

For each interviewee, I will elaborate fully on the perceived meaning behind each of the themes derived from the interviews conducted prior to the creation of this document. These themes were constructed through a process of in-vivo coding and cross-participant comparison, allowing for both individual insight and recurring patterns to be identified.

The figures referenced for the creation of this product can be found in this document under the “Sources Cited” tab.

Theme Description 1 – “Learned through school”

All six participants described learning about topics related to water conservation through some form of formal education. However, the depth and consistency of this education varied significantly across participants.

Three participants (Cooper, Alaina, and Kayla) specifically referenced middle or high school as their last meaningful interaction with these topics, while one participant (Emma) emphasized that although exposure begins in elementary school, “it doesn’t get mentioned as we get older” . This introduces a key inconsistency in the educational pipeline, where early exposure is present but not reinforced over time.

Additionally, one participant (Akira) referenced a more recent interaction through a college-level course, suggesting that continued exposure is possible but not universally experienced. Alicia’s response differed slightly, as she referenced community-based discussions and online sources rather than formal schooling, indicating that education may also occur informally in areas directly affected by water-related issues.

From this theme, it can be concluded that while water conservation is introduced within the education system, it lacks continuity and long-term reinforcement. This inconsistency may contribute to the overall decline in awareness and engagement as students' progress beyond early schooling.

Theme Description 2 – “Guardians of Earth”

Participants consistently framed individuals working in water conservation or environmental management as important, necessary, and in many cases morally admirable.

Emma described these individuals as “caring” and “selfless”, while Cooper referred to the field as a “noble cause” that is often overlooked. Similarly, Kayla and Alicia emphasized the importance of these roles in sustaining both human life and the environment, reinforcing the idea that these careers are not only functional but essential.

This theme suggests that participants do not view conservationists as ordinary professionals, but rather as individuals who take on a responsibility that benefits society as a whole. The language used across interviews implies a level of moral elevation, positioning these individuals as protectors of both natural resources and community well-being.

In conclusion, this theme highlights a strong respect for conservation-related careers, which may serve as a foundation for increasing engagement, as individuals are often more willing to support causes they associate with positive moral identity.

Theme Description 3 – “Awareness and Culture”

This theme reflects the ways in which participants’ motivations toward water conservation are shaped by personal experience, cultural environment, and social values.

Two participants (Cooper and Alaina) explicitly linked their motivation to helping others and improving their communities. Alaina, in particular, emphasized that her willingness to engage is rooted in “knowing that I’m helping people,” suggesting that conservation is viewed as a socially driven behavior rather than an individual responsibility.

Emma introduced a different dimension by describing awareness as something that develops over time, influenced by upbringing and repeated exposure. Alicia’s responses further support this, as her understanding of water issues was heavily shaped by growing up in an area with frequent boil orders and contamination concerns.

From this, it can be concluded that awareness is not solely developed through formal education, but is also shaped by lived experience and cultural context. Conservation behavior, therefore, is not isolated, but embedded within social and environmental conditions.

Overall, this theme suggests that engagement strategies may be more effective when aligned with community values and shared experiences rather than relying solely on informational approaches.

Theme Description 4 – “Education and Outreach”

All participants identified some form of communication, exposure, or engagement strategy as necessary for increasing involvement in water conservation efforts.

Emma emphasized the importance of exposure and normalization, stating that increased visibility would naturally lead to greater participation. Cooper highlighted the effectiveness of visual demonstrations, such as showing real-world environmental impacts, while also suggesting that integrating conservation efforts into existing activities (such as sports) could increase engagement.

Alaina introduced the role of influencers and celebrity figures, arguing that promotion through individuals with cultural relevance could significantly increase interest among young adults. Akira and Kayla both emphasized the importance of incentives and structured opportunities, such as group activities or rewards, to encourage participation. Alicia, however, identified time constraints as a major limiting factor, suggesting that even if interest exists, accessibility remains an issue.

Collectively, this theme demonstrates that engagement is not driven by a single factor, but rather requires a combination of education, visibility, social influence, and accessibility.

In conclusion, successful outreach efforts must be multi-dimensional, integrating traditional education with modern communication methods, social incentives, and practical opportunities for involvement.

Theme Description 5 – “Crisis and Personal Experience”

Participants demonstrated significant variation in their personal experiences with water-related crises, which appeared to influence their level of awareness and concern.

Three participants (Cooper, Alaina, and Alicia) described direct experiences with water-related issues, including contamination, boil orders, and water shortages. These experiences were often described in detail, indicating a higher level of personal relevance and understanding.

In contrast, Emma and Akira reported little to no direct experience, with Akira specifically referencing knowledge gained through education rather than personal exposure. Kayla did not explicitly describe any personal experience, suggesting a more neutral or detached perspective.

This variation indicates that personal experience plays a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive the urgency of water conservation. Those who have directly encountered water-related issues tend to demonstrate a stronger awareness of the problem, while those without such experiences may view it as more abstract.

This theme highlights the importance of connecting environmental issues to real-world experiences in order to increase engagement among individuals who have not been directly affected.

Theme Description 6 – “Limited Knowledge of Organizations”

Across the interviews, participants demonstrated generally low awareness of organizations involved in water conservation or environmental sustainability.

Only two participants (Alaina and Kayla) mentioned familiarity with CODES, primarily due to its presence within their academic environment. Emma referenced Heartlands Conservancy but admitted limited knowledge of its activities, while the remaining participants (Cooper, Akira, and Alicia) reported no awareness of relevant organizations.

This pattern suggests that the primary barrier to participation is not a lack of interest, but rather a lack of visibility and accessibility. Many participants expressed openness to

involvement, but were unable to identify specific opportunities or organizations to engage with.

From this, it can be concluded that increasing awareness of existing organizations may be a critical step in improving participation rates. Without clear pathways to involvement, even motivated individuals may remain disengaged.

Theme Description 7 – “Incentives, Media, and Accessibility”

Participants identified several modern factors that influence engagement, including incentives, media presence, and accessibility of opportunities.

Alaina emphasized the role of influencers and celebrity endorsement, suggesting that cultural relevance plays a significant role in attracting attention to conservation efforts. Cooper proposed integrating conservation into existing social structures such as sports and clubs, while Akira and Kayla both highlighted the effectiveness of incentives, including rewards or resume-building opportunities.

Alicia introduced a practical constraint, noting that lack of time may prevent individuals from participating even if they are interested. This adds an additional layer to the discussion, as it suggests that accessibility is not only about awareness, but also about feasibility within individuals' daily lives.

This theme suggests that engagement strategies must evolve to reflect the realities of modern life, incorporating digital media, social influence, and flexible participation opportunities.

In conclusion, increasing engagement among young adults will likely require a combination of cultural relevance, tangible incentives, and accessible opportunities that fit within existing schedules and lifestyles.

Sources Cited

Engaging Young Adults in Water Conservation Transcriptions (CODES Capstone Spring 2026)

Engaging Young Adults in Water Conservation Codes and Themes (CODES Capstone Spring 2026)