

## **NEEAC Meeting Summary August 22, 2024**

### **Overview**

The National Environmental Education Advisory Council (NEEAC) held a virtual meeting on August 22, 2024. Mr. Javier Araujo, NEEAC Designated Federal Officer (DFO), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), led the meeting. Eight NEEAC members participated in the meeting. Representatives from EPA's Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education (OPEEE) and members of the public also attended. A list of participants is provided at the end of the meeting summary.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss charge topics that will be highlighted in the Report to Congress on the Status of Environmental Education in the United States for the EPA Administrator.

### **Meeting Minutes:**

#### **Convening of Meeting**

Mr. Araujo convened the meeting by welcoming the NEEAC members and EPA participants to the meeting. He thanked the members for their participation and introduced Ms. Clare Trinity, contractor to EPA, to review the Microsoft Teams meeting logistics.

#### **Welcoming Remarks**

Ms. Kim Noble, Senior Advisor for Environmental Education, OPEEE, introduced herself and OPEEE to the group. Ms. Noble emphasized the important role that educators have in combating climate change and praised the impressive environmental projects undertaken by K-12 students. Underscoring the essential contributions of K-12 teachers, she noted that environmental educators are fundamental in creating inclusive and impactful programs across the nation.

#### **Charge Presentation**

Mr. Araujo read the NEEAC Charge to the group and overviewed its key topics, which include assessing environmental education nationwide, identifying obstacles, and recommending actions to address challenges in areas such as climate change, environmental justice, clean energy, and water.

#### **Agenda Overview**

Ms. Tanya Poole, NEEAC Chair, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, briefly reviewed the agenda and outlined the meeting's objective of identifying three charge topics for the report on the status of environmental education in the United States.

## **NEEAC Introductions**

Ms. Poole introduced herself and shared her background as a conservationist and environmental educator. She then called on each NEEAC member to briefly introduce themselves.

## **Roles and Functions of EPA Federal Advisory Committees**

Ms. Noelle Green, Attorney-Advisor, EPA Federal Advisory Committee Management Oversight Division, presented information about EPA advisory committees. Ms. Green provided an overview of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) of 1972, FACA requirements, member roles and responsibilities, ethics considerations, committee limitations, and additional resources.

## **Discussion for NEEAC Members on Charge Topics and Potential Workgroup Assignments**

Ms. Poole opened the discussion by emphasizing the importance of the NEEAC's charge and the need to produce a report that addresses three key topics within their scope. The charge topics include:

- Environmental justice
- Climate change
- Building resilience
- Clean energy
- Clean transportation
- Clean water and related topics

The conversation was opened to the NEEAC members. Their discussion is summarized below:

- **Target Audience and Recommendations:** The report is intended for the EPA Administrator, with a focus on summarizing the status of environmental education and offering actionable recommendations at the federal level.
- **Climate Change as a Central Theme:** Ms. Laura Schifter, NEEAC Member, The Aspen Institute, and Ms. Poole suggested that climate change be the main focus of the report, with related topics falling under climate change, emphasizing its critical importance and relevance within each topic.
- **Environmental Skills Gap in Education:** Ms. L. Julian Keniry, NEEAC Member, Green Teach for Opportunity Project, emphasized a significant skills gap, particularly among non-environmental majors, and suggested that the report should address the disconnect between graduates' environmental science knowledge and the demands of employers for those skills.
- **Resilience and Empowerment in K-12 Education:** Ms. Rachael Arens, NEEAC Member, Omaha Public Schools, suggested the need for building resilience as a topic of focus. She stated that building resilience as a central topic may be the best way to involve and engage students in environmental issues.
- **Inclusion of Environmental Justice:** Ms. Rashida Ferdinand, NEEAC Vice-Chair, Sankofa Community Development Corporation, supported a focus on environmental justice,

highlighting its historical context and the impact on communities affected by policies and resource disparities. She noted that environmental justice is linked to climate change, has global relevance, and affects how environmental issues influence people and politics.

- **Incorporation of Real-Life Examples:** Each NEEAC member agreed on the importance of including in the report real-life examples and projects to motivate involvement and illustrate productive environmental education and climate action within communities.
- **Community Involvement:** Suggestions were made to partner with organizations like the Divine Nine, Girl Scouts, and 4-H to broaden the reach of environmental education and community involvement.
- **Data Collection via Surveys:** Ms. Keniry recommended conducting surveys in schools to gather data, which could inform the report's content and focus.
- **Collaboration Platform:** The group discussed creating a shared platform for ongoing information sharing. Mr. Araujo agreed to explore options for setting up a platform.
- **Exploration of Office of Environmental Education (OEE) Grants:** Mr. Araujo mentioned existing OEE grants, and the group discussed exploring additional grant opportunities to support local-level environmental education initiatives.

### **Public Comment Period**

Ms. Poole opened the public comment period. No comments from the public were made.

### **Summary and Next Steps**

Ms. Poole reopened the discussion to address charge topics and identify potential speakers for the next NEEAC meeting. She proposed that the group first compile a list of projects and environmental education activities. By reviewing these real-world examples and identifying barriers, they can then determine the key focus areas that will be addressed in the Report to Congress.

Additionally, Ms. Poole requested that the NEEAC members share with Mr. Araujo by September 6, 2024, the names and contact information of individuals to be invited as speakers for future NEEAC meetings. NEEAC members were also asked to submit discussion topics or questions they would like these speakers to address:

- **Ms. Schifter:** What do you believe is the current status of environmental and climate education at the federal level? Where are the successes? Where are there gaps/opportunities to do more?
- **Ms. Keniry:** (1) What are the initiatives underway to bridge the green skills/climate action gap? (2) What are some top initiatives and employers? (3) What do they want us to know about their and other agency initiatives?
- **Ms. Arens:** What research report(s) guide the agency's education initiatives?

An additional meeting is required to finalize the three topics of focus for the environmental education report. The NEEAC members voted on a meeting date and selected potential speakers.

**Proposed Next Meeting**

- **Date:** October 24, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM EDT
- **Alternative Date:** November 7, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM EDT

**Proposed Speakers**

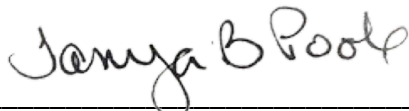
- Andrea Falken, U.S. Department of Education (currently detailed with American Climate Corps)
- Frank Niepold, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

**Adjournment**

Mr. Araujo thanked everyone for participating and adjourned the meeting.

**NEEAC Meeting Participants**

Javier Araujo, NEEAC DFO, EPA OPEEE  
Rachael Arens, NEEAC Member, Omaha Public Schools  
Jakob Avivah, EPA OPEEE  
Arline Bronzaft, NEEAC Member, Quiet Communities Inc.  
Victoria Eng, Tetra Tech  
Rashida Ferdinand, NEEAC Vice-Chair, Sankofa Community Development Corporation  
Lawrence Friedman, Member of the Public, Independent R+D and Research  
Noelle Green, Attorney-Advisor, EPA Federal Advisory Committee Management Division  
L. Julian Keniry, NEEAC Member, Green Teach for Opportunity Project  
Jessica Loya, Deputy Associate Administrator, EPA OPEEE  
Renee Madden, Member of the Public, Environmental Health Manager, South Carolina  
Department of Environmental Services-Bureau of Air Quality  
Chelsea McClure, EPA OPEEE  
Kim Noble, Senior Advisor for Environmental Education, EPA OPEEE  
Tanya Poole, NEEAC Chair, NC Wildlife Resources Commission  
Marc Rogoff, NEEAC Member, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
Laura Schifter, NEEAC Member, The Aspen Institute  
Said Sewell, NEEAC Member, Atlanta University Center Consortium, Inc.  
Clare Trinity, Tetra Tech



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Certified by: Tanya Poole, NEEAC Chair

9-17-24

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Date

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Certified by: Javier Araujo, NEEAC Designated Federal Official

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Date