

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CONSERVATION PROJECT?

Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers undertaking conservation work are volunteering their time and energy for the good of the environment. A worthwhile project allows them to feel pride in what they are doing. It gives them a chance to experience something new. Though the work may be hard, it should also be satisfying.

The following guidelines will help Scout leaders and agency personnel plan conservation work that serves the needs of Scouts, of agencies, and of the environment.

Involve Scouts in All Aspects of a Project

A sense of project ownership is important to young people. Scouts should understand the purpose of a conservation project. Increase their commitment to conservation by involving them in planning as well as in carrying out the work.

Make Projects Fun

Whenever possible, combine conservation efforts with other Scout activities such as a hike, a campout, a swim, or a nature walk with someone who can discuss the area's ecology. That will enrich the experience for everyone and also reinforce the idea that caring for the environment is a fundamental part of the Scouting program.

Choose Reasonable First Projects

The first projects undertaken by a Scouting unit should be limited in scope and last no more than a few hours or an afternoon. As the young people gain experience and confidence, projects can become more lengthy and complex.

Consider Skill Levels

A good project is within the skill levels of the young people doing it and is age-appropriate. Work that is too demanding sets up young people to fail and to lose interest. On the other hand, the best opportunities challenge Scouts to push a little beyond their current abilities and master new skills.

Set Reasonable Goals

Everyone likes a sense of completion to their work. Some conservation efforts can be finished in a few hours, an afternoon, or a day. Longer-term projects may be broken into intermediate goals achievable in shorter amounts of time—planting a certain number of trees, for example, or repairing the sites in just one area of a campground.

Make a Difference

Appropriate projects allow young people to see their efforts have a positive effect on the quality of their environment. They learn about the importance of conservation and gain a sense of pride in having done a Good Turn for the environment and for those who will enjoy the outdoors in the future.