

A More Perfect Union - Project Proposals

(20 points Community Learning)

Pick one of these basic project ideas below to develop into a proposal for the class. Most, perhaps all, of you will be working in groups over the next several days to elaborate and get creative with your ideas. You will present these proposals to the class on Thursday (possibly Friday).

I'll evaluate proposals based on the following:

- 1) have the greatest possible impact on the health of the river
- 2) provide a way for everyone in class to contribute beautiful work
- 3) is something the class will enjoy doing and be motivated to do well

As a group (or individual if you are working alone), you will answer the questions on the attached worksheet. The rubric for evaluation is on the worksheet.

Project Ideas

1. Organize and expand Voices of Animas event in Silverton – There is an opportunity for us to team with the group who put on the *Voices of the Animas* event at the Fairgrounds to expand their work. They would like to do a similar event in Silverton and document all the responses of people who come in order to expand the dialogue in a non-partisan and non-judgmental way. Some possibilities include teaming with students from Silverton to host a similar event, document all the sticky notes from both events, connect the StoryCorps interviews to a digital map, and anything else you can think of to try to bring local people together around the future of the river.

Potential elements - educational material, outreach, graphic design, media, website work, facilitation practice, event organizing and publicity

2. Campaigning for mill levy & bond issue – There are two funding measures on the ballot on November 3rd. The first is to increase the “mill levy” or property tax for road and bridge repair. Part of this money would go to improve stormwater management. Stormwater is what washes nitrates and phosphate from city streets into the river. This is typically at the bottom of the priority list but can make a big difference in the health of the river. The bond issue is for renovating the wastewater treatment plant at Santa Rita, which would improve the water quality in the river. These are typically low turnout elections because nothing else is on the ballot. Creative ways to get out the vote and make the connection between these measures and river health could make a difference in the outcome.

Potential elements – education materials, media, art and graphic design, marketing, outreach, research, meeting with scientists, engineers, elected officials and the media

3. Elected Officials Forum – While it is not an election year, local elected officials have a hard time saying “no” to young people who are interested in an issue. This would involve inviting city councilors and county commissioners together to talk about what we can do locally to address river pollution. This would include stormwater management, leaking septic systems, farm runoff, erosion, gravel mining, and trash in the river. You would work to get as many young people to the event as possible, give a short presentation on what’s affecting the river, and ask questions of our local elected officials. You would likely work closely with local environmental groups.

Potential elements – educational materials, media, graphic design, marketing, outreach, research, meeting with scientists, engineers, and environmental groups and the media

4. Advocating for Superfund – There are some in our community who want the Upper Animas River declared a Superfund site over the opposition of Silverton residents. These folks are working in reinvigorating the group Animas Riverkeeper to advocate at several levels. I don't know what help they need, but we would divide up tasks to help them start their campaign. They might want to do intensive outreach to young people. Their advocacy might include reform of the 1872 Mining Law as well. I'm waiting to hear back from one of the people involved.

Potential elements – education materials, media, website, social media, graphic design/marketing, outreach.

5. Advocating for Reform on the 1872 Mining Law – This option would entail trying to connect with other young people in other towns affected by mining and finding ways to join forces via the Internet and social media to press Congress on reform of the law. Republicans control Congress right now and most aren't supportive of reforming this law. But this doesn't mean advocacy and networking aren't worthwhile. Another option would be to expand this to a global network of young people impacted by mining. Reform of national laws and policies require broad networking and creative action that can generate media attention and put pressure on lawmakers.

Potential elements – education materials, media, website, social media, outreach, research, graphic design/marketing, meeting with staff for elected officials, connecting with national and international organizations

6. Research product cycle for metals – One thing that most of us don't know is how metals end up going from the mines to finished products. Tracing a product chain is difficult and involves lots of exhaustive research. The end result would be some kind of educational material (website, video, etc.) that would add to the debate and discussion about mining in our local mountains. While the mines in Silverton haven't been active since the 1990s, we do have historic information on what metal ores were taken from our mountains.

Potential elements – education materials, media, website work, research, graphic design/marketing

7. Education Campaign about Local Solutions – There are several impacts on the river that people are not discussing in the wake of the spill: gravel mining, lack of buffers along the rivers, eroded banks, stormwater management, leaking septic tanks. While it seems that a healthy river is all about the EPA and Silverton, there are many things people can do locally to help the river. Education about these issues could take many forms: website, map, tour, board game, etc. With this option our class would need to research and document everything people can do and figure out a dynamic way to communicate this to the public.

Potential elements – education materials, media, website work, research, graphic design, marketing, outreach, meeting with scientists, engineers, and environmental groups

8. Make media/art on river issues – Arts and cultural interventions are about getting people to think about things in a new way. They get people to stop and ask questions and generate media attention. Truly powerful art, performance, or media projects can shift the debate and force responses from elected officials. This option could result in sculptures, a mural, a film, photo display, etc. that raises important questions about the river. The juniors "Voices of the Animas" project would fall under this category.

Potential elements – education materials, media, website work, graphic design, art, outreach