

Education WORKING GROUP

Chair: Kellie Tharp (AZ)

Vice Chair: TBD

Monday, September 22, 2025

10:15am – 12:15pm

#Attendees = 42

Agenda

- **Welcome/Introductions** - 5 min
 - Round robin of name/organization
 - Overview of the agenda
- **Conservation Educators Network**- Kellie Tharp (AZ) - 10 min
 - OVERVIEW: CE Strategy; develop products that are timeless, and states can easily implement.
 - Teach educators and bring conservation education into the classroom
 - CE Strategy is on the AFWA website: <https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-informs/ce-strategy>
 - Have a CE Strategy networking call; meet in between in-person meetings (AFWA Annual Meeting and NA Conference); provide webinars and other priorities of the group
 - How to build program goals to increase the relevancy of your (conservation) education within your agency; aligning CE goals to your agency strategic goals
 - Upcoming webinar (October 16, 2025): that will cover some successful CE programs
 - Join the AFWA Education Working Group (Conservation Education Network) for the upcoming webinar, New Ideas for Educator Engagement. Heather Hubbard (Colorado Parks and Wildlife) and JJ Gladden (Arkansas Game and Fish Commission) will share about new programs they have launched to engage with educators in their states.
 - Webinar: New Ideas for Educator Engagement
October 16, 2025 1:00 Eastern
Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83438871425?pwd=XJR5MAAaTaeyGirzw4MrpF10T9IjIMt.1>

Meeting ID: 834 3887 1425
Passcode: 418151
 - Invite states to use the CE Strategy; some states shared they use them to introduction educators to conservation education and how they can incorporate it into their classrooms

- **Project WILD Updates**- Elena Takaki & Marc LeFebre (AFWA) - 20 min

- Have two new online courses as part of the online WILD and Healthy Outside [\[click to see flyer\]](#) program (see below). More information and to register for these online courses can be found here: <https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/ProjectWILDOnline>
 - *A Tick Trek Adventure*
 - In a style of choosing your own adventure; in the end you see if you get bit by a tick
 - *Mosquito Mayhem*
 - Interactive activity about how West Nile Virus can be transmitted
- Project WILD training online courses (see bullets below of new courses); meet the need to training educators that cannot get to an in-person training. Part of a Multistate Conservation Grant. More information and to register for these online courses can be found here: <https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/ProjectWILDOnline>
 - *Human Dimension of WILDLIFE Conservation*
 - *Room to Roam*
 - *Healthy Connections*
- Webinars- October 2 as part of bat week → Teach about Bats: And education webinar featuring bat curriculum for grands 3-8; partnering with Bat Conservation International. [\[link to webinar\]](#)
- [WILD School Sites](#) → improving wildlife habitat on school grounds
- Upcoming presentations at North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) Conference on November 3
 - Wildlife Conservation and Student Achievement for 40+ Years (Exhibitor Showcase)
 - Meeting Educators Where They're At
 - Schedule, Scoped, Budget and Critters
- **Increasing Program Impact Through Partnerships: Boating Education-** Josh Hoffman (AZ) 20 min
 - Benefits that partnerships bring to our programs; when you do something together, it may take longer to get where you're going but the results are significantly better and impactful; boating education and safety incorporated into each aspect of the programs developed
 - Three main categories or partnerships: 1) Agencies; 2) state, county, and city; and 3) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
 - Agency = Arizona Game & Fish
 - Wildlife Viewing Program → bighorn sheep tours; kayaking and birding clinics
 - Field Biology → Apple snail surveys; goose banding
 - Agency Messaging → Aquatic Invasives; Fishing Education; Hunter Safety
 - States, County and City
 - State Parks and Trails → Family camping program (paddle sports, bow-fishing, kayak-fishing, risk management, staff training)
 - County Parks → boat AZ and paddle sports classes; training & equipment
 - City of Prescott → paddle sports activities; mutual support
 - NGO
 - Becoming an Outdoor Woman- support events with hands on kayaking classes
 - National Turkey Federation – bi-annual Jakes events with kids and kayaks

- AZ Veterans Fly Fishing- hands on kayaking training with emphasis on fishing
 - Cast for kids- loaning life jackets for participants; providing inflatable life jackets to captains that take pledge to wear life jackets
- Partnerships = Possibilities
 - Allows you to become part of someone else's success → making a difference
- **Succession Planning-** Future topic from last meeting- open discussion- All- 20 min
 - There has been a lot of turnover in positions; has anyone done succession planning to help prepare for this to make sure we keep some of this institutional knowledge.
 - What are the needs? Webinars, something else?
 - Who has done this? Any success?
 - IHEA has tried this without much success; looking for pointers
 - What are the components that need to be included?
 - AZ has started to have this discussion; but no products as of yet
 - Alabama has started to do 'training up' and 'training down' so others are familiar with what other staff are doing and how to do it; some resistance to what a staff member is doing (and if they are the only ones that can do it) is a source of power and security.
 - Learning staff need more onboarding materials; this idea can be cross pollinated between the two (onboarding + succession planning)
 - TX will re-position/re-classify (receive same salary, etc.) an employee who is about to retire so they can advertise their position early and have them around to help train the new employee.
 - Louisiana has the ability to have 180 days for two people (one outgoing one incoming) in the same position so proper success training can take place.
 - FL- is trying to come up with a career development program; find ways to grow professionally without necessarily going into a higher position that a person is not well suited for (ie. Supervisory position) where you can still get pay increases, etc.
 - There is a need to transition a new person to continue to maintain/grow external partnerships.
 - AZ- looking at giving shadowing opportunities to learn skills that staff may want to learn (ie. managing program budget, etc.)
 - Creating an Agency Resource Guide is important so people feel empowered to do some things on their own and not have to constantly ask how to do a necessary task.
 - Sometimes it's better to hire a consultant to help with these tasks (onboarding/ succession planning); staff bandwidth is low, and it can be hard or impossible to make happen.
 - A recent survey showed that employees in state fish & wildlife agencies took their position because they love the natural resources and don't want to sit behind a desk all the time → created an engagement opportunity board where people can sign up to go out in the field to so/help with some of the field work; a perk of joining the agencies even if not as a field biologist.
- **New Conservation Education Course-** Elena Takaki & Marc LeFebre (AFWA) 30 min
 - Part of the Management Assistance Team (MAT) offerings
 - AI and Wildlife Conservation [\[see flyer\]](#)

- AI for Conservation Leaders – Oct 30
 - Using AI Tools for Conservation Outreach Series – Jan 20, 27, & Feb 3.
- Webinar: Generations At Work- Oct 21 [[see flyer](#)]
- Conservation Education Courses:
 - Course 1: Fundamentals of Conservation Education
 - Full course outline is under development, and can be viewed and make comments [via google docs](#) to make sure the course is meeting your needs. Comments due by Oct 6.
 - Course 2: Creating Effective Conservation Education Experiences
 - Full course outline is under development, and can be viewed and make comments [via google docs](#) to make sure the course is meeting your needs. Comments due by Oct 6.
- **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
 - IHEA: have a number of online courses that are now available; both hunter education and trapper education; CWD courses; turkey habitats, fly fishing, archery, certification courses, etc.
 - NE: questions- is anyone doing programming based off of other events (ex. Beyond BOW is a deeper dive off of the Becoming and Outdoors-Woman (BOW) event);
 - TX: started to look at how we can work together to expand on what others (outside organizations) are doing (not stealing or taking away from the other groups program).
 - Boone & Crockett Club- has started a podcast on a variety of topics; podcast titled Heritage of the Hunt; [listen HERE](#).
- Wrap-up/closing - 5 min
- **Adjourn**