

LAND STEWARDSHIP COMPETITION 2016–2017

The 10th annual Land Stewardship Competition, sponsored by Grayson LandCare, provides high school students in Grayson County and the City of Galax (Grades 8-12) an opportunity to explore ways to increase livelihoods, enhance the environment, and improve quality of life in our community. Students first submit a written report to our Land Stewardship Committee to review. The committee then invites students with the reports that best address our criteria to present their projects at the Land Stewardship Fair. These students will have the opportunity to compete for the following cash awards:



- 1ST PLACE \$1000**
- 2ND PLACE \$500**
- 3RD PLACE \$250**
- FIVE HONORABLE MENTIONS \$50**

How to participate:

1. Be a student in Grades 8-12 in Grayson County or the City of Galax.
2. Review this information packet, especially criteria for the written report (page 2) and the presentation (page 3).
3. Decide whether you would like to work individually or as a team.
4. Pick a *specific* topic that can increase livelihoods, enhance the environment, and improve quality of life in Grayson County (See pages 4 and 5 for resources and examples of past projects). If you would like to discuss your ideas with someone or get in touch with experts on your topic in our community, contact Ruth Ross at ross@ls.net.
5. Submit your entry form and written report (preferably in Microsoft Word) through the Grayson LandCare website (www.graysonlandcare.org/our-work/land-stewardship-competition) by **March 15, 2017**. The form asks for your name(s), contact information, project title, and topic area. The Competition Committee will let you know by **April 1** if you have been selected to present your project at the Competition which will be help on a date to be determined in April 2017.
6. Present your project at the Land Stewardship Fair in April, 2017 to a panel of judges and community members. You will need to develop a display (slideshow, poster, or props) to set up on a table.

Report Guidelines

Please describe your project in detail and share what you learned in your research. We will review the reports prior to the Land Stewardship Fair and your score on the report will count as part of your final competition score. Remember to submit your written report as a Word Document on the Grayson LandCare website (www.graysonlandcare.org/our-work/land-stewardship-competition) **no later than March 15, 2017.**

Your topic should be presented as an open-ended question or statement such as *“How can we develop a profitable and sustainable local business growing and selling ginseng?”* or *“Developing a profitable and sustainable ginseng business in Grayson County.”* We encourage students to explore relevant literature and other sources (books, articles, websites) to inform their report and also to reach out to experts in their topic area. Some participants may find it helpful to conduct their own investigation, including personal interviews, in the community or on the farm. Work on your project might include any of the following:

- Personal observation and experience
- Demonstrations
- Pilot projects
- Interviews, accounts, or stories
- Surveys
- Experiments or testing
- Computer models
- Evaluation of economic or census data
- Monitoring or evaluating existing operations
- Case studies

Reports will be judged by the Competition Committee on the following criteria. The score on the report will determine which projects are selected to present at the Land Stewardship Competition. This score will also be taken into account by the judges in evaluating the different projects at the Competition.

Criteria	Points Possible	Points Received
Report Quality		
Gives a clear detailed description of the project, including specific information about how to make it work	2	
Clearly explains the benefits of the project to livelihoods, the environment, and quality of life in Grayson County	2	
Discusses some of the challenges of the project	1	
Cites literature or personal research to make a case for the project	1	
Between 1,000 and 1,500 words, in 12 pt Times New Roman font, with 1 inch margins, and double spaced	0.75	
Includes a title, author(s), and date, and is clearly formatted with headers	0.25	
Project Characteristics		
Feasible for implementation in our region	1	
Creative and innovative	1	
Could benefit livelihoods, the environment, and quality of life	1	
Total Score	10	

Presentation Guidelines

The Land Stewardship Competition is similar to a science fair. You will stand at a table where you have set up your presentation and describe and answer questions about your project for approximately 5 to 10 minutes with each of the judges individually. Other visitors from the public may also stop by to see your project but will be asked not to interrupt conversations between judges and participants.

You may use whatever format or visual aids are best suited to your topic (for example, creating a website, making a Power Point slide show, doing a poster or demonstration). On competition day, we will provide you with a table to set up your presentation. A panel of judges from local agencies and organizations and regional universities will assess your projects based on the criteria outlined in the table below

We will hold the competition on a date and location still to be determined in **April, 2017 in Independence, VA. The competition is held on a Saturday between 8:00 am and 1 pm.** We invite parents and community members to view the projects between 11:00 am and 12:00 pm and attend the awards ceremony at 12:30 pm.

Presentations at the Competition will be scored on the following criteria. Report and presentation scores together will be used to determine top projects to receive the cash awards.

Presentation Criteria	Points Possible	Points Received
Quality		
Display (poster, slideshow, and/or props) is professional, creative, and helps visitors better understand the project	2	
Student or team clearly articulates the benefits of their project to livelihoods, the environment, and quality of life in Grayson County citing published research and/or their own observations	3	
Student or team acknowledges some of the challenges of the project	1	
Student or team is professional in attire (business casual) and demeanor	1	
Characteristics of the project		
Feasible for implementation in our region	1	
Creative and innovative	1	
Could benefit livelihoods, the environment, and quality of life	1	
Total Score	10	

Resources

Local Resources

Grayson Land Care: we have experts available on many topics related to agriculture, land management, entrepreneurship, and the environment and will be happy to put you in touch with someone who can help you gather information. Examples are raising and marketing beef cattle, rotational grazing, riparian borders, water quality monitoring, raising chickens/poultry for eggs and/or meat, market gardening, raising sheep for wool and/or lamb for meat, raising rabbits for fur and/or meat, farmer's markets, forest management, harvesting hardwoods, non-timber forest products, raising medicinal herbs, and ecotourism and birding.

New River Hill Farm, a farm owned and operated by the New River Soil & Water Conservation District, is available for student projects (www.newriverswcd.org/#!new-river-hill-farm/cfmd). Contact Tracy Goodson thgoodson@embarqmail.net 276-236-7191 for more information.

Carroll County STEM Lab at Carroll County High School is available for use by students in Grayson County and Galax. The lab has microbiology and molecular biology equipment that would be helpful for projects dealing with crops, livestock, soil, water, and more. Contact Rachelle Rasco at rnrasco@ccpsd.k12.va.us to learn more about how to use the Lab for your project. Please note that you *may* need to purchase some consumable equipment such as petri dishes if used in a large quantity. Grayson Land Care has some funds to assist with this cost; please contact Ruth Ross ross@ls.net for more information.

School and County Libraries are available to check out books and access online resources. Contact your librarian for assistance finding books related to your topic. Please see below for additional local and regional resources as well as links that may help you choose a topic.

Local Organizations.

Grayson LandCare at www.graysonlandcare.org

Blue Ridge Woodland Growers <http://blueridgewoodlandgrowers.weebly.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/BRWoodlandGrowers/>

Independence Farmers Market <http://independencefarmersmarket.org/>

Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority <http://www.brceda.org/>

Crossroads Institute <http://www.crossroadsva.org/>

Regional/State Organizations

Virginia Cooperative Extension Publications <https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/>

Blue Ridge Permaculture Network Resources
<http://www.blueridgepermaculture.net/resources.html>

Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition
<http://www.vabeginningfarmer.alce.vt.edu/index.html>

Virginia Association for Biological Farming <http://vabf.org/links/>

Sustain Floyd Resources Page <http://sustainfloyd.org/news/resources/>

Links for Project Ideas

Check out these links for project ideas, guidance, and resources. Access the links to the book publishers where you can find lots of creative ideas just by reading through the book titles. You can then do further research or request the book from your school or county library.

Youth Business How-To <http://economicempowermentfoundation.org/entrepreneur-programs/>

Service-Learning Project Ideas <http://readwriteact.org/files/2013/01/55-Environmental-Service-Learning-Projects.pdf>

Chelsea Green Books publishes books focused on sustainability
<http://www.chelseagreen.com/books-and-products>

New Society Publishers publishes books on sustainability
<https://www.newsociety.com/Books>

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Learning Center
<http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center> to find books, bulletins, videos, and fact sheets on sustainable agriculture.

Past Land Stewardship Project Titles

Here is a sample of some of the past Land Stewardship Competition projects that have been presented:

Grayson County Community Orchard
Grayson County Community Garden
Medicinal Greenhouses
Harvesting Wind Energy
Methanol from Saw Dust
Commercial Composting
Environmentally Friendly, All Natural Cleaning Products and Toiletries
Creating and Marketing Eco-Friendly Fertilizers and Pesticides
Creation of an Elk Creek Community Center
Creation of a Community Coffee Shop
Starting a Garden at the Nursing Home
Sustainable Sheep Farming in Grayson County
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and Riparian Buffers
Raising Meat Rabbits in Grayson County
Raising Alpacas in Grayson County
Setting up a County-Wide Bee Hive Business
Creating a Business Selling Organic Free Range Eggs
Bird Watching Tourism
Eco-Tourism
Converting Homes to be More Energy Efficient
Creating a Solar-Powered Greenhouse
Building a Dog Bed Using Recycled Materials