

RMSC Scout Information: Sustainability Merit Badge Prerequisites

Pre-requisites are required for this class. The following requirements must be completed BEFORE attending the merit badge class in order to not receive an incomplete:

1. Write in your own words the meaning of sustainability. Explain how you think conservation and stewardship of our natural resources relate to sustainability. Have a family meeting, and take notes about what family members think sustainability means. Bring your writing, and the meeting notes, to the RMSC for use during the merit badge class.
2. Keep a log of the "stuff" your family purchases (excluding food items) for two weeks. In your log, categorize each purchase as an essential need (such as soap) or a desirable want (such as a DVD). Share what you learn with your counselor. Bring this log to the RMSC for use during the merit badge class. The log at the US Scouting service Project website is an excellent tool for tracking your "stuff":

<http://usscouts.org/mb/worksheets/Sustainability.docx>

Although this is a one-day class, the merit badge requirements will not be completed at the end of the class time. There are 2 additional at-home projects required for completion. Scouts can choose to do the projects before, or after, the class meets. If scouts complete projects before the class, they must bring their results to the class to show the counselor. A website will be set-up so that scouts choosing to do the projects after the class can share their information with the counselor and complete the badge.

Project #1: Develop and implement 3 plans that attempt to reduce your family's water usage. Implement those ideas for one month and track your results. Pre-approved projects include:

- Install a water butt or rain barrel to your drainpipe and use the water collected to water your plants, clean your car and wash your windows. If you would like to do a rain barrel project, barrels can be purchased as part of this class for an additional \$15 (must pre-register), and scouts will be able to put them together and take them home as part of the class.
- Install water-saving shower heads and low-flow faucet aerators.
- Put plastic bottles or float booster in your toilet tank. To cut down on water waste, put an inch or two of sand or pebbles inside each of two plastic bottles to weigh them down. Fill the bottles with water, screw the lids on, and put them in your toilet tank, safely away from the operating mechanisms. Or, buy an inexpensive tank bank or float booster. Be sure at least 3 gallons of water remain in the tank so it will flush properly.
- Take shorter showers. One way to cut down on water use is to turn off the shower after soaping up, then turn it back on to rinse.
- Turn off the water after you wet your toothbrush, and turn it on again to rinse after brushing.
- There is no need to keep the water running while brushing your teeth. Just wet your brush and fill a glass for mouth rinsing.

- When washing dishes by hand, don't leave the water running for rinsing. If you have a double-basin, fill one with soapy water and one with rinse water. If you have a single-basin sink, gather washed dishes in a dish rack and rinse them with a spray device or a pan full of hot water. Dual-swivel aerators are available to make this easier.
- Use your water meter to check for hidden water leaks, and then repair leaky pipes. Read the house water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, there is a leak somewhere.
- If you would like to ask about a project idea that is not listed here, call the merit badge counselor, Calvin Uzelmeier, at 697-1915.

Project #2: Develop and implement a plan that attempts to reduce your household food waste. Establish a baseline and then track and record your results for two weeks. Report your results to your family and counselor. Keep track of food waste by how much you throw away and how much you must buy for the two weeks before and during the implemented changes. Suggested changes include:

- Cook or eat what you already have at home before buying more.
- Plan your menu before you go shopping and buy only those things on your menu.
- Practice FIFO. It stands for First In, First Out. When unpacking groceries, move older products to the front of the fridge/freezer/pantry and put new products in the back. This way, you're more likely to use up the older stuff before it expires.
- Buy only what you realistically need and will use. Buying in bulk only saves money if you are able to use the food before it spoils.
- If safe and healthy, use the edible parts of food that you normally do not eat. For example, stale bread can be used to make croutons and beet tops can be sautéed for a delicious side dish.
- Nutritious, safe, and untouched food can be donated to food banks to help those in need.
- Donate the gross stuff, too! Many farmers happily accept food scraps for feeding pigs or adding to a compost heap.
- Note upcoming expiration dates on foods you already have at home, and plan meals around the products that are closest to their expiration. On a similar note, keep a list of what's in the freezer and when each item was frozen. Place this on the freezer door for easy reference and use items before they pass their prime.
- If you regularly throw away stale chips/cereal/crackers/etc., try storing them in airtight containers — this should help them keep longer (or, of course, just buy fewer of these products).
- Freeze, preserve, or can surplus fruits and vegetables - especially abundant seasonal produce.
- At restaurants, order only what you can finish by asking about portion sizes and be aware of side dishes included with entrees. Take home the leftovers and keep them for your next meal.
- Compost food scraps rather than throwing them away.