ENVIRONMENT

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

2026-2028 GFWC CLUB MANUAL

GFWC est. 1890 GENERAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS

2026-2028 ENVIRONMENT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

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"HOLD UP A MIRROR AND ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU ARE CAPABLE OF DOING, AND WHAT YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT. THEN TAKE THE INITIATIVE — DON'T WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO ASK YOU TO ACT." – SYLVIA EARLE, FIRST CHIEF SCIENTIST OF THE U.S. NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Descending from the Middle French preposition environ "around," environment, in its most basic meaning, is "that which surrounds." The environment is composed of both living and non-living elements, from the smallest microbe to mountain ranges, and the interplay between these elements affects us all. Humans have learned how to leverage the earth's resources to improve our lives, sometimes at great cost to the other species that cohabit the earth with us. Deforestation, pollution, habitat destruction, extinction of species, and fossil fuel emissions have added stress to the environment and placed us all in jeopardy.

GFWC members realized the value of protecting the environment from the earliest days of its inception. In 1902, a Committee on Forestry and Irrigation was appointed at the Annual Convention, and by 1906, a full Forestry Department was established. GFWC was so well known for its conservation efforts that Sarah Platt Decker (1904-1908) was invited by President Theodore Roosevelt to attend the Governors' Conference on Conservation of Natural Resources in May 1908. One of our earliest projects was the creation of what is now Everglades National Park – Florida clubwomen helped create Royal Palm Park in 1904, then helped it become a state park in 1916, and again a national park in 1947.

Continuing our legacy of environmental advocacy is more important than ever; there is much we can do to preserve the world's resources, protect wildlife and domesticated animals, live sustainably, beautify our communities, and enjoy nature. With many of the world's scientists forecasting a climate emergency, we are called upon to act now. It is vitally important that we do our part to care for and heal our planet.

Direct any questions regarding projects that do not involve GFWC Affiliate Organizations to the Environment Community Service Program Chairman or GFWC Programs Department at Programs@GFWC.org.

2026-2028 UNITY PROJECT

THE RIGHT PLANT IN THE RIGHT PLACE

THESE PROJECTS WILL FOCUS ON HABITAT RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY.

Clubs are asked to partner with other organizations on projects dedicated to the restoration of habitat, with an emphasis on protecting native plants and pollinators.

Some examples are:

- Work with state or county Departments of Natural Resources to harvest local plants from construction sites or add native plants to parks and recreation areas.
- Partner with youth troops to earn badges or special awards.
- Host an event with Master Gardeners or Master Recyclers / Composters to educate the community on the importance of native plants and recycling correctly.
- Partner with local Audubon chapters for events such as the annual Great Backyard Bird Count and "lights out" week during bird migration.
- Contact your local utility companies (power or waste management) and schedule a tour of water treatment facilities, landfills, or green energy sites. Invite others to join you.
- Hold a fundraiser to help pay transportation and admission fees for local schools or senior centers to attend nature-based tours.
- Partner with the garden club on sustainable agriculture; co-host a Pea Patch and donate the vegetables and flowers to a local food bank.
- Provide a program for club and community members that highlights the best native plants for food and cover. Organize a planting of native flowers, shrubs, and trees on public and private lands that will nourish and sustain wildlife.
- Share information with club and community members from the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) about the impact of wildlife gardens, encourage the formation of personal and public wildlife gardens, and spread the news about signing up for the free electronic NWF newsletter.

The possibilities are limited only by your imagination!

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FEATURED PROJECTS

COUNTING HORSESHOE CRABS

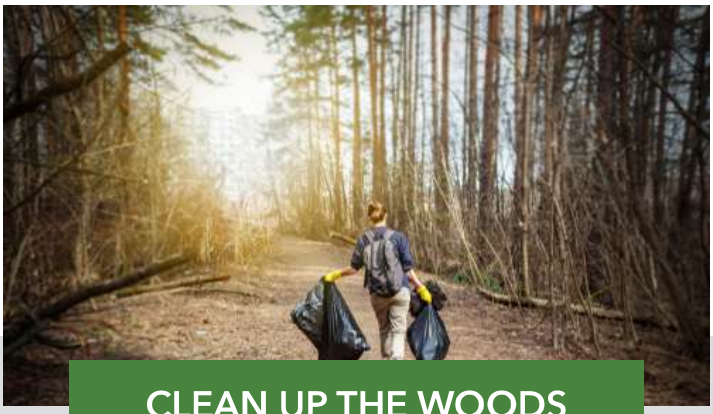
At spawning season's start, members of GFWC Woman's Club of Little Silver (NJ) join evening counts to tag and measure horseshoe crabs, which come ashore and lay up to 100,000 eggs per female each season. Club members learned about this protected species, such as the fact that dead crabs are used in fertilizer, and that research on horseshoe crabs has aided biomedical companies in developing many life-saving medications.

TUXEDO CAT BALL

GFWC Junior Woman's Club of Raleigh and GFWC Woman's Club of Raleigh (NC) collaborated to support the "Black Tie" fundraiser for Safe Haven, a no-kill cat shelter. Members helped with guest registration and check-in. The evening featured food, drinks, and entertainment. The live and silent auctions raised over $148,000. With the funds and help of club members, this past year, 1,323 cats and kittens found loving homes, 328 were rescued, and over 22 tons of food were distributed! These members are the Cat's Meow!

BIRD SIGHTING WITH THE GIRL SCOUTS

The GFWC Junior Woman's Club of Lake Murray (SC) led a bird-themed activity with a local Girl Scout troop. They read a book about birds, exploring facts and how to support bird populations locally. Each scout received a journal to log bird sightings and draw their discoveries. They also created a binocular craft to spark interest in birdwatching. Comparing journals and identifying birds encouraged the scouts to bond, share experiences, and make new friends through nature exploration.



CLEAN UP THE WOODS

The GFWC Northboro Junior Woman's Club (MA) answered the call to address yard waste dumping near a popular trailhead. The club obtained permits and collaborated with Sustainable Northboro for help. They prepared and distributed an educational handout to 50 homes, printed by the Northboro Free Library. Boy Scouts, the Trail Committee, neighbors, and friends joined. Spearheaded by three members, multiple community presentations were given to educate the community about this issue, and the project gained attention.

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PROJECT IDEAS

Be inspired by this list of ideas show how GFWC clubs can use local resources and creativity to support the Environment Community Service Program. Find further information about organizations named here under Resources.

PRESERVE RESOURCES

- Seed saving is a way to reduce the cost of producing healthy food and will help future generations enjoy healthy varieties of food. Check the website for ideas. www.thespruce.com
- Strategize ways to reduce energy consumption and create a program to track the success of members as they put ideas into practice.
- Learn about the dangers associated with fracking, such as air and water pollution and human health issues. Consider a program on the pros and cons of this issue or another questionable environmental practice. Consider all viewpoints and then take a blind poll (pro, con, or unsure) to hear what members think.
- Support wetland conservation and learn how wetlands are a deterrent to both flooding and drought, and how they filter and purify water that enters streams, rivers, and larger bodies of water.
- Schedule outings to remove invasive plants from community parks and other public areas to preserve native species of plants and animals.

PROTECT WILDLIFE AND DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

- Engage with the World Wildlife Fund to learn about the world's most endangered wildlife species and programs that help their cause, such as Sign On to Stop Wildlife Crime and Adopt a Tiger.
- Build recycling bins for monofilament fishing line, which is hazardous to marine life, scuba divers, and watercraft. Install and maintain the bins in high traffic fishing areas such as boat ramps and marinas. Reel In & Recycle, a program sponsored by BoatUS, provides a how-to video and offers a source for recycling monofilament.
- Establish a club relationship with a local shelter for domestic animals. Club members can volunteer at the shelter, help with fundraising events and activities, spread the word about animals that are offered for adoption, and collect needed supplies.
- Make your backyard a safe place for wildlife. Create a haven for local wildlife, instead of viewing it as a nuisance, as more and more wildlife habitats are lost to the spread of development. By providing basic needs like water, food, and shelter, each club member can make a difference in her backyard. Sign up to receive a backyard sign, gardening gloves, and All Animals magazine from the Humane Society.

LIVE SUSTAINABLY

- Chart a path towards zero waste in your community by using tools suggested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Participate in Nike's Reuse-A-Shoe Program, which accepts worn-out sneakers and makes Nike Grind, a material used in sports surfaces and playgrounds.
- Explore renewable energy sources that can be utilized in your community, such as solar and wind power, and see how your club can support their use.
- Encourage club and community members to take one day a week, or one day a month, to reduce energy consumption by adjusting thermostats and shutting off lights, televisions, computers, optional appliances, and other electronics.
- Start a campaign to say "no" to disposable items and promote reusable alternatives. Consider

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the life expectancy of every item purchased and resell or donate what is no longer needed.

- Make your meetings "green." Guidelines on organizing sustainable meeting and events at the Commission - Publications Office of the EU

BEAUTIFY COMMUNITIES AND ENJOY NATURE

- Plan a clean-up day in the community by coordinating groups of volunteers to clean eyesore areas and properly discard the waste.
- Work with preschool classes, or other groups of young children to teach them to enjoy and understand nature through simple projects such as creating a bird treat, collecting colorful leaves, or going on a nature walk to spot birds, squirrels, turtles, frogs, butterflies, and bugs.
- Collect or purchase children's books about nature and other environmental issues and donate them to schools, libraries, shelters, and family centers. Or host a story time at the local library, featuring a book about nature, and then allow each child to choose a nature book for his or her own. Host a scout meeting and work on certain badges related to the environment.
- Organize a local garden tour and donate the proceeds to a community garden or conservation project. Consider providing an earth-friendly gardening or wildlife tip at each location.
- Join more than 200 other non-profit philanthropic park partners or friends groups to carry out national park projects and programs through the Strong Parks, Strong Communities initiative.
- Wildfire Prevention remains crucial. Download the FEMA app and receive real-time alerts from the National Weather Service.

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CONNECT WITH GFWC AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

- Heifer promotes agroecology, working with farmers to integrate climate-smart agricultural practices to increase resilience and crop production. www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/caring-forthe-earth/index.html.
- At your next meeting or community event, set up a table to promote the goal of donating a beehive. Wear bee antennae headbands to draw attention to the project. For any donation, offer a packet of wildflower seeds to promote local bee activity. Have information about Heifer and your own club available.
- Teach schoolchildren about Heifer's mission by using the free curriculum. Adopt classrooms and read "The Chicken and the Worm," where children discover worms, learn about eggs, and enjoy dirt cupcakes as they explore farming and helping others. Provide a copy of a nature/farm type book to each child.
- Host a duck pond game to raise money to sponsor ducks. The matching duck game is easy to set up using a duck set, toddler pool or container, water, and some prizes. This can be done with adults, teens, or children. Have participants buy a turn for $1.
- Have a "farm" day dress-up event. Vote on the best "farm animal costume."
- Play a grocery game like Price is Right. Learn the cost of purchasing flocks, herds, sheep, and honeybees.

UNICEF USA

- Present information and videos from UNICEF USA initiative about the need for accessible clean water and the significant difference it makes in the lives of women and children. www.unicefusa.org/mission/survival/water
- Host a water walk to promote how children around the world walk several hours each day to find potable water.
- Support UNICEF's WASH Project to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene. Ideas to raise awareness and funds include hosting a souper party, clean-a-thon, car wash, dance off, game night, or raffle.

GFWC RESOURCES

PRESERVE RESOURCES

Our Work - 350
350 is building a movement that fights for a fairer future for all. They believe in the collective power of ordinary people taking action: 350 campaigns and organizes locally and globally to create a world powered by just and accessible renewable energy that will move the world away from fossil fuels, for good. And 350 is doing this with the urgency the climate crisis demands.

Citizens' Climate Lobby
Citizen's Climate Lobby (CCL) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy climate change organization focused on national policies to address the national and global climate crisis.

American Whitewater www.americanwhitewater.org

Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition www.asoc.org

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Center for Clean Air Policy www.ccap.org

Climate Reality Project www.climaterealityproject.org

Conservation & Preservation Charities of America www.conservenow.org

Department of Natural Resources: Google your state's name + DNR

Earth Day www.earthday.org
For information on Earth Day Science and Education Toolkits, go to www.earthday.org/our-toolkits

Green Empowerment www.greenempowerment.org

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration www.noaa.gov
For information on ocean acidification, go to www.oceanacidification.noaa.gov

Ocean Conservancy www.oceanconservancy.org

PROTECT WILDLIFE AND DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

World Migratory Bird Day https://www.migratorybirdday.org/

Animal League www.animalleague.org/

Arbor Day Foundation www.arborday.org

Audubon Society www.audubon.org
For information on birding, go to www.audubon.org/birding

Great Backyard Bird Count www.birdcount.org

Greenpeace Fund www.greenpeacefund.org

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association (PA) www.hawkmountain.org

Heifer International www.heifer.org

Humane Society www.humanesociety.org

Nature Conservancy www.nature.org/en-us

Jane Goodall Institute janegoodall.org

World Wildlife www.worldwildlife.org

LIVE SUSTAINABLY

One Plastic Bag
Making recycled plastic bag purses may seem like a simple idea—but it was life-changing to the villagers of Njau, Gambia, in the late 1990s. The project continues to save livestock, prevent greater outbreaks of disease, and make the soil healthier. Did you know that each small coin purse recycles 4-10 plastic bags? The women use very small crochet tools to create durable, functional items and have sold them to people around the world. oneplasticbag.com/the-bags/

America Recycles Day www.americarecyclesday.org

Soles4Souls www.soles4souls.org

Terracycle www.terracycle.com/en-US/

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The Archaeological Conservancy www.archaeologicalconservancy.org

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency www.epa.gov
For information on zero waste, go to www.epa.gov/transforming-waste-tool

Water.org www.water.org

Wells of Hope International www.wellsofhopeinternational.org

World Wildlife Fund www.worldwildlife.org

BEAUTIFY COMMUNITIES AND ENJOY NATURE

American Hiking Society www.americanhiking.org
For information on water purifications, go to www.americanhiking.org/resources/water-purification

Appalachian Trail Conservancy www.appalachiantrail.org

BoatUS Foundation www.boatus.org

Center for Biological Diversity www.biologicaldiversity.org

Bureau of Land Management www.blm.gov

Bureau of Reclamation www.usbr.gov

Gardening Know How www.gardeningknowhow.com

Chesapeake Bay Foundation www.cbf.org

Gettysburg Foundation www.gettysburgfoundation.org

Greater Yellowstone Coalition www.greateryellowstone.org

Keep America Beautiful www.kab.org

National Parks Conservation Association www.npca.org

National Park Foundation www.nationalparks.org

National Park Service www.nps.gov

National Wildlife Federation www.nwf.org
For the free NWF newsletter, go to www.nwf.org/Get-Involved/Subscribe

U.S. Forest Service www.fs.usda.gov

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service www.fws.gov

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AWARDS

GFWC recognizes State/District of Columbia Federations for outstanding projects and clubs for creative projects in implementing effective Environment Community Service projects and Affiliate Organization projects as follows:

- **Certificate to one State/District of Columbia Federations in each membership category**
- **$50 award to one club in the nation for project creativity**

Award winners will be determined by entries into the Award Program. Each State/District of Columbia Federations may submit one State/District of Columbia Federation Award Entry and one Club Creativity Award Entry for the Environment Community Service projects. **Entries should be submitted to the State/District of Columbia Federation Environment Community Service Chairman.** Forms are accessible to the State/District of Columbia Federation Presidents in the Member Portal.

Note: Clubs do not submit entries directly to GFWC or GFWC Chairmen.

Refer to the Deadlines for GFWC Awards and Contests sections of the Club Manual for more information.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions adopted by GFWC are the foundation of our organization. They guide our call to action and are the basis of all programming and advocacy. Current Resolutions for the **Environment Community Service Program** are listed here by number and title. Refer to the complete text in the GFWC Resolutions document, filed under "Governance" in the Digital Library on the Member Portal. Resolutions are an important and integral part of GFWC Programs.

160-010	Chemicals in the Environment
160-020	Climate Change
160-030	Conservation of Natural Resources
160-040	Conservation of Wildlife
160-050	Disposal of Hazardous and Nuclear Waste
160-060	Energy Resources
160-070	Household Waste Management
160-080	Local Parks and Recreation Areas
160-090	Management of Outer Space
160-100	Protection of Oceans
160-110	Soil and Water Conservation
160-120	Water Quality and Supply
160-130	Wildfire Prevention & Safety

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