



Capstone Project

The Michigan Conservation Stewards Program (CSP) Capstone Project is an opportunity to take what you learn in classroom and field sessions and apply it to a real-world conservation need in your community.

These projects can include a wide variety of activities from the installation of native gardens at nature centers to increasing education of community members at events. You can either choose from a ready-to-go project from your learning cohort or develop your own project in consultation with your planning team.

Due to the fast-paced nature of CSP, we encourage you to brainstorm project ideas in the first few weeks of class. A "Capstone Project Celebration" will take place on the final night of class where you will present project to your classmates. Participation in a Capstone Project is a requirement of the program.

Core requirements of a Capstone Project:

- Your project must advance on-the-ground conservation efforts, public awareness, and/or educational efforts regarding management of our natural resources.
- It must be located on accessible land in Michigan. A project cannot be located on private property unless it is also accessible to the general public. The project must provide benefits to all.
- You can work on a project independently or in a small group. Sometimes the most robust learning experiences occur in groups because of the opportunities to network with individuals who share similar interests.
- You will work directly with at least one cohort planning team member or staff from a conservation organization who is willing to guide you through your project. They will ensure your project is accomplishable within the proper timeframe and connect you with resources. Note: some cohorts will assign a mentor who will support you during the duration of the project.
- Due to the late-season nature of this program, execution of certain elements of your project prior to the last program session may not be possible. In some cases, certain project elements may need to be executed in the year following program completion. It is not an expectation that every project will begin and be completed by the last day of class.
- There is no requirement for a minimum number of hours you are expected to work on your project. However, carefully consider how much time is needed to complete the planned components. As a guide, plan on spending approximately 6-10 hours over the course of the program.
- Post information about your project in the Capstone Project Discussion Forum on the course website.
- The purpose of the Discussion Forum is to provide a space to:
 - Communicate details of your project for approval by your local cohort planning team.
 - Solicit other participants for your project or look for opportunities to join other projects being proposed.
 - Receive feedback/resources from other participants and program leaders and provide input on other project proposals.
 - Document all phases of your project and serve as a historical record of your efforts.

By working on this project, you will:

- Learn about local organizations involved in natural resources management and familiarize yourself with volunteer and training opportunities.
- Form relationships with other CSP members who share similar education, conservation, and stewardship interest.
- Gain practical experience that can be helpful if you choose to take on a natural resource focused leadership role.
- Strengthen your communication and presentation skills.

Capstone project deadlines**Discussion forum post about project and partners**

Login to the D2L course and submit your project idea via the Capstone Project Discussion Forum set up for your learning cohort.

In your post, include the following elements:

- Project title and brief description
- Project location
- Cohort members in your group (if you are working with others)
- Expected project deliverables
- Required training (if any)
- Staff member(s) and organization(s) you plan to work with

Include other relevant material such as resources, photographs, maps, articles, etc. to give your cohort planning team details they need to provide feedback on your proposal. They may also ask for clarification before approving your project. Your local cohort planning team will post a response to your project proposal.

Note: if you are working in a group, please assign one member to post information to the Discussion Forum.

Last Day of Class: Presentation on project at Capstone Project Celebration

Prepare a 2-3 minute presentation or display about your capstone project. Specific details about the format and expectations will be shared by your cohort leaders. If you worked with a local organization on your project, they can attend the Capstone Project Celebration. Let your cohort leadership team know if additional guests will be attending prior to the last day of class.

Post-Program: Not all projects can be completed and wrapped by the last session. We highly encourage you to keep in contact with your local cohort planning team to share updates on your project. We greatly appreciate hearing your accomplishments via photographs, reports, etc.