



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

EDUCATION WORKING GROUP NOTES

Chair: Kellie Tharp (AZ)

Thursday, April 2, 2026

1:15pm- 3:15pm

91st North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference
Columbus, Ohio

Attendees: 17

- **Welcome/Introductions-** 5 min
- **Conservation Educators Network-** Kellie Tharp (AZ)- 10 min
 - This past year the CE Network and webinars have been focusing on Evaluations (program evaluations, etc).
 - Looking how to best maximize our time together and to be value added.
 - What are our current challenges [potential future webinar topics]?
Discussions:
 - Start highlighting some case studies so we can all learn from each other
 - Bring forward some challenges that case studies can help overcome
 - Evaluation of programs is still a hot topic and should continue to be explored; what is the best way to go about effective evaluations
 - What is the best approach/best practices to tackle challenges
 - Association of Nature Center facilitators helps with open discussions
 - A focused discussion on the [Conservation Education Toolkit](#)
 - Create a video webinar that can then be uploaded to the CE Toolkit YouTube channel playlist; have it updated.
 - Review of the Landscape Analysis Toolkit
 - ADA website compliance
 - How do you make an ADA accessible pdf (on the website)?

- Connecting conservation education to SWAPs
 - Overview/best practices/case studies of educating the public about what the state agency does.
- **Project WILD Updates-** Elena Takaki (AFWA)- 30 min
 - Online Courses: currently have 10 different online courses available; WILD about Monarchs is the newest one that is available starting this month; Coming soon → 1) WILD for Faculty- focuses on university and college professors, and 2) Facilitator Training that all facilitators can take
 - Annual Meeting → Held in March 2026 in Arizona; learned about trapping education, learn how to adapt lessons specific to a state.
 - **Outstanding Coordinator of the Year-** Kim Morris-Zarneke with Georgia DNR
 - **Lifetime Achievement Award-** Jen Dennison with Ohio DNR- Division of Wildlife
 - Next year's Annual Meeting will be in Oklahoma City, OK
 - ee360+ grant- this will be the last year for this grant; will be launching 'WILD about Bears- and using information from BearWise.
 - Upcoming Webinars:
 - Working with Homeschool audiences; partnering with Project WET and PLT → Better understanding how to connect with homeschool audiences, feel more prepared to offer programs, examples of successful programs
 - Bat Week- Oct 24-31 → will be doing another webinar for bat week
 - Ohio Project WILD report: increase number of student engagement by 172% from the previous year; Growing Up WILD is seeing a big increase; have the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA) for accreditation → now educators get professional development credits for going through Growing Up WILD training; created new and updated education materials [World of Wildlife K-2 nonfiction text; WILD Ohio for Kids- Wildlife Journal Kids Magazine; Ohio poster coming soon]
- **Education Planning in Nebraska-** Andrea Faas (NE)- 20 min
 - The Plans: Focus on the Future 2023-25; SWAP Revision 2025; Focus on Education 2020-24. (Will be available online outdoornebraska.gov>Community Plans)
 - Nebraska's SWAP: update & expand environment education sections (revise, engage refine, promote); included methods for environmental literacy; included an EcoRegion update → educational landscape (collaborations, challenges, opportunities) and representative species (educational and/or community science opportunities).
 - Education Strategy: for educators, communicators and leaders across NGPC; a priority list.
 - Focus on the Future Strategic Plan: an agency plan; strategic directions (conservation, recreation, our team, the people we serve); Goal 1

[Resources]- understand, appreciate, and engage with NE communities by education about natural resources, cultural and historical, and outdoor recreation resources, Goal 2 [Our Team] - continue to build a cohesive team for education efforts, Goal 3 [the people we serve] – grow strategic partnerships to foster greater impact across Nebraska.

- **Succession Planning- All** –What is your state doing? - 30 min
 - Looking to have this be a larger discussion/workshop/presentation during the 2026 AFWA Annual Meeting; presentation will be lead by someone from MyFWC who is currently doing such planning in Florida.
 - Will look at some options for training opportunities;
 - Arizona- took class called “Risk management with outdoor programs”; when know of an upcoming retirement, work with that person to help train other employees to make them marketable for that position when it becomes available.
 - Nebraska- trying to be as transparent in leadership positions as they can to staff understand (ex. budgets, reorganization, etc.)
 - Louisiana- teaching biologists that are moving into leadership roles how to do some of these administrative items
 - Texas- talk with your HR team to see how you can have a shadow overlap when someone is getting ready to retire.
 - Colorado- working together as a team to see how we fit together instead of working within silos; share training, etc that helped staff within their position and how it can help with future successional planning.

- **Lightning round** - Come prepared to share innovative ideas, success stories, and other exciting ways that your state or organization is delivering education programs - 20 min
 - Florida- new MyFWC Director has stated that staff will need to come up with a new Conservation Education curriculum for every school district in the state that will be mandatory in the schools; are there any states already doing that that we can look at? Arizona and Colorado have some non-mandatory curriculum available for schools; Missouri has something similar
 - Boone & Crockett- a feral Friday program that is available to homeschoolers. Can do a webinar on this topic for the CE Network.

- **Wrap Up/Closing- 5 min**
- **Adjourn**