

Regional Reports

Updates from E.E. associations around the west

Environmental Education Association of Washington (EEAW)



The Environmental Education Association of Washington has much to report for spring 2006. Here are some highlights:

• **Washington Comprehensive EE Planning Process.** EE stakeholders will be rolling out our statewide comprehensive EE planning process this spring. We are pleased to announce that Governor Gregoire has agreed to serve as the honorary co-chair of the Advisory Council for this process. The first Advisory Council meeting will take place in May in Tacoma, Washington. Preceding the Advisory Council meeting will be the Pierce County (Tacoma area) Environmental Education Leadership Summit on March 31st. This summit is the first in a series of community level meetings that will take place across Washington state for the planning process.

• **EEAW Conference.** The EEAW annual conference will take place in Spokane, March 23-25th. The conference theme is "Reconnect with Nature: Restore, Renew and Reignite" and will feature high quality sessions geared to local and state-level education practitioners and leaders. A conference highlight will be keynote speaker Richard Louv, author of "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder".

• **Advocacy for EE.** Working with multiple stakeholders, EEAW's Advocacy Committee has secured an increase in funding from \$90,000 to \$150,000 for environmental education grants administered through Washington's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Additionally, House Bill 2910, requiring an environmental education study was approved by the legislature during the 2006 session. The Environmental Education Study will assist Washington's comprehensive EE planning process and will provide empirical evidence and recommendations on how environmental education can help provide Washington's youth with:

- Career development
- Good citizenship proven through service learning
- Graduation requirements, specifically addressing culminating projects.

The study will be conducted through the

state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and will have a priority focus on underserved demographic groups. These initiatives were made possible because of the partnership between EEAW, OSPI, the Sierra Club, Pacific Education Institute, the Washington State Farm Bureau, Timber Industry, and multiple state agencies.

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Environmental Education Association of Oregon (EEAO)



Environmental Education is actively engaging children and adults all over the state in learning and caring about the natural world around us. What makes EE so strong in Oregon is all of the dedicated individuals who work in formal and non-formal educational settings to help people connect with the natural world.

Classroom teachers at every grade level incorporate EE into every area of study you can think of. They all do it not because of a particular mandate from governmental bodies but because they care and know it's essential for sustaining this planet. EE educators in Oregon are a stronger, more independent breed who go it alone, against the stream of standard curriculum guidelines, no-child-left-behind mandates and budget restraints. Each teacher deserves accolades and recognition beyond the level of Oscars or Super Bowls. One Oregon school district superintendent told Dan Prince this week: "EE, like Outdoor School, is important because many students today have a limited sense of the environment, and that's a dangerous thing."

More unsung heroes are diligently performing amazing educational feats at nature centers, aquariums, zoos, community gardens, natural history museums, science centers and children's museums, exciting and motivating Oregon's citizens to include habitats and ecosystems into their schema. The non-formal educators also face budget hurdles and mystifying managerial mandates in addition to the challenge of educating reluctant students who are really just out to play.

All of these intrepid interpreters of nature and science, both non-formal and formal, commingle with like minds and intent through the Environmental Education Association of Oregon to seek camaraderie, professional support, new ideas and validation. We're a powerful group that can have great impact on the educational atmosphere in Oregon.

Leading the charge is Executive Director Linda Rhoads who is advancing many initiatives to bring new light and energy on EE in Oregon. State certification, federal funding and interstate collaboration are just a few of the huge projects in the works. Want to be part of the action? Contact any of the board members:



Linda Rhoads

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- Oregon (EEAO)
- British Columbia (EEPSA)
- California (AEOE)
- Nevada (NNREC)

You may not realize it, but if you join the state EE association in Oregon, Washington, or British Columbia, or the Northwest Aquatic and Marine Educators (NAME), you get a subscription to Clearing as part of your membership!

Contact the association in your region through the website or mailing address provided by the association in their column on these pages.