

NEWS FROM THE CREW

CONSERVATION CREW WINTER 2024

FROM THE TRAILHEAD

Winter is upon us, but our Conservation Crews are not hibernating—they're hard at work. After brainstorming and researching, Crews are finalizing project decisions and getting down to business. We have **thirty-two Conservation Crews digging in this year**. We've welcomed nine new schools and have 23 returning.

Welcome to the program:

- Aurora Waasakone Community of Learners—Bemidji
- Cathedral Middle and High School—St. Cloud
- Foley Intermediate School—Foley
- Glacial Hills Elementary School—Starbuck
- Horizon Middle School—Moorhead
- Jedlicka Middle School—Proctor
- Justice Page Middle School—Minneapolis
- Monroe Elementary School—North Mankato
- Prairie Seeds Academy—Brooklyn Park

Our new schools bring enthusiasm and fresh ideas, and our returning schools are benefiting from the ability to expand and build upon existing projects.

CREW VIEWS

Food for Thought

This year, several schools have focused on the environmental impacts of what happens in the cafeteria.

- Hopkins North Junior High is working to eliminate disposable trays and silverware. They're also brainstorming how to reduce food waste by building a slide in the lunchroom to save



whole fruit. Every lunch comes with a fruit, but many apples and oranges are thrown away.

- Black Hawk Middle School in Eagan is exploring the possibility of composting in the cafeteria. They are working with the administration, cafeteria staff, and custodians and communicating the opportunity to their fellow students through morning announcements.
- Prairie Winds Middle School in Mankato is learning from their local high school about their work to switch from disposable to reusable flatware. Crew leaders advocated for a better option, and impressed, the school administration.
- Jedlicka Middle School in Proctor is working to bring attention to plastic waste generated at the school and open up options for recycling.

Conservation Connections

A cross-over connection of Conservation Minnesota programs happened in November, when eight Conservation Crew members from Horizon Middle School in Moorhead joined Community Steward Ryan West for pizza and storm drain marking. Keeping storm drains clean is an important way to prevent runoff pollution. Rain and melting snow wash trash and phosphorous-leaching organic matter down storm drains and into lakes, rivers, and wetlands. The team collected litter, cleaned and marked storm drains, educated neighbors on clean water, and brainstormed other ways to help their community.

Teacher Spotlight

Jay Brockman leads the Conservation Crew at Dakota Meadows Middle School in Mankato. He teaches life science. “Last time we met the kids came with a bunch of ideas, and you could tell they’ve really been thinking about their projects”

One of their projects, “Youth on the Move,” centers around establishing a classroom set of bicycles for the school to use. This will benefit the Crew and the whole school.

“Teachers can use these bikes to reinforce their curriculum with hands-on learning and students will get to do something fun and physical. We’ve already started to engage the community by having guest speakers from the school board and Boy Scouts come in to help us think about our Crew projects, and we’ve been able to apply for a grant to get the bicycles.”

His crew of 9 kids have been exploring the Great Outdoors by trick-or-treating via bike on Halloween, fishing, and creating educational posters about environmental issues in their community.

CONSERVATION CREW

CONSERVATION MINNESOTA