



JANUARY NEWSLETTER



The Zero Waste Schools newsletter will help you get your school on a path toward generating zero waste through waste prevention, recycling, composting, and food recovery. You'll also find resources that connect zero waste to healthy eating, school gardens, and environmental education and action.

Feel free to share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students who are interested in zero waste.

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

Illinois EPA Poster, Poetry & Prose Contest



All **5th and 6th grade students** in Illinois are invited to participate in the Illinois EPA's annual Poster, Poetry & Prose Contest. The theme for 2021 is *Fight Food Waste: Our Environment Can't Be Replaced!* The creation of posters and written works gives students an opportunity to express and share, on a deeper and more personal level, what they have learned. The student exhibit also draws attention to environmental issues. The top 12 entries will be displayed on the Illinois EPA website.

Teachers: Find the exhibit timetable, contest rules, and resources for teaching about food waste [HERE](#).

[Seven Generations Ahead](#) is proud to be listed as one of the many resources available. Be sure to check out our [Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools](#).

Plastic pollution learning resources

Plastics pollution is a problem we can all take action on, no matter our age. Use these resources to engage your students in being part of the solution.

National Geographic

- [Education Resource Library: Plastic Pollution](#) - A vast collection of lessons and teaching resources
- [National Geographic Kids: Kids v. Plastics](#) - Great

guides and toolkits designed for kids

5 Gyres

- [Plastic Pollution Curriculum and Activity Guide](#)

Cafeteria Culture

- [Microplastic Madness](#) - Free virtual screenings of this amazing film are available **Jan. 25-31**. Learn more, watch the trailer, and sign up!
- [DIY DATA + ACTION Litter Clean-up](#) - Community science for ages 8-98.
- Organize a [Cafeteria Plastic Survey and Plastic Free Lunch Day](#) at your school.



Civics for Environmentalists



CIVICS FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS

EDUCATE • ADVOCATE • WIN

The Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) is hosting two workshops for Illinoisans to gain the know-how and skills to effectively advocate for the environmental causes you care about. If you'd like to learn (or brush up on, as the case may be) how state government works, how a bill becomes a law, and how you can participate in the process, IEC's Civics for Environmentalists program is for you!

Workshop 1: Advocacy 101 – Jan. 15, 12-1 p.m.

This workshop will cover information on how to lobby, power building analysis and legislator engagement tips. Perfect for newbies and those looking for a refresher on tips and tricks for successful advocacy at the state-level as concerned Illinoisans. Presenters: Jennifer Walling and Colleen Smith of the IEC.

Workshop 2: Legislative Procedure and Lobbying – Jan. 29, 12-2 p.m.

This workshop will cover the rules and processes outlined by the Illinois constitution for lawmaking; the difference between a statute, rule and policy; drafting legislation 101; the calendar and schedule; the committee process and several other legislative topics. This workshop is applicable to organizations outside the environmental community as well. Presenters: David McEllis, Environmental Law & Policy Center and Jennifer Walling, IEC.

Climate Change Conference - Loyola University



Across the country, youth climate activists are mobilizing people to protect the planet. Loyola's Virtual Climate Change Conference will focus on how we can amplify the voices of these young activists.

This year, Loyola will be delivering their signature conference through a week long series of evening events and programming. Each evening, you can join us and participate in discussions around a variety of topics including:

Mar. 15: The Climate Change Crisis: Global Migration, Race and Youth Advocacy
Mar. 16: Art as a Platform for Climate Advocacy
Mar. 17: Chicago Youth Seeking Truth And Justice
Mar. 18: Keynote Panel: Conversations with Youth Climate Activists; Keynote Panel, Pt. 2: Accompanying Youth to a Hope-Filled Future - An Intergenerational Effort

The conference is free to attend. View the conference agenda and register [HERE](#).

Green Schools Summits

The Center for Green Schools and the Green Schools National Network invite you to come together with professionals in your field to learn new strategies, gain inspiration from our green school community, and inform the next chapter of the movement at one of the following four summits.

School Leaders Summit: Feb. 4–5

Educators Summit: Feb. 12–13

Building Industry Professionals Summit: Feb. 18–19

Facilities and Sustainability Leaders Summit: Feb. 25–26



Learn more about each summit and register [HERE](#).

The cost of attending each of these summits is \$50. Scholarships are available.

Waters School Ecology Program



Waters School, a Chicago Public School in the Lincoln Square neighborhood, has a unique field-based [Ecology and Environment program](#) for grades K – 8. The Ecology Program is integrated with Waters' Science Program. In Fall, Winter, and Spring, students participate in a nature-based field experience that focuses on education, restoration, and exploration. The students are introduced to nature in a way that

fosters a personal connection to our natural areas. Volunteer parents and community members are active participants in the field visits, as well. Students keep field journals to write and draw about their experiences. Even the youngest students draw pictures or collect leaves for their journals. The program is led by Pete Leki, Ecology Program Director, and Jules Peterson-Green, Ecology Film Project Director.

This year, of course, they have had to take a different approach and have adapted their field-based program online. Visit [Water's Ecology Online](#) to explore their all-season curriculum at every grade level, which includes videos highlighting our beautiful local ecosystems.

The videos and resources shared by Waters Ecology are not only for Waters School, but are also a gift to the larger Chicago community. And what a wonderful gift they are!

Big Green at Home

[Big Green at Home](#) features activities for kids and families to connect with food and celebrate new experiences and familiar customs alike.

Check out their [January 2021 edition](#) for the following:

- Cook with Food Scientist Ali Manning
- Guide: How Kids Can Help Meal Prep
- Crash Course: Knife and Food Prep Skills

- Recipe: West African Soup
- Super Soil Series with Dr. Akilah Martin



Apply to be a 2021 Green Ribbon School



The [Illinois Green Ribbon Schools Application](#) is still open. Illinois Green Ribbon Schools recognizes PreK-12 schools that have active programs and actions to promote and educate students on sustainability. This year the evaluation process will take into account the changes and challenges this school year has presented. Applications can highlight pre-COVID sustainability efforts, as well as any current work being done to move these efforts forward. Top scoring schools from Illinois will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools program for consideration at the national level.

View this [webinar](#) to learn more about the application/nomination process.
Application deadline: Feb. 8.

Grant and scholarship opportunities

COVID-19 Emergency School Meal Delivery Fund: GENYOUth is providing grants of up to **\$3,000 per school** to supply much-needed resources for meal distribution and delivery efforts to get food to students during COVID-19. Applications will be reviewed and approved on a rolling basis.

Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant: Funding for field trips for grades PreK-12 to study some aspect of Illinois' biodiversity. See the [2020 grant awards](#). **Deadline Jan. 31.**

USDA 1890 National Scholars Program: For high school students who want to study agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, and related disciplines at a 1890 Land-Grant University. Full tuition, room/board included. **Deadline Jan. 31.**

Gro More Good Grassroots Grant: For the development of new and expansion of existing youth garden programs and greenspaces serving 15 or more youth. Grants of \$500 and \$1,000 are available. **Deadline Feb. 5.**

President's Environmental Youth Award: Students can submit a project and make a difference. **Deadline Feb. 19.**

Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators: For K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context for teaching their students. Up to two teachers from each EPA region, from different states, will be selected to receive this award. **Deadline Feb. 19.**

Illinois Conservation Foundation's Conservation Achievement Scholarship: Awarded to 4 high school seniors in Illinois who have demonstrated effective, voluntary and long-term dedication to the preservation, protection, enhancement and/or promotion of Illinois' natural resources. **Deadline Mar. 1.**

Events

[Holiday Tree Recycling](#)



Jan. 9-23

[Chicago's 2020 Tree Recycling Program](#) runs Jan. 9-23 at 25 park locations across the city. The mulch created is available to Chicago residents, free of charge. Outside of Chicago? Check with your local public works department to see if they have a curbside pick up option for recycling trees.

Several [compost subscription services](#) will collect your tree for a fee.



[Moving Beyond Plastic Pollution Webinar](#)

Jan. 14, 6-7:30 p.m. CST

Join Beyond Plastics president Judith Enck for an online talk about our plastic pollution crisis and how we can work our way out of it.



[Economic Development & Local Food Systems Meeting](#)

Jan. 27, 10-11:30 a.m. CST

Learn about some successful local food systems models and about USDA programs that can help build and support these systems to harness economic development. **Registration deadline Dec. 14**



[Wild Things Conference 2021](#)

Part 1: Feb. 19-21, Part 2: Feb 26-28

The virtual conference features workshops and sessions from regional and national experts plus meet & greets, video content, and exhibitors. Learn about the plants and animals that call our region home, hear about new ecological research and how to get involved in conservation, and meet other people passionate about nature. Registration for each weekend is \$15. The entire conference is \$30.

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This newsletter was created by Seven Generations Ahead.

Funding for Zero Waste Schools is provided by Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas, and Food:Land:Opportunity, a collaboration between Kinship Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust and funded through the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust.

