



## *Leadership for the next generation*

Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA) is a high school program of the **National Wildlife Federation** (NWF) that empowers teens to impact environmental health issues through skills training, community action projects, and civic engagement opportunities. Our mission is to *inspire, educate, and take action on environmental issues facing our communities*. Our work is built upon four major pillars:

[www.ayea.org](http://www.ayea.org)

## *Training Tomorrow's Leaders*

AYEA provides top-notch training for teens to develop skills in environmental issues identification, community problem-solving, youth organizing, communication and media, diplomacy, and cross cultural outreach. Each year, one hundred teen leaders participate in our training events and then initiate community action projects that improve the environment. Our *Summer Institute* is a back-to-school training for emerging youth leaders that addresses a statewide conservation issue, for example global warming. In the fall and spring, we host regional *Youth Environmental Leadership Training (YEL)* events for youth and adults interested in addressing a pressing environmental health concern, for example pesticide spraying on subsistence lands, while building youth capacity to address the issue in the long term. In the late spring, teens participate in our *Civics and Conservation Summit* in which they bring environmental issues before state legislators, sharing concerns and learning civic engagement tools.

## *Giving Youth a Voice*

Through AYE, young people can hold meaningful positions of influence to impact environmental health issues. Our *Youth in Governance* initiative promotes the placement of youth onto boards and commissions of conservation and civic organizations as well as tribal councils, working in partnership with the Alaska Association of School Boards and other statewide organizations. AYE actively recruits youth to apply for board positions and provides training to community organizations and commissions on the importance of youth representation. Our teens have served on the boards of the Alaska Marine Conservation Council, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, the Anchorage Waterways Council, the Anchorage School Board, the Anchorage Cultural Council, and Spirit of Youth Foundation.

## *Diversifying the Movement*

AYEA is a powerful vehicle for uniting youth from diverse cultural, socio-economic, and geographic backgrounds and getting them involved with conservation and stewardship. Youth from over thirty villages have participated in our program and we have received support from both conservative and progressive public leaders. AYE forms strategic partnerships with conservation, civic, tribal, and youth development entities to build our capacity to support youth from diverse backgrounds. We are turning our focus in the future toward engaging and cultivating disenfranchised audiences so that more youth feel they are a vibrant part of our social fabric. These young people will become future leaders, representing their communities and the changing demographics in Alaska and the nation.

## *Choosing Healthy Careers*

Young people need a continuum of opportunities if they are to choose a career in conservation, health, natural resource management, or education. AYE participants are exposed to a myriad of health, conservation, education, civic and science careers throughout the year. NWF staff work with organizational partners to place our trained graduates into paid and volunteer internships. Graduates have interned with the National Wildlife Federation, the Student Conservation Association, the National Park Service, First Alaskans Institute, and the Alaska State Legislature.

## A Snapshot of AYEA Accomplishments

Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA) members have improved the environmental health of their schools and communities through sustainable projects and initiatives. AYEA members have made visible impacts on solid waste, toxics/"right to know" and global warming issues that affect a diverse array of people throughout the state. All AYEA projects are youth-driven, and results are achieved through partnerships with school administrators, elected officials, community leaders, and a variety of stakeholders in a diplomatic, educational process.

### Toxics

- Helped pass statewide legislation requiring regulation of cruise ship pollution
- Helped pass statewide legislation requiring pesticide tracking for commercial applicators
- Implemented policy limiting use of toxic pesticides in Anchorage School District
- Helped pass Anchorage municipal law requiring public notification for pesticide use
- Helped pass statewide legislation requiring labeling of salmon as wild-caught or farmed
- Helped pass statewide legislation requiring labeling of fish country of origin
- Implemented Idle-Free Zones at several high schools to protect school children from inhaling vehicle emissions

### Recycling and Solid Waste

- Developed an award-winning recycling education booklet *Alaska Youth Reach out and Recycle* in demand by teachers, tribes, and community organizations
- Established the first successful plastics recycling program in the Kenai Peninsula
- Established *Green Star* recycling programs in Sitka, Anchorage, and Mount Edgecumbe
- Implemented successful paper recycling and plastics recycling in Juneau
- Earned the Alaskans for Litter Prevention and Recycling (ALPAR) *Leadership in Recycling Education* award for statewide education program on recycling
- Established municipal proclamation declaring *Anchorage Recycles Day* and *Juneau Recycles Day* in conjunction with the nationally recognized *America Recycles Day* November 15
- Currently partnering with Green Star to pilot a sustainable recycling and hauling system throughout the Anchorage School District

### Global Warming & Renewable Energy

- Educated thousands of Alaskan teens on global warming issues through over 300 classroom presentations, and submitted 5,000 teen signatures representing 105 Alaskan communities to U.S. Congress demanding action on global warming
- Selected to send Alaska delegates to the International Youth Eco-Forum on climate change and renewable energy in Hokkaido, Japan and Akureyri, Iceland
- Currently coordinating a "3-2-1 Efficiency!" education campaign to help people take individual action to save energy and money across Alaska.