



# YEAR 4 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## THIRD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – STEVENS POINT



### Introduction

The Third Environmental Education and Training Partnership (EETAP3) is a consortium of nine organizations<sup>1</sup> that deliver environmental education (EE) training to teachers and other education professionals. EE prepares citizens to make informed, intelligent decisions that protect human health and environmental quality. Through workshops, courses, and other carefully tailored strategies, EETAP3 is building a cadre of educators who are knowledgeable about the environment and have the skills needed to help children and adults understand complex environmental issues. It is helping education professionals work effectively with diverse audiences and make their organizations and programs more inclusive. EETAP3 is ensuring that environmental education programs and resources are of high quality and present multiple perspectives in an unbiased manner. This was the fourth year of a five-year program that has already benefitted nearly 1.6 million education professionals and 16 million individuals across the country.

EETAP3's Year 4 work plan detailed 12 activities designed to achieve a more environmentally literate public over the five-year period of the project. In all, 485,858 educators and an

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<sup>1</sup> EETAP partners include the American Forest Foundation/Project Learning Tree, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Council for Environmental Education, National Audubon Society, North American Association for Environmental Education, Project WET, University of Oregon, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (National Conservation Training Center).

estimated 5,923,054 individuals have expanded their knowledge and skills through EETAP3 Year 4 activities. These figures reflect attendance at EETAP3-supported workshops and user visits to EE-Link, along with the learners reached by these educators.

U.S. EPA's Division of Environmental Education and EETAP partners fund the project; the budget for Year 4 was \$2.6 million. Of this, the Federal share was \$1.8 million while partners contributed \$0.8 million. Over the life of the project, Federal funds have totaled \$5.2 million and partners have contributed \$2.6 million. The University of Wisconsin serves as the managing partner.

### Why This Program is Unique

This summary covers Year 4 (July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009) of a five-year program. However, much of EETAP3's work builds on the efforts of EETAPs 1 and 2 (1995-2005) and the first three years of EETAP 3. This continuity has enabled unprecedented gains on strategic initiatives that require years to fully develop.

One such example is the national *Guidelines for Excellence in Environmental Education*, which has been called the single most important event in the field of EE in the last decade. These voluntary standards describe quality EE resources and programs, identify what learners should know and be able to do as the result of K-12 EE programs, and articulate the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective environmental educator. The *Guidelines* were drafted, reviewed, and approved during

EETAP1, and dissemination and training programs were established. During EETAP2, the *Guidelines* formed the basis of programs to certify professional environmental educators, develop online EE courses, and review EE resources for quality. Efforts to distribute the *Guidelines* more widely and to train additional educators and leaders to use the *Guidelines* expanded during this time.

EETAP3 continues to build on these efforts. In Year 2, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) approved NAAEE's Standards for the Initial Preparation of Environmental Educators; teacher education programs across the country will have to meet EE standards in order to attain or retain NCATE accreditation. In Year 3, NAAEE initiated training programs to help universities and colleges meet these new EE standards, catalyzing further development of EE programs for thousands of pre-service teachers. In Year 4, progress was made on a new set of guidelines for effective early childhood environmental education programs. EETAP3 continued to assist states with development of professional certification programs for environmental educators and is in the final stages of creating a national program to accredit state certification programs. Taken together, these long-term efforts increasingly ensure that educators have the resources, knowledge, and skills needed to deliver quality instruction about the environment.

## Highlights of Major Accomplishments

EETAP3 divides its activities into three areas: Professional Development, Advancing Environmental Education, and Reaching Diverse Audiences. Programmatic goals within each area reflect the priorities of EETAP3—and the field of environmental education. During the last year, great strides have been made within each program area; these accomplishments range from integrating EE into preservice teacher preparation and training thousands of

educators in EE methods to helping states develop environmental literacy plans and identifying effective strategies for reaching diverse audiences. The most notable achievements of Year 4 are highlighted below.

### Professional Development

Helping education professionals develop their abilities to teach fairly and effectively about complex environmental issues is a priority for EETAP3. Consortium partners delivered professional development through in-person and online workshops and courses to 3,718 education professionals and EE leaders working in schools and other settings.

#### Online Instruction

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UW-SP) continued its highly popular online EE instruction program, offering a total of seven sections of four courses: “Applied Environmental Education Program Evaluation,” “Fundamentals of Environmental Education” (FEE), “Leadership Development in Natural Resources: Strategic Planning and Implementation,” and “Making Environmental Education Relevant for Culturally Diverse Audiences” (MEER).” Three additional colleges offered FEE for the first time during Year 4, and at least three more plan to offer the course in the coming year. MEER, the newest course in the series, debuted and was offered twice. These courses helped 290 educators and natural resource professionals incorporate EE into their work, thus advancing both student academic achievement and environmental literacy. In February 2009, UW-SP faculty approved a program proposal for a new online MS degree in EE; the first students will be accepted into the program in summer 2010.

#### Guidelines Development and Training

The National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education began work on a new set of guidelines for effective early childhood

environmental education programs. The first review draft was made available for comment in February 2009, with a revised draft expected in September 2009.

Members of the Guidelines Trainers Bureau gave 31 presentations and workshops in 24 different states. These trainings ensure that EE professionals are prepared to apply the *Guidelines for Excellence* to achieve quality practice in their work. Workshop evaluations consistently indicate that participants plan to use the *Guidelines* to improve their environmental education efforts and plan to share what they learned with colleagues and other professionals.

### EE Training Networks

EETAP3 partners American Forest Foundation (Project Learning Tree), Project WET, the Council for Environmental Education (Project WILD and Flying WILD), and National Audubon Society continued to cultivate new leaders within their networks through specialized leadership training for 350 state coordinators. PLT and CEE mentors continued to help states build their capacity to deliver high quality EE programs, including five organizations participating in the new Flying WILD Jump Start program. Working with their state networks, these partners offered increased training for four target audiences: secondary, urban, preservice faculty, and nonformal educators. As a result, 2,259 professionals—at least 10% of which work with diverse/underserved audiences—increased their abilities to teach about environmental topics.

### **Advancing Environmental Education**

EETAP3 is helping to ensure EE resources and programs are of high quality, support student academic achievement, and increase environmental literacy. The consortium is also increasing educators' access to information about EE and related areas. More than 9,850

education professionals enhanced their skills as environmental educators through in-person training and 452,998 individuals accessed information online using the Internet (eelink.net).



Coordinators engage in a field study activity during the 2009 Project WILD Coordinators' Conference in Cannon Beach, OR.

### Correlating EE Resources

Twenty states completed or are progressing with 30 correlations of Project Learning Tree, Project Wet, Project WILD, and Flying WILD curriculum to state learning standards. The completed correlation documents are posted on the PLT, CEE, and WET websites. These correlations demonstrate to educators how EE resources can be used to increase student achievement and help meet state standards across the curriculum.

### Building Capacity for EE

NAAEE and five of its Affiliates (Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication [EECOM]) are ensuring that current and emerging leaders are well versed in the components of high quality EE. These Affiliates conducted 33 training sessions for 1,387 educators and the 1,525,700 children and adults they reach. NAAEE and the Affiliate

Network held a workshop at the 2008 NAAEE conference so that Affiliates could share experiences in building state capacity to deliver a broad array of high quality EE programs. The EE Association of Oregon, working with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and NAAEE, also developed materials and training to assist other states with development of Environmental Literacy Plans.



State/provincial representatives at the Affiliates workshop during the 2008 NAAEE conference in Wichita, Kansas.

### Online Review of Resources

EETAP3 supports an online review program for EE curriculum materials and resources using the *Guidelines for Excellence*. The program both conducts reviews and provides access to reviewed materials through an online resource database shared with states. In Year 4, a major restructuring of EE Resource Reviews was integrated into a full upgrade of EE-Link technology that will include social networking functions that allow resource sharing, commenting, and online discussion. Training to review materials using the Guidelines and training to conduct self-reviews are also being merged and redesigned as a simplified, online, self-paced experience.

### Pre-Service Education

NAAEE continued working with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to ensure that every future teacher attending more than 600 NCATE-accredited colleges and universities is highly qualified to teach about the environment and environmental issues. In Year 4, NAAEE's Pre-

Service Advisory Council delivered updated training in the EE standards for teacher-education faculty attending NAAEE's 2008 conference. The Council also trained six NAAEE members to review reports submitted by institutions seeking NCATE accreditation. NAAEE continued to build and maintain current data in an online higher education directory; the database was accessed 145,953 times during Year 4. In addition, NAAEE awarded three fellowships to its mentoring program, helping faculty members develop quality pre-service EE programs.



Pre-Service Advisory Council meeting participants in Montreal prior to the 2008 World EE Congress. Back row, L to R: Courtney Crim, Elyse Rodewald, Joe Baust, Christine Moseley (co-chair), and Melissa Grella. Front row: Bora Simmons, Terry Wilson, Billy Bennett, Himanshu Gopalan, and Blanche Desjean-Perrotta (co-chair).

### EE Certification

By establishing state-level certification programs based on the *Guidelines for Excellence*, EETAP3 is helping to create accountability for the knowledge and skills expected of individual environmental educators. Eleven states currently have or are developing certification programs. NAAEE conducted a sustainability assessment for the EE certification program and is exploring the resulting recommendations. The Certification Advisory Council continued to revise drafts of an Accreditation Manual for states seeking

NAAEE accreditation for their certification programs; accreditation will ensure quality and reciprocity among states. Draft rubrics that will be used to review accreditation applications were also reviewed. Work on these two documents will continue in Year 5.



Sue Bumpous and Sarah Haines (L to R) display a new brochure at the launch of Maryland's EE Certification program at their 2009 state conference.

### Technology Tools for EE

EETAP3 supports EE-Link (an Internet portal for EE information), EE-News (an online newsletter sent to about 10,000 education professionals twice a month), EE-Jobs (an online job posting service that reaches more than 1,560 people each week), and a technology program for NAAEE Affiliates and other organizations that helps them build electronic networks. With 452,998 visits to the Web site in Year 4 alone, EE-Link is arguably the primary channel for reaching individuals new to EE. EE-Link provides EE information and resources including lesson plans for teachers, publications, programs, organizations, and more. NAAEE selected a vendor to begin work on a complete technology revamp for NAAEE and its Affiliates. The new Social Content system will fully replace EE-Link, EE-News, and EE-Jobs in 2010.

### Reaching Diverse Audiences

Another EETAP3 priority is helping education professionals develop the knowledge and skills needed to work more effectively with audiences traditionally underserved by EE. These audiences are wide-ranging, including African and Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and conservation managers.

### Delivering Culturally Relevant Environmental Education

UW-SP, Intercambios (a binational, bicultural consulting group), and three EE organizations continued to work together to develop strategies to become more inclusive. Each of the three organizations has refocused its original goals and embraced more inclusive approaches as learning has evolved. EETAP and Intercambios have collected data about program progress since its inception in Year 2. In October 2009, the learning community will meet to identify those experiences that have assisted them in achieving more inclusive practices. These challenges and strategies will be shared with the wider EE community. EETAP and Intercambios continued work on a related research article describing the evaluation results of one-day long EE and diversity workshops.

EETAP and Intercambios continued to post installments on diversity on the NAAEE website, sharing lessons learned and resources about inclusiveness practices. The site continues to show increases in average visitations from 1,333 per month in Year 2, to 2394 per month in Year 3 and 3,095 per month in Year 4. Total visits during the reporting period were 37,141.

### EE Training for Tribal Communities

Support for working in culturally diverse tribal communities across the United States continued during Year 4. Ninety education professionals working in six Native communities

in the United States and Tribal communities in Canada received training in EE. A conference for Native Waters educators and professionals was held in Montana in June and plans were made to meet next year in Nevada, creating a possible basis for a future network of Native Environmental Educators. Cultural diversity training helped the Native Waters coordinator understand and identify cultural learning styles and teaching methods, which were shared with coordinators in the field to help their interaction with Tribal groups.

continuing in Year 5. For more information about EETAP visit: [www.eetap.org](http://www.eetap.org)

### Conservation Education Toolkit

The National Audubon Society (NAS) has developed a draft Conservation Education Toolkit to provide resources, training tools, and research that will help conservation practitioners better understand how to use education as a conservation tool. In Year 4, NAS linked the conservation education planning tool—a cornerstone of the Toolkit—to its own broader conservation planning process, making the Toolkit easier to use and more effective. The Toolkit was presented at conferences and meetings to approximately 400 conservation professionals. NAS continued to assess the Toolkit and incorporate feedback. Initial responses at the testing stage indicate that the Toolkit will play an important role in helping to integrate education into on-the-ground conservation efforts.

### **Conclusion**

EETAP's work as highlighted above is helping to develop an environmentally literate public whose behaviors foster improved environmental quality and a healthy environment. Over the life of the project, this work has ensured that more than 1 million formal and nonformal educators and conservation professionals have the skills and knowledge to deliver EE that is fair, balanced, and scientifically accurate and that is relevant to culturally diverse audiences. This work is