, educators.	Learn about the negative implications invasive species have on ecosystems. Network with professional land managers and biologists. Contribute labor towards removal of invasive species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •In conjunction with a property manager, host a field day to remove invasive species and educate peers. •Create a poster for WCC convention and share lessons learned.
Individual Study	Learn about local deer ecology and factors that affect deer population.	Participate in CDAC meetings. Spend time with a wildlife biologist to learn about deer research and population modeling.	DNR wildlife biologists, CDAC committee members, local wildlife chapters	Learn how citizens can contribute to local natural resource management through thoughtful discussion and debate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Share information about CDAC meetings, and how to become involved. •Create display board related to CDAC data in county, share historical and harvest information, and current recommendations.
Individual Study	Learn about coldwater streams and trout habitat.	Work with DNR staff on streambank habitat projects, visit fish hatcheries to learn about fish rearing and release.	DNR fisheries biologists, Trout Unlimited local chapters, WCC mentors.	Learn about coldwater streams, trout fishing techniques, and fisheries management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Help plan a fishing field day for peers. •Share a poster or video at the WCC convention about lessons learned.

Poster example:

2023 Youth Conservation Congress Delegate

Tommy Burr Vilas County



Working with Dale was a great experience. He taught me the different types of handles and the different possibilities to customize any fishing rod.

Individual Focus Opportunity: Skill Building

LEARNING GOAL:

To build a fully functional fishing rod

PARTNERS:

Dale Peterson

PROJECT:

I took a rod blank and added all the items needed to turn it into a completed fishing rod. I learned how to use a laser engraver to customize the handle, tie eyelets straight and mix two part epoxy to apply so everything stays tight.

I went on a tour of the St. Croix rod building factory a while back and it was a real eye-opener for how rods are built and it made me want to try and build one. Dale Peterson, a member of the Headwaters Muskie Inc. Organization reached out to me about a contest/skill building program that the Custom Rod Builders Guild has for youth. We entered it and they sent us all the necessary pieces to build a rod. Dale was a huge help in teaching me how to design and assemble the rod. The theme for my rod was America. Dale and I laser engraved an American Flag and Large Mouth Bass on the handle and also hydro dipped the rod seat red, white and blue. I used my airbrush to create an American flag on the lower part of the rod. Dale showed me on how to tie the eyelets straight and glue them to stay straight and tight. I clear coated the entire rod to make it shiny and protect it from the elements. We are entering the rod into the contest this May.

Additional Conservation & Outdoor Activities



YCC mentored upland bird hunt at Mead Wildlife Area.

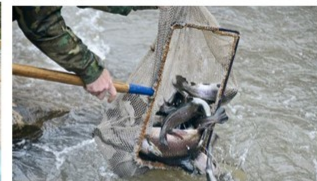


Tommy, pictured with former mentor, and WCC delegate, Jim Heffner.

Poster example:

2022 Youth Conservation Congress Delegate

Jacob Munson Dane County



Individual Focus Opportunity: Individual Study

LEARNING GOAL:

Learn when to stock
freshwater lakes

PARTNERS:

DNR Biologist:
Daniel Oele,
Dane County

PROJECT:

I researched fish stocking in Wisconsin where
I learned about different ways and reasons to
stock a lake with fish.

I have always loved and had an interest in the freshwater lakes of Wisconsin and the fish that live in them. This interest has led me to pursue a degree at the University of Stevens Point in Natural Resources with a concentration in fisheries. My hope is to be able to study the process of stocking Wisconsin lakes. Specifically, I had a great conversation with Daniel Oele, Dane County Biologist, regarding the practice of stocking fish in the Yahara chain. It was interesting to learn all the studies and research being done to decide what lakes to stock and with what fish. This project has shown me that there is much more to learn about the process of stocking lakes in Wisconsin. I'm excited to learn more next Fall at UWSP.

Additional Conservation & Outdoor Activities



Jacob working
with a controlled
burn at Indian
Lake County
Park.



Jacob worked as an aquatic
plant harvester.



Jacob volunteers with prairie
restoration groups. Pictured at
Stewart Lake.