

Oak Park and River Forest High School

2022 First Place - High School Division



The Project:

The OPRF Environmental Club students created project teams to focus on four different projects: Zero Waste Cafeteria, Native Prairie Garden, Thatcher Woods and Thrift Store Weekend. Each team made significant progress throughout the year, outlined ways to measure their success and laid the foundation for the project to grow in the future.

- **Thatcher Woods:** Environmental Club received a \$500 grant to promote good stewardship of Thatcher Woods, a forest preserve in River Forest. Thatcher Woods was not open to volunteers in the fall, so students organized a volunteer stewardship day at Schiller Woods to help remove barberry, an invasive plant species that harbors ticks. They are reaching out to Thatcher Woods to hold an informational event or guided hike in the spring.
- **Thrift Store Weekend:** Students planned a clothes donation and reselling event, open to both high schoolers and community members. They organized to send leftover clothes to Chicago Textile Recycling and donate the event proceeds to environmental charities. The club plans to hold this event annually and calculate resources and emissions saved from new clothing production based on the weight of clothes received.
- **Zero Waste Cafeteria:** Students posted graphics on waste bins with instructions on what to put in compost, recycling, and landfill. They also explained the importance of composting through the school news program, the daily bulletin, and the principal's weekly newsletter. They conducted a waste audit and plan to continue these every semester, aiming for a year-to-year 15% increase of food waste composted and 100% of food waste being composted by 2030.
- **Native Prairie Garden:** To help rebuild declining prairie land in Illinois, students researched native plants and plant nurseries that do not use neonicotinoids. In the spring, they weeded the garden and selected several seed kinds, which will be planted in May. The students plan on using cameras to survey how many different insects and birds the garden is attracting every year, and purchasing more native plants in coming years to add to the garden.

Project Focus: Various

Staff Involved: 85

Location: Oak Park, IL

Students: 20

