

Ecology Club Handbook

Ecology clubs can play a vital role in ecology education. They provide an opportunity for experiences that the textbook, lecture, and even laboratory cannot match. This handbook is intended to serve as a resource to students who aspire to promote ecological awareness, education, outreach, and action through the work of ecology clubs. Already existing ecology clubs can use it as a resource for new ideas. Schools that hope to start an ecology club can use it as a resource for registration information, club establishment guidelines, fundraising and activity ideas.

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Purpose

Why Start an Ecology Club?

Ecology clubs serve many purposes beyond the obvious goal of promoting ecology.

◆ Education and Awareness

Club members increase their own knowledge of ecology, supplementing courses and putting into practice the principles learned in classes. Club members can also educate and raise awareness through outreach to the campus and community. This outreach can serve many purposes. One, the outreach educates and promotes education and awareness among other students and community members. If people are more educated about ecology and what they can do, they will be more likely to implement ecologically sound practices. Outreach to the community also promotes the college or university and its students. Community members see the good actions of the students and the image of the college or university is enhanced.

What one has not experienced one will never understand in print.

- Isadora Duncan

Problems can't be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.

-Albert Einstein

◆ Personal Development

Ecology clubs also develop skills within the members. Club members who choose to become active can develop valuable skills such as public speaking, organization, management, and leadership. All members can learn the value of participation and cooperation.

I do not think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday.

- Abraham Lincoln

◆ Social

Ecology clubs can serve a social purpose. Students are able to meet students with similar interests. Students also become more involved in college or university life. Involved students are more likely to have a positive undergraduate experience.

◆ Career Development

Ecology clubs can also be a tool for career development. Club members are able to participate in activities that will allow them to hone their interests. Members can learn about career paths and options. Activities such as field trips and hosting speakers allow students to network with ecologists and related professionals.

To find out what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness.

-John Dewey

Interest Assessment

Is There an Interest in Ecology on Campus?

When a student or faculty member wants to start an ecology club there is a natural tendency to take the idea and run with it. However, the success of the club depends on the student involvement that is, in turn, dependent upon student interest. Before a club is established it is a good idea to assess student interest on campus.

◆ Informational Meeting

One way to assess interest is to organize an informational meeting and see what kind of response it receives. In this meeting you can assess the amount of interest and the kind of interest. The meeting can also be an open forum for initial planning. For an informational meeting, a day, time and location must be set. If campus facilities are to be used, then this must all be arranged with the student affairs or activities office. If the school is not supportive then a dormitory lounge or public field can be used. Once these arrangements have been made, the meeting must be publicized. Flyers can be distributed in classes, union mailboxes, in person on campus... Announcements should be made in science classes, campus radio, campus TV... The first indication of interest will be the number of students who come to the meeting although this is not the sole indicator. At the meeting the kind of interest should be ascertained. What kind of club do the students want? Will it have a focus - outdoors, outreach, campus events?... Brainstorming can take place for names and potential advisors. All ideas should be recorded. Finally, initial leadership roles can be appointed to continue the process to register or charter a club.

◆ Student Survey

Another way of assessing interest on a campus is through a student survey. Sample questions could include:

Student Survey
Is there a need for an ecology club on campus?
Would you be interested in being a member?
What would draw you to a club?
What times are most convenient for you to meet?
What activities would you see an ecology club doing?

The survey can be dispersed in science classes initially. Later, random student sampling in dormitories, student unions, and dining facilities will draw from a larger pool of students.

When assessing interest it is also important to ensure that another club on campus doesn't already serve the same purpose. If there is a similar club, then perhaps you can form an ecology committee within that club. Other clubs with similar activities might include a biology club or an outdoors club.

Registration

What Do Schools Require?

Registration Process

- The process of starting a club varies by each school. Most schools require clubs to register. While at some schools only a simple form is required, at other schools registration is a long process. At the very minimum, registration forms require the name and address of the organization and the name, address, and social security numbers of ten currently registered students. Contact your student affairs or student activities office for registration information.

- Many schools require clubs to reregister every year. Depending on the school this may mean a fee each year. Plan this into your budget. In order to ensure that your charter will be renewed there are certain guidelines that must be followed. This usually entails attending meetings and, of course, adhering to all university policies and procedures.

Sample Club Constitution

Preamble:

We, the undersigned, wishing to secure for ourselves the pleasures and benefits of an association of persons commonly interested in ecology, constitute ourselves the _____(your club name) and enact this constitution as our governing law. It shall be our purpose to conduct club programs and activities as to promote ecology on campus and in the community.

Membership: Article I

All persons interested in ecology shall be eligible for membership. Membership shall be by application and election upon such terms as the club shall provide in its By-Laws.

Officers: Article II

Sec. 1. The officers of this club shall be President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Sec. 2. The officers of this club shall be elected for a term of one year by ballot of the members present.

Sec. 3. Vacancies occurring between elections must be filled by special elections at the first regular meeting following the withdrawal or resignation.

Sec. 4. Officers may be removed by a three-fourths vote of the membership.

Duties of Officers: Article III

Sec. 1. The President shall preside at all meetings, and conduct them according to the rules adopted. He/she shall enforce due observance of this Constitution and By-Laws; decide all questions of order; sign all official documents adopted by the club, and perform all other duties pertaining to the office of President.

Sec. 2. The Vice-President shall assume all the duties of the President in his/her absence. In addition, he/she shall organize club activities, plan and recommend contests for operating benefits, and advance club interest and activity as approved by the club.

Sec. 3. The Secretary shall keep a record of the proceedings of all meetings, keep a roll of members, submit membership applications, carry on all correspondence, read communications at each meeting, and mail written meeting notices to each member. At the expiration of his/her term he/she shall turn over all items belonging to the club to his/her successor.

Sec. 4. The Treasurer shall receive and receipt for all monies paid to the club; keep an accurate account of all monies received and expended; pay no bills without proper authorization (by the club or its officers constituting a business committee). At the end of each quarter he/she shall submit an itemized statement of disbursements and receipts. At the end of his/her term he/she shall turn over everything in his/her possession belonging to the club to his/her successor.

Meetings: Article IV

The By-Laws shall provide for regular and special meetings. At meetings, a minimum of one-third of the membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Dues: Article V

The club, by majority vote of those present at any regular meeting, may levy upon the general membership such dues or assessments as shall be deemed necessary for the business of the organization. Non-payment of such dues or assessments shall be cause for expulsion from the club within the discretion of the membership.

Amendments: Article VI

This constitution or By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the total membership. Proposals for amendments shall be submitted in writing at a regular meeting and shall be voted on at the next following regular meeting, provided all members have been noticed by mail of the intent to amend the constitution and/or By-Laws at said meeting.

Robert's Rules shall govern proceedings.

By-Laws:

- 1. Secretary. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to keep the constitution and By-Laws of the club and have the same with him/her at every meeting. He/she shall note all amendments, changes and additions on the constitution and shall permit it to be consulted by members upon request.
- 2. Membership. Full membership includes all club privileges as well as rights to hold a club office and to vote for club officers. Associate membership includes all club privileges except for the right to hold office and vote for club officers. Applications for membership shall be submitted at regular meetings.
- 3. Meetings. Regular meetings shall be held on _____ of each calendar month. Special meetings may be called by the President upon the written request of any five club members. Notices shall be sent to members concerning special meetings and the business to be transacted. Only such business as designated shall be transacted. Such notices shall be sent so that they arrive not less than 24 hours before the meeting.
- 4. Dues. A regular monthly assessment of \$_____ per member is hereby assessed in accordance with the provisions of Article V of the constitution for the purpose of providing funds for expenses.
- 5. Interference committee. This committee shall consist of five members (appointed by the club President). The committee shall direct investigation, invite proper inquires, establish technical facts and testimony and report its results to the club.
(additional By-Laws may provide for technical, program, publicity and other committees, or other rules provisions not provided for in this sample constitution.

Delegate Responsibilities

- There are usually many things to do when starting a club. The best way to handle it all is to share the responsibilities. Assigning tasks to interested students or even forming a founders committee to handle all the tasks is a great way to go.
- If your school requires a proposal and/or charter and by-laws, then a person or committee must be in charge of this. Even if your school simply requires a form, then somebody has to be in charge of filling it out. If your school requires a charter and by-laws, they may provide a sample format to follow. By-laws will include membership requirements which will have to be determined. Ideas to think about include: Will you have a minimum participation level for meetings and/or activities?; Will there be dues?

Success on any major scale requires you to accept responsibility... in the final analysis, the one quality that all successful people have...is the ability to take on responsibility.

- Michael Korda

Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him.

-Booker T. Washington

Choose a Faculty Sponsor

- Discuss what role an advisor would play in your club. Be clear about what responsibilities the club expects of the advisor so that the person you approach understands what their job will be.

- Often the faculty sponsor is chosen simply because he/she is willing. Instead, try to choose a faculty member who is genuinely interested. They can play a vital role in the club and should believe in the club and its work and they should have a desire to help students. Plus, they have to be able to commit time to the club. Of course, one would first turn to science faculty members, particularly ecology or biology. If a suitable faculty member cannot be found within these departments, do not overlook other departments. A history professor or political science professor with a strong interest in the environment could bring an interesting perspective to the club.
- Once an advisor has been chosen it is important to maintain a two-way line of communication with this person. Include the advisor in planning. When arranging meeting times and locations try to accommodate the advisor's schedule. If the advisor is not able to attend, send them minutes and ask for feedback. When planning larger events always ask the advisor for input. Use the connections of the advisor to your advantage. Often they will be able to do or get things that students will not. Once the event is planned don't forget to invite the advisor!

The First Meeting

Who, What, Where, When...?

Arrangements

Once the club is properly registered the next step will usually be to plan a meeting schedule. When selecting a time and place, first consult with the advisor in order to accommodate his/her schedule. Also, try to make sure that your meeting time accommodates as many students as possible. Try not to conflict with other clubs' meeting times and night classes. Once you have a day, time, and place in mind you must reserve the room through the Student Activities/Affairs Office.

Publicity

Leave enough time before the first open meeting to publicize it well. If you are not sure about the best advertising medium on your campus, ask around to find out. Ideas that don't involve much work include campus radio and TV and having students speak in science classes. If you want to post flyers, posters, or send mailings then this will require some work and upfront costs. Try to recruit an art or design student. They will probably create the best looking advertisements and they may appreciate the publicity for their work.

Agenda

At the first meeting be sure to welcome everyone and tell them briefly about what the ecology club is about. Tell them about possible projects and then get their input. You should project that there is a plan but you want to be sure to include them in it with their ideas. A brief brainstorming session may be helpful. Within the first or second meeting the officer responsibilities need to be defined and nominations should be made.

Parliamentary Procedure

If you choose to conduct your meetings in the very formal, parliamentary style, you may want to consult a book on the subject. The most well-known is Robert's Rules of Order. For information and to order visit their website at <http://www.robertsrules.com/> The book covers all issues of parliamentary procedure including calls to order, orders of business, motions...

Club Organization

How to Keep It Running Smoothly

Offices

Generally, there are four officer positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

- **President**

The president has the overall responsibility for the operation of the club. S/he calls and presides at all meetings and reviews and approves all financial activity.

- **Vice-President**

The vice-president performs the duties of the president in their absence or inability to serve. The vice-president performs other duties as needed.

- **Secretary**

The secretary keeps an up-to-date membership roster. The secretary keeps full minutes of all meetings and records all actions taken by the club. S/he maintains a complete file which includes minutes, copies of all contracts, and current correspondence.

- **Treasurer**

The treasurer is responsible for the general supervision of the finances of the club. S/he prepares the budget, receives all payments due, collects dues, and issues receipts. S/he is responsible for the prompt payment of all bills. S/he maintains up-to-date financial records and gives a financial report at each meeting. Finally, s/he signs contracts when authorized to do so.

Good leaders make people feel that they're at the very heart of things, not at the periphery. Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of an organization. When that happens people feel centered and that gives their work meaning.

- Warren Bennis

Committees

Another useful practice is to form committees, especially when a club has a large membership. This ensures that each member is involved and that the officers don't do all of the work. Common committees include fundraising, activities, membership, and publicity.

- **Fundraising**

The fundraising committee must first know the school and state policies for raising funds. For example, some schools will not allow door-to-door solicitation on campus. Once there are revenues the club must also be aware of state laws regarding taxes. Sources of funds include membership dues or fees, the student affairs office of the college or university, fundraising events or sales, and grants from philanthropic foundations.

- **Membership/Recruitment**

This is a vital part of any club. Since students graduate there must be a regular influx of new members. This committee should also be on top of school policies for membership such as minimum membership requirements, GPAs, ... The most effective recruiting method is personal contact. Discuss what it was that motivated current members to join. Ask each current member to try to bring one new member to the next meeting. Another effective recruiting tool is setting up tables in the student unions or quads. Generally, people join clubs to meet new people, make friends and have fun; for an experience that will add to their resume; for opportunities to develop and use their skills and talents; and, for a chance to serve others and make a difference. If the club can effectively articulate how it addresses these needs, it will be more successful recruiting new members.

Keeping members can also be a challenge. Some tips include

- Give each member responsibility and the authority to make decisions. Create a system of accountability.
- Orient new members. Meet with them over lunch or coffee. Find out why they were attracted and if they have any special skills or talents.
- Take advantage of the special skills and talents of your group members.
- Recognize a job well done.
- Make it fun to belong. Include social activities for a chance to mingle and relax.
- Use meeting times effectively. Start on time and end on time. Keep the meeting well organized.

*The sweetest
of all sounds
is praise.*

- Xenophon

*Use what talent
you possess; the
woods would be
very silent if no
birds sang except
those that sang
best.*

- Henry Van Dyke

Icebreakers can be helpful at meetings with new members. For ideas, check out <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/icebreak.html>

- **Publicity/Promotion**

Informing the campus and community of the club and its activities is crucial. It is important for recruiting new members and to build the morale among the membership. Some ideas include:

- Have a posting party. After members go out and distribute fliers or poster, regroup afterwards for pizza.
 - Use campus media including radio, mail, email, web page, newspaper, newsletter...
 - Use bulletin boards in the student union and academic buildings.
 - Personal contact such as door-to-door announcements are also effective.
 - Set up information tables or booth in the union or dining hall.
 - Put group members in costumes and have them hand out flyers.
 - Use a sandwich board on campus.
 - Give out free or discount tickets to campus events.
 - Develop a logo or trademark.
 - Develop a mailing list of interested people for specific events.
 - Use teasers (short one or two word signs) to build curiosity.
 - Set up a publicity phone-a-thon.
 - Perform skits in public areas like dining halls, unions, quads to draw attention to an event.
 - Be sure to participate in campus events such as club fairs.
- **Activities**
This is perhaps the most important committee of an ecology club. Without interesting, exciting, fun activities the membership will suffer.

Planning Activities

- **What is the goal?** While this may seem like an unimportant detail, it is not. The goal of the activity will decide the planning. There should be a balance of activities that are for entertainment, education, outreach, fundraising... Activities with a goal of entertainment should be fun and details like music and decorations will be more important. Activities that are for entertainment are also good to attract new members and so should be highly advertised. Examples of entertainment activities include club parties, movie nights. Educational activities would include fieldtrips. Outreach would include working with community schools or community cleanups.
- **How many people will be involved?** Will the activity include the club members, interested prospective members, community

You got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.

- Yogi Berra

members...? Will it be open to anybody? This will be decided by the goal but will determine the costs, materials, location...

- **What are the costs?** You must know how much the activity will cost in relation to how much money is available and then decide if the activity is worth the cost. Sometimes a fundraiser for a specific activity is worth it. Costs to consider include transportation, rental and gasoline, food/meals, venue rental.
- **Set Date and Location** First decide the date. When choosing a date, check the school calendar, community calendar, athletic schedules, religious and cultural holidays, midterms, finals, semester breaks. Next, decide where it will be held. Remember to take into account the number of people involved and the facilities needed. Make any necessary reservations for venues with the Student Activities Office. If the event is outside, plan for rain locations or rain dates. Within the venue think about where things will be located.
- **Contact Student Activities Office** Most schools require on-campus activities to be approved by the Student Activities office. Generally, they require a notice of several months for a major event and notice of at least two weeks for smaller activities. Consult your Student Activities Office for your school's particular regulations.
- **Brainstorm and Assign Tasks** Brainstorm all the tasks that will need to be accomplished. Create a checklist of jobs and then assign specific responsibilities to each volunteer. Develop a realistic timeline. Count back from the selected date to set deadlines. If the event is too large for your club consider cosponsoring the activity with another club or with a department. Don't forget to use the talents of the group!
- **Publicize** Usually, the larger the event, the more advertising there will be. Use campus methods like campus TV, radio, flyers, student union bulletin boards
- **Do Not Assume Anything** The only thing that will happen is what the club arranges to have happen. For example, when you think about reserving a room on campus, do not assume that the room will have furniture or a podium or a microphone...

*If there is
anything that a
man can do
well, I say let
him do it.*

- Abraham
Lincoln

Planning Timeline

- **The Week Before**
 - Confirm facility reservations and set-up

- Confirm all arrangements for speakers/performers including transportation.
- Confirm that all volunteers know what they should be doing.
- Make a check-list of last-minute details that must be taken care of (supplies, decorations, refreshments)
- **One Day Before**
 - Confirm all arrangements: set up, clean up, food service, last minute publicity, technical services, security, schedules, staff duties, payments...
 - Contact everyone involved and make sure they know when to be where.
- **Day of the Event**
 - Arrive at least 1 ½ hours before event begins.
 - Make sure set-up is going on schedule.
 - Check equipment, make sure it works properly.
 - Make sure you have necessary payments. Obtain receipts.
- **Post Event**
 - If you are responsible for clean up, make sure it is done.
 - Thank everyone involved. Write letter or notes to anyone who made a contribution to the event, including your advisor, donors, and workers.
 - Conduct post-event evaluation; communicate suggestions to future planners and sponsors.
 - Pay all the bills promptly.
 - If the event is canceled or rescheduled, all affected parties must be notified immediately.

General Meeting Guidelines

The key to a successful meeting is planning and organization. First, write an agenda.

Writing an Agenda

An agenda forces the group to follow an orderly progression of topics. Disperse the agenda several days prior to the meeting. This will allow the members to give their input by email prior to the meeting. It will also allow members to come to the meeting with input. Don't forget to get the advisor's input on the agenda too.

Arrange the topics on the agenda according to time. Put the topics that will require the least amount of time at the top of the agenda and end the agenda with the topics that will require the most time. This way, you will be able to dispense with more topics in a shorter amount of time.

Meeting Minutes

Another key part of organization is the meeting minutes. Minutes should include:

Name or organization, committee

Type of meeting

Date and location

Name of presiding officer and secretary

Notation of reading and previous minutes, and how they were approved

All of the major motions

Adjournment – note date, time, place of next meeting

The minutes serve as a permanent record and can be used for planning the next meeting. The minutes should be typed and distributed to all club members and the advisor in a timely manner after the meeting. Ideally, they should be ready within a few days after the meeting.

Running the Meeting

Start on time. Mold a good behavior. If the officers start the meeting late then members will be more likely to arrive late on a regular basis.

Whether the meeting is run formally or informally there are many factors to consider.

- The meeting room should have the proper number of chairs, with just enough.
- Chairs should be arranged in a random arrangement, such as a semi-

circle, facing the front. Group interaction is necessary for a successful meeting to be held. A block, or classroom-style of seating eliminates face to face discussions.

- Make sure that meetings last no more than one hour.
- Make meetings fun with snacks, icebreakers, videos, guest speakers.
- Watch closely and learn to read non-verbal communication. Watch for signs of boredom and disinterest.

Brainstorming

- Set a time limit of 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the size of your group and the complexity of the issue.
- The best group size is between 3 and 12 people. If you have more, break into two or more groups and brainstorm simultaneously.
- Record all responses in key phrases on a board or sheet so that everyone can read them.
- Be spontaneous, just call out responses.
- Don't criticize, praise, or judge
- Do not discuss ideas.
- After all the ideas have been given, the group can discuss and evaluate ideas and select the best ones.
- Be sure to use the ideas generated. Otherwise, the group will see their time, energy, and creativity wasted.
- Expect that only 5 to 10 percent of the ideas that come from a brainstorming session will be practical

You don't get harmony when everybody sings the same note.

- Doug Floyd

The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas.

-Linus Pauling

Goal Setting

- Seek Input – for maximum effectiveness, goals must be set with input from the entire group. People support what they help create.
- Prioritize – Based on group members input rank the goals from most to least important. Divide long-term goals into smaller short-term goals.
- Set Target Dates – allow adequate time to accomplish goals and set deadlines for reaching the goal.
- Seek Approval – periodically review goals with the group to assure continued support.
- Restate the Goal – when a project comes up that will help in accomplishing one of the group's goals, refer to that goal and remind the group that this is their chosen goal.
- Evaluate Progress – evaluate things that could keep you from or are keeping you from reaching your group's goals. Develop a plan to remove the obstacles.
- Be Positive – a positive attitude will be a catalyst in getting members motivated and keeping them involved.

However beautiful the strategy you should occasionally look at the results.

-Winston Churchill

Goals determine what you are going to be.

-Julius Erving

Group Communication

Sending a message effectively

- Use personal pronouns such as "I" and "my"
- Make your messages complete and specific
- Make your verbal and non-verbal communication congruent (don't smile when you have bad news)
- Say important things more than once and in a different way.
- Ask for feedback concerning the way messages are being received.

Receiving messages effectively

- Paraphrase the message back accurately, without evaluating
- Describe your perceptions of the meaning of what was said.
- Clarify until sender and receiver agree on the message.

Pattern of communication

- Observe who talks the most. Try to have everyone say something at every meeting.
- Observe who talks to whom and when.
- Observe what triggers behavior.
- Interruption is very harmful. Have people wait their turn

Beware of competition among members

- A competitive climate blocks communication.
- A cooperative climate leads to increased group cohesiveness and the ability to get more things done.

For More Info:

<http://www.brocku.ca/commstudies/courses/2F50/effective.html>

A good listener tries to understand thoroughly what the other person is saying. In the end he may disagree sharply, but before he disagrees he wants to know exactly what it is he is disagreeing with.

-Kenneth A. Wells.

Funding Sources *Where to Get the Money*

Before planning any fundraising consult your school's Student Activities Office as most fundraising requires prior approval. Knowing both your immediate objective and long-term goals is vital to the selection, planning, and the implementation of a fundraiser.

Fundraisers/Sales

The following sites are central sites to review the goods and services offered by a variety of fundraising companies.

- ❖ Fundraising Companies, Products, Services and Information Home Page
www.123fundraising.com
- ❖ Fundraising Ideas & Products Center
www.fundraising-ideas.org
- ❖ ABC Fundraising
www.abcfundraising.com
- ❖ All Fundraising Companies Directory
www.fundraisingweb.org
- ❖ The Fundraising Directory
www.fundraisingdirectory.com
- ❖ The Fundraising Network
www.fundraisingnetwork.org

The following sites are central sites especially for colleges and universities.

- ❖ Campus Fundraiser
www.campusfundraiser.com
- ❖ The Fundraiser Company
www.nolines.net/thefundraisercompany.html