Take the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge!

RIDE YOUR BIKE FOR POLAR BEARS

POLAR BEARS INTERNATIONAL

A Community Action Toolkit for Inspired Youth (11–18 years)

Part of our **Save Our Sea Ice** campaign
www.polarbearsinternational.org

Community Action Toolkit Contents

Take the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge!

Your guide to what, why, and how 1-2
Sample emails to businesses and schools 3
Talking points for businesses and schools 4
Sample letter to the editor 5
Social media 6

Poster, pledge cards and stickers

Pedal for Polar Bears safety poster 7
Ride Your Bike pledge cards 8
Ride Your Bike static cling decals or stickers 9
Save Our Sea Ice stickers 10

Tips for adult advisors

Your role in supporting enthusiasm 11

RIDE YOUR BIKE FOR POLAR BEARS

You're INSPIRED. You want to HELP. Here's HOW!

photo: © Valerie Beck/polarbearsinternational.org

DID YOU KNOW that we can help save the polar bear's sea ice habitat by changing our transportation habits? One way is by riding our bikes. The link to polar bears is direct, because most vehicles burn fossil fuels. When we burn fossil fuels for transportation we add more and more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This buildup acts like a blanket that traps heat around the world, disrupting the climate, and melting Arctic sea ice. You can help by biking more and speaking up for a bike-friendly community—like supporting bike lanes and highways.

[Visit **polarbearsinternational.org/climate-change**]

Take the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge

photo: Bicycle Alliance of Washington

Bikes are a fun way to get around and provide daily exercise! You can ride with your friends to school or create teams for an all-school competition. And you'll help polar bears at the same time.

Did you know?

Investment in bike infrastructure has made biking comfortable, safe, and dignified in Denmark, making car ownership optional. In fact, cycling accounts for 24% of all commuter trips in Denmark and 9 out of 10 Danes own a bike!

U.S .Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx (left) & Danish Minister of Transport and Building Hans Christian Schmidt (right).

photo: Danish Cyclists' Federation

Our Actions Matter!

For each gallon of gas burned, 20 pounds of heat-trapping CO_2 are released into the atmosphere. You can calculate your personal impact. First, figure out the average miles per gallon of your family's vehicle. Then, over the course of a week, keep track of your biking miles. How much gas did you save? How many pounds of CO_2?

photo: www.pedbikeimages.org / Margaret Gibbs

Expand to Your Community

A single person, family, school, or business can help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels by riding bikes for transportation—but the real impact comes when we invite others to join us. Make your community bike-friendly! Benefits include cleaner air and healthier lifestyles.

- ☑ **Begin by looking in your community for existing projects.** Check with bike shops or cycling clubs and your local transportation department. One option is to join their effort.
- ☑ **Next, take part in Bike to School Day, held in May.** (Use the bike option on Google Maps to find a safe route.) Invite your friends, class, or—even better—your entire school, to join you.
- ☑ **Make biking a habit! Ride as often as you can in your daily life.** Calculate how much fuel and CO_2 you save.
- ☑ **Talk with your principal or school district superintendent about the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge.** Use our sample email to request a meeting. Then prepare a presentation with the help of our talking points. Reward anyone who joins in with a sticker for their backpack, notebook, or helmet.
- ☑ **Host a bike repair or bike safety awareness day at your school** by partnering with a local bike shop or cycling club.
- ☑ **Help change your community! Invite local shops, churches, and offices to support biking by providing bike racks.** Use our sample email to request a meeting. Be prepared to make the case for why biking is important and what benefits each of us will gain. (See our talking points.) Reward those who take the pledge with a sticker or a window cling.
- ☑ **THINK BIG: Write letters to your local newspaper and politicians asking them to support the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge via bike lanes and other safety efforts.** A heartfelt letter from a young person who cares will help inspire action.

Tell Your Story

Celebrate your success! Share a photo and caption of your action on Polar Bears International's social media sites, using #saveourseaice.

Sample Emails

photo: © BJ Kirchhoffer

Teachers, principals, and business owners are busy! Following are sample emails to get you started.

GETTING STARTED. The purpose of this email is to introduce yourself and explain why you want to meet. At this point, your goal is to set up a meeting. You'll describe your project later.

Before writing the email, do your homework and find out the name of the teacher, principal, school district supervisor, or business owner so you can address the email personally. After you've scheduled a meeting, see our talking points for suggestions on how to make your pitch.

Email template inviting a local business to participate in the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge:

TO: (NAME and TITLE of business)
FROM: (NAME)
SUBJECT: Ideas for improving our community from a __th grade student at _____ [name of school]

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____:

My name is ____ and I'm ___ years old. [If applicable, personalize the note "My family banks with you/My parents shop in your store," etc.]

I'm volunteering with a community project called the ____ [insert name of your city] Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge. I have some ideas on how you can support biking, which will reduce pollution and traffic congestion and show customers that you care about the environment. I have a cool static cling decal for your window to show you're taking part!

Could I stop by on ___ (DATE and TIME) to introduce myself and talk about the project?

Sincerely,
[Your name and contact information]

Email template for your school's principal or superintendent to ask about support for biking to school:

TO: (NAME and TITLE)
FROM: (NAME)
SUBJECT: Ideas from a student on biking to school

Dear Mr./Mrs ____:

My name is ____ and I'm a ___ [insert grade level] student at ____ [name of school].

I'm volunteering with a community project called the ____ [insert name of your city] Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge. I have some ideas on how our [school/school district] can support biking to school, which will save money, reduce pollution and traffic congestion, and show the community that we care about the environment. I have a cool static cling decal for your window to show that our [school/school district] is taking part!

Could I stop by on ___ [DATE and TIME] to introduce myself and talk about the project? Or would another time be better?

Sincerely,
[Your name and contact information]

Talking Points for the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge

photo: © BJ Kirschhoffer

The key to launching a successful Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge is being able to explain what you are asking others to do.

Following are suggested topics to cover. Whether you put together a PowerPoint or one-page paper, these topics will help the listener feel your passion for the project, understand what you are asking for, and become motivated to join you. (See our sample email for help with setting up a meeting.)

Talking Points to involve local businesses or your school/campus in your Community Action Plan

GET STARTED. Introduce yourself and talk about why the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge is important to you. Express your interests and concerns.

CLEARLY EXPLAIN WHAT YOU ARE REQUESTING. "Please join me in taking the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge. You can support biking by providing bike racks or encouraging your students/ employees to commute by bike."

GET TO KNOW THEM. Talk with the business owner or facilities manager about their current support for biking. Do they have a bike rack for customers/ students? Do they have lockers where employees can store their bike helmet and shoes? Do they provide a discount to customers who bike to their store? Or give incentives to students and employees?

SHOW BENEFITS

- Consumers want action on climate change. Community members want safe roads, clean air, and less traffic and parking congestion. By taking part in the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge and displaying the static cling decal on a door or window, a business/school can show its support for action on pollution and a bike-friendly community.
- Clean air matters. Poor air quality can irritate the eyes, nose, and throat and cause a variety of health problems, including asthma.
- Biking has many health benefits and is a good way of getting daily exercise. Plus, it saves money and reduces carbon pollution.
- Share the fact that bike- and pedestrian-friendly areas typically see an increase in business. And schools experience a greater sense of community.
- Peer pressure works! Have other businesses/schools joined the campaign? Be sure to share this news and let the business/ school know that this is a community effort.

STAY IN TOUCH

Nearly everyone enjoys an encouraging word and needs support. Use phone calls, emails, and visits to see how they are doing.

BE READY TO HELP!

Offer to make presentations to their employees or staff a table outside to talk with customers or students. Then, celebrate the success from this business or school by sharing a photo and caption of your action on Polar Bears International's social media sites, using **#saveourseaice.**

Sample Letter to the Editor

A good way to spread the word to a wider audience is to write a letter to the editor of your local paper. Following is a sample. Feel free to adapt this to make it your own.

A Greener ____ [insert name of your city here]

My name is ____ and I'm a ___ [insert grade level] student at ____ [name of school].

I'm volunteering with a project called the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge to help reduce greenhouse gas pollution in our community. My family rides bikes for errands and to commute to school and work.

Will you join us in this action? The more families, schools, and businesses that take part, the cleaner the air in _____ [insert name of city] will be and the brighter the future for our planet. My family and I hope that our community planners and elected officials will provide safe bike routes to encourage bike commuting.

I think it would be cool to have EVERYONE take part. I learned about this on the Polar Bears International website. Let's show the world that _____ [insert name of city] cares about the environment and we're doing our part!

[Your name]

Social Media

Following are some sample tweets and posts for use on social media. If you create your own, use the hashtags **#BikeRide** and **#SaveOurSeaIce** to help build momentum.

SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

Ask me about the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge! Visit **polarbearsinternational.org/get-involved/save-our-sea-ice-campaign/**

Bike if you love polar bears! Visit **polarbearsinternational.org/get-involved/save-our-sea-ice-campaign/**

I Bike for Polar Bears! Will you join me? **polarbearsinternational.org/get-involved/save-our-sea-ice-campaign/**

Take the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge! **polarbearsinternational.org/get-involved/ save-our-sea-ice-campaign/**

SAMPLE TWEETS

Ask me about the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge! Visit **bit.ly/pedalforpolarbears #BikeRide** Via **@PolarBears**

Help **#SaveOurSeaIce**! Take the Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge. Visit **bit.ly/pedalforpolarbears #BikeRide** Via **@PolarBears**

Bike if you love polar bears! **bit.ly/pedalforpolarbears #SaveOurSeaIce** Via **@PolarBears**

Bikes = clean air, good health! **bit.ly/pedalforpolarbears #SaveOurSeaIce** Via **@PolarBears**

RIDE YOUR BIKE -FOR- POLAR BEARS

Safety Tips

YIELD TO TRAFFIC. Look before turning or crossing intersections. Use hand signals to indicate turns.

DON'T RIDE AT NIGHT. If you do, make sure your bike has lights and that you wear reflective clothing.

GET PERMISSION. Talk to your parents about whether you can bike to school. If they say yes, work together to plan your route.

FOLLOW TRAFFIC RULES. Stop at stop signs, ride in the same direction as other vehicles, and stay in your lane.

STAY ALERT! Watch out for potholes, parked cars, puddles, dogs, and other hazards.

STAND OUT. Make it easy for others to see you! Wear bright colors or clothing with reflective tape or flashing lights.

SAVE YOUR BRAIN! Wear a bike helmet that fits properly.

KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN. Don't wear a headset. Listening is just as important as seeing.

RIDE SAFELY. Keep your hands on the handlebars and stay in your lane. Be sure to use hand signals when turning.

CARRY IT WELL. Transport your books, lunch, and other items in a bike basket or backpack.

CHECK EQUIPMENT. Test your brakes and make sure your tires are properly inflated.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT BIKE. Make sure your bike is the right size for you.

photo: www.pedbikeimages.org/Austin Brown

Pedal for Polar Bears Challenge Pledge Cards

Instructions: Print out this page, cut on dotted lines, and have pledgers sign their name.

Pedal for Polar Bears Stickers: Check with an office supply store for sticker and static cling sheets. You can even order online!

Save Our Sea Ice stickers

Your Role as an Adult in Supporting Enthusiasm to Fix a Global Problem

photo: www.pedbikeimages.org / Mike Cynecki

Young people have an amazing capacity to make a difference. Here are a few tips to successfully support your budding activists, beginning with the golden rule: be a hands-off supporter! First, ask what type of support would help. Then, create an agreement about how you will communicate to make sure expectations are met.

MAKE IT FUN & SOCIAL

Collaborative work is fun and actually more productive. Help young people work through the challenges. Encourage them to learn from other successful projects. A good place to start is by looking in their local community for efforts they could join. Support excellence in teamwork by encouraging them to listen with an open mind, compromise, stay focused, and be respectful.

REMEMBER, IT IS THEIR PROJECT

If you want to do a community-based action project, go ahead, start your own effort! But let the young people do their own—your role is to mentor, coach, and most important, be a cheerleader, problem-solver, and supporter.

YOU HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE

Guiding young people in a project is a delicate balance. You want to provide sources of new information when they are stuck, not step-by-step instructions. Let them create their own path! You can help make that path smoother by looking ahead to the next step and anticipating challenges. Most important, provide encouragement.

JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT

A successful challenge arouses emotions that motivate individuals to take action. This holds true for young people trying to lead a community conservation action. As an advisor, your role is to apply just the right level of expectation and emotion—too much causes anxiety, too little causes apathy and disinterest.

TAKE TIME TO CELEBRATE

Community efforts are a process. Celebrate the steps that are accomplished, whether they are a success or not. If a school principal says “no” to the full proposal, celebrate the success of holding the meeting and having the opportunity to educate someone about the issues. Share your success on Polar Bears International’s social media sites with a photo and caption of your action, using **#saveourseaice**.

MANAGING SOCIAL MEDIA

Our action toolkits include sample social media content that students can share. Please remind students that they must be 13 to be on Facebook and other sites. Also discuss privacy settings with them.