

EDUCATION WORKING GROUP - NOTES

Chair: Kellie Tharp (AZ)

Attendees: 21

90th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference Louisville, Kentucky

Agenda

- Welcome/Introductions - 10 min
 - Round robin introductions

- Conservation Educators Network- Kellie Tharp (AZ) - 10 min
 - A network where we collaborate, share ideas and learn together a variety of conservation education topics.
 - Virtual calls a few times throughout the year.
 - In 2024, these calls focused on Evaluations-- special training and presentations.
 - Next call we will be asking what we would like this group to focus on; continue with evaluation training? Conservation education resources? Other?
 - The [Conservation Education Toolkit](#) is available on the AFWA website that are free resources for everyone. We've been refining them over the years; a great starting point for someone who is new to conservation education.
 - Please click on 'please add me to the email list' when you sign in to this meeting.
 - Discussion: what do you want to get out of this group over the next year?
 - Previous topics include:
 - Professional development
 - Facilitation training
 - Budget training
 - Building quality evaluations
 - Possible new topics:
 - Succession planning
 - Teacher Externships (CO, AK)

- Project Wild Updates- Elena Takaki and Marc LeFebre (AFWA) 20 min
 - 3 new Online Courses; success stories are incorporated in each lesson.
 1. **Human Dimensions in Wildlife Conservation**
 2. **Healthy Connections** (One Health)
 3. **Room to Roam** (wildlife connectivity)
 - Anyone interested in these courses, email Elena to get in for free (otherwise = \$25) etakaki@fishwildlife.org
 - Target Audience = Educators (middle-high school level)
 - Coming Soon → **WILD about Monarchs**

- **WILD School Sites** guidebook is being brought back this spring. Last published in the 1990s.
- This spring we will get Project WILD Guide student pages translated into Spanish. This should be available in summer 2025.
- Developing curriculum on **Vector Borne Diseases**; 1 on ticks + 1 on mosquitoes. There's currently not a lot out there available to teachers to use in the classroom; filling a known gap.
 - Sub awardee from the Association of States and Territorial Health Officials.
 - We don't want to scare kids or teachers about going outside; focus on being healthy outside.
 - Making curriculum very interactive
 - Objectives: 1- vector-borne diseases (VBD) exist in nature and cases are increasing; 2- people can take steps to prevent VBDs; 3- vector organisms are part of ecosystems and have ecological significance; 4- professionals work to ID VBD and protect people and wildlife.
- Project WILD Annual Meeting; May 19-23 in Orono, Maine
 - Theme: Braiding Knowledge.
 - Learn more: <https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/project-wild-conference-2025>
- [Download the Project WILD Update presentation.](#)
- Teacher Externships - "Utilizing experiential learning opportunities for educators to develop classroom content" Heather Hubbard (CO) 20 min
 - Envisioning our role in formal education; career and technical education
 - Partnerships with CO Community College system
 - Endorsement of industry certification from Ducks Unlimited
 - Approval to develop: 1- high school work-based learning program; 2- teacher externship program.
 - Teacher Externship Programs for STEM disciplines approved in 2023
 - Goal: create experiential learning opportunities to connect educators with field staff to gain real world experiences that can be applied in the classroom
 - Outcomes: 1- increased teacher knowledge base and confidence; 2- increased teacher developed resources, 3- increased public awareness of our work.
 - Still in the piloting phase.
 - 8 unique lessons have been developed (2 middle school; 5 high school; 1 after school program)
 - Evaluation of small groups:
 - #1 interest was connections to subject matter experts
 - Industry partners: \$1000- \$2000 stipend to develop lessons
 - Testing 1 week in-person model
 - Connecting to CTE credentials (getting natural resources into high school lesson plans)

- Incorporating Education and Outreach into SWAP Plans- Jen Dennison (OH) 20 min
 - **ASK:** Where does your state stand with incorporating education and outreach into your SWAPs today? Fill out survey: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=xPz4UNiUB0-E6zbtV8flogsgaNv73dNLizH2fo8F3NJUOVM3VkJTDDZTOFVST0JLNFE1VlpGM1pHQi4u&origin=QRCode>
 - Fill | Incorporating Education and Outreach into Your State's SWAP Revisions
 - This short survey is to gauge interest and value across the states for including Education and Outreach into the current revision process for state SWAP plans.
 - Ohio is writing a chapter in SWAP on education and outreach
 - After the SWAPs are drafted in October, will look at how to possibly implement some of those ideas.
 - Info available here: <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/wildlife-management/swap/state-wildlife-action-plan-clearinghouse>
 - Looking at how to create useful information on SWAP to our partners

- Outdoor ELN and LMS Progress- Jae Ellison (IHEA) 10 min
 - 63% of K-12 students participate in online learning daily
 - 70% of students prefer to learn online
 - 77% of companies provide a selection of online learning for their staff
 - Studies suggest that students retain 25-60% of materials with online learning compared to 8% with in person.
 - Test scores were statistically equal with online vs. hybrid vs in-person learning.
 - Hunter Education (HE) is no different
 - Learning has evolved, trying to keep up with the times and adapt to how people are learning today.
 - **Outdoor Extended Learning Network (ELN)**- a network of outdoor industry Learning Management Systems (LMS) that shares educational resources while maintaining brand identity.
 - *North American Trapper Education course* is being offered through the ELN system; were able to create interactive elements; scenarios examples; able to better reach target audience.
 - When dealing with the private industry→ have less control over content and advertising exposure
 - Upcoming LMS Launches:
 - AK Game and Fish- focus on K-12 education
 - Mammals, Reptiles, and Birds K-3
 - KS Dept Wildlife Parks- focus on instructor training and development
 - New Hunter Education Instructor Training
 - Recent Course Launches:

- Modern Ammunition (opportunities in hunting and wildlife management-instructor learning)
 - Modern Ammunition (opportunities in hunting and wildlife management-student learning)
 - Becoming a turkey hunting mentor
 - Hunter Connect: Turkey Hunting 101
 - Hunter Connect: waterfowl Hunting 101
- 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
 - AZ- Arizona State University runs March Mammal Madness; doing webinars to bring March Mammal Madness into the classroom; getting educators excited about incorporating mammal education into the classroom
 - FL- currently doesn't not have an education entity; currently creating a department for outreach and education for MyFWC (Office of Conservation and Education); there will be a lot of change within MyFWC over the next year.
 - OH- Contact Teens (and advisory council); where about 60 teens meet to learn about conservation and natural resources; part of the goal is to have the teens give back to OH DNR in a way with a 'Take Action' project; it's a pipeline for getting students interested in natural resources before they/as they prepare to go to college.
 - There are some obstacles because they are minors- what are some ways we can overcome this obstacle.
 - → have the AG office create a waiver (beyond a typical volunteer waiver) that the parents would sign.
 - Try to discourage one-on-ones; when needed to have background check
 - Follow child labor laws.
 - PA- attended the Philadelphia Flower Show; have the agency there with a habitat and/or pollinator angle; had a huge success telling people who we are and what we do; ran campaign of **6 Things You can do for Wildlife** to those they interacted with; huge ROI.
 - Bat Conservation Intern'l- have new K-12 resources on our website <https://www.batcon.org/about-bats/learn/>
 - Did a virtual field trip in partnership with Lego
 - Discovery Education
 - If Than She Can partnership to create lessons (17 lessons in both English and Spanish)
 - **Deep in the Heart of Texas**- a film about Texas Wildlife; had bat curriculum associated
 - Boone &Crockett Club- **Fair Chase & Hunter Education Course** <https://www.boone-crockett.org/learn>

- ASK: looking to create curriculum based on ballistics→ if anyone has anything like that they can share- please send to Luke@boone-crockett.org
- Developed a Women's Hunter Education Course→ was shut down in Montana since it excluded men; now working to Becoming and Outdoors-Woman to get something like this done.
- Have Outdoor Education/Excursion Camps- actually paying kids to go to camps; looking for new participants from other states (looking to partner with other states)
- TX- Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy www.wvntacademy.com
 - Only accept 100 people
 - Presentation Request for Proposals just now OPEN (Due June 16, 2025)
 - Attendee Registration will OPEN August 2025
 - DATE: February 16-20, 2026, Cedarbrook Lodge, Seattle, Washington
- AK- School of Conservation Leadership→ creating a designation for schools that can get to teach hunter/angler education and other conservation programming. Learn more at: <https://www.agfc.com/education/school-of-conservation-leadership/>
- Wrap-up/closing - 10 min