

NEWS FROM THE CREW

CONSERVATION CREW SUMMER 2025

FROM THE TRAILHEAD

We closed out another successful year of Conservation Crew across Minnesota, with more than 500 students finding new and creative ways to protect the Great Outdoors.

Now, for the first time ever, some **Conservation Crews are extending into the summer season.** This pilot program includes 15 schools and is designed to give Conservation Crews time and resources to tend to outdoor projects like pollinator gardens between the school years.

Looking ahead to the 2025–26 school year, we are excited to announce we will have a new record of **more than 50 Conservation Crews across the state.**

CREW VIEWS

Hats off to our top three Conservation Crew winners for 2025:

- **Valley Middle School of STEM** (Apple Valley) took the top prize with a powerful project that combined waste reduction, recycling, and education. Through a donation drive, they diverted over 3,000 lbs of clothing from landfills and then planted a tree for each filled box. Their team promoted recycling with campus-wide signage, student volunteers, and a custom bin map. They also tackled food waste through peer education and composting initiatives, helping build a culture of mindful consumption.
- **Justice Page Middle School** (Minneapolis) collected 1,000+ pieces of winter gear in a coat drive, distributed 300+ items through a clothing swap, and raised awareness about the environmental cost of fast fashion through a secondhand fashion show. They also supported pollinators by planting 600 seedlings and creating mason bee jars.
- **Achieve Language Academy** (St. Paul) addressed water quality, waste, and education by testing lake water for pollutants, launching a classroom recycling competition, and hosting a school-wide trash reduction challenge. They also held a conservation-themed poster contest and raised funds for environmental nonprofits through handmade bracelet sales.



CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS

Westwood Middle School built and hung 15 birdhouses around campus, which caught the attention of students and teachers outside the program. The Conservation Crew team provided bird identification materials to classrooms with windows facing the birdhouses, enabling all students to learn about our local feathered friends.

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Nathan Lund is a 5th and 6th grade teacher at **Glacial Hills Elementary** in Starbuck who just completed his second year of Conservation Crew. This year, his Crew of 20 students planted 50 trees, built and installed 15 birdhouses, and cleaned up a local park. They celebrated the end of the year by biking to the marina to go fishing and getting some ice cream.

Nathan was also recently named **2025 Outstanding Teacher of the Year by Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom** for his efforts to creatively integrate agriculture concepts into his teaching. Congrats, Nathan!



Conservation Crew is generously supported by a grant from the **Manitou Fund, Xcel Energy, CenterPoint Energy**, and the **George Family Foundation**.

CONSERVATION CREW



CONSERVATION MINNESOTA