

Education WG Meeting Notes

AFWA Annual Meeting

Agenda

Welcome/Introductions - 5 min

- Round robin introduction

Conservation Educators Network- Kellie Tharp (AZ) - 10 min

- We meet fairly regularly
- When you sign in, you can ask to be added to the email list

Project WILD (PW) Updates- Elena Takaki & Marc LeFebre (AFWA) - 10 min

- PW has been around in 1983; there are currently 7 different PW publications in circulation—this includes 3 new ones (PW Climate & Wildlife; Creciendo WILD; Wildlife Resources and Conservation in North America- and Educational Guide)
- Going more toward electronic distribution instead of hard copies
- Strength- able to make connections between our members and NGOs and other conservation partners to bring PW to educators.
- Working on a MSCG to develop 3 online education professional development courses
 - Human dimensions of wildlife conservation
 - Wildlife health/one health
 - Ecological connectivity
- EE360+ grant
 - Provide DEI training
 - Funding for strengthening Environmental Education among in-service and pre-service educators
 - Mini-grants and publications to state PW hosting organizations
 - Online professional development courses in
 - PW Facilitator Training
 - WILD About Monarchs
 - Updating one of the PW guides
- Project WILD Annual Meeting 2025; May 19-23 in Orono, Maine

Field Edventures in Wisconsin- Victoria Rydberg Nania- 15 min

- Co-coordinate Project WILD in Wisconsin with FIELD Edventures
- Helps connect the WHY it's important to connect with the outdoors
- Get educators outdoors; get kids to connect, explore and engage.
 - Connect to Wisconsin standards for environmental literacy and sustainability → use Project Wet and Project Wild to cover water topics and wildlife topics
- Use [How to Teach Nature Journaling](#)—a free pdf online
- Provide a 5-week educator workshop using an EE360+ grant around *Changing Climate, Changing Cultures*
- Limiting factors include: funding, caps on course fees, teachers lack of experience, decreed freedom in the classroom; showing value in PW

Discussion: Next Steps in the Program Evaluation Series- All- 15 min

- Conservation Education Network- a growing group of educators that meet virtually as well as in person during the AFWA Annual Meeting and the North American Conference; includes webinars, professional development, and meetings to discuss priorities identified in the group
- One of the big items we want to discuss are Program Evaluations
 - Looking to partner with human dimensions staff to look at the evaluation process; develop evaluations that help answer some bigger questions that we would like to answer.

Overview of Michigan's 4th Grade Program Evaluations- Kevin Frailey (MI) 20 min

- Natural resources education
- Last year was given a budget (4M) to do programing → developed program called [Nature Awaits](#)
 - Goal to get every 4th grader in a state park; have specific programing
 - Biggest budget line item were buses to get kids to the parks
- Initial proposal = importance of public lands (Michigan parks and other public lands); health benefits to being outdoors; outdoor experiences can bolster education standards
 - Use infographics to support the initial proposal
- In Michigan all the FW divisions don't have educators; they're in a completely different section/division.
- How it works: 4th grade teachers schedule a location/time online; DNR educators meet at location with swag; spend 90 minutes with educators; students take a 5-question survey; teachers send a reimbursement form for bus travel (up to \$1000) and must take a survey of their own before money is transferred.
- 100% of teachers said would recommend this program to other teachers.
- Had 6K+ kids fill out evaluations
 - Want to know if the students had a good experience
 - Want the students to learn something
 - Did we give them some messages important to our state agency
 - Did they retain this information (still working on this one)
- Have a full-time marketing person, and full time person coordinating transportation
- The program was just turned into a permanent program (was only a 2yr program to start)

New programs and partnering with the Dept of Education - Ashley Leonard (WY) 20 min

- Conservation Education in Schools – in Wyoming
 - Wyoming Game & Fish Dept. partnership with Wyoming TU, TU, NASP, WDE, Wy State Board of Education.
 - Last year: hunter education, trout in the classroom, NASP, Conservation crates; total reach close to 5K students
- *Trout in the Classroom*- introduces students to concepts of ecology, pop biology, etc.; last year was first year of program
 - 28 schools participated; 1511 students, 20 schools released fish in 10 different locations
- NASP- an in-school target archery program
 - Was restarted last year
 - 24 schools participated

- 2100 students
- Hosted a virtual state tournament
- Hosted 5 basic archery instructor trainings
- Trained new 39 basic archery instructors
- *Hunter Education in Schools*
 - Inspire your students to safely explore by teaching them to: be safe and ethical hunters, respect for firearms, gain understanding of hunting as wildlife management tool, ID participation in hunting impacts the conservation of land and other natural resources; safely explore the outdoors and watch wildlife.
 - Incorporate hunter education into school curriculum
 - In 20 schools; 23 courses; 354 students
- *Conservation Crates*: include lesson plans for all grade levels and the materials to implement them. Designed to make teaching conservation topics easy and accessible.
 - Soft launched in January 2023
 - Close to 1000 students have been exposed
 - Initial challenges: reach constituents in a large geographic area; define program values and measure success; quantify demand for programs; utilize limited personnel
 - Helps meet demands of schoolteachers have on the Wyoming Game and Fish Department

EdTech in Conservation Education- IHEA Jae Ellison 10 min

- Tech based solutions in the conservation space
- SCOUT- an AI solution
 - Provide clarity on rules and regulations
 - Closed AI model- only has access to information provided by the state agency rules and regulations (not getting data from outside sources)
 - Safeguards built in
 - Refers to rules & regulations for confirmation and continued learning
 - Used data provided to inform future rules & regulations format
 - Asking state agencies to start testing out SCOUT; hasn't publicized this to the public as of yet
 - States can request the questions most often asked about their states rules and regulations; may be used to help better communication with the public
 - SCOUT is still in the testing phase
- *Outdoor Extended Learning Network*
 - A network of outdoor industry **Learning Management Systems** that Shares educational resources while **maintaining brand identity**
 - 4 essential functions
 - Effective audience segmentation
 - No costs per user
 - Access to detailed student and course data
 - Professional learning designers to enhance educational outcomes
 - Examples: built courses for NWTF → Becoming a Turkey Hunting Mentor; NWTF Education & Outreach Event...
 - Allows for sharing of resources
 - Can provide reports for an organization

- Lightning round - Come prepared to share innovative ideas, success stories, and other exciting ways that your state or organization is delivering education programs - 10 min
- Association for Conservation Information (ACI)- Blake P.
 - The Association for Conservation Information (ACI) is a non-profit organization of natural resources communicators. We serve to further natural resource conservation and exchange. We are made up of professionals representing state, federal and Canadian wildlife conservation and parks and natural resource agencies as well as private conservation organizations.
 - Content creators for our state agencies, conservation NGO's etc
 - Have one of (if not the) best awards program for outreach, education, and communication professionals in fish & wildlife conservation
 - Great place to network and get inspired by ideas
 - Given out \$2.3M in grant money to state agencies, thanks to the MSCG program
 - Just finished an [R3 clearing house](#) of resources
- Wrap-up/closing - 5 min