

Breakout Session Discussion Groups – Now We Hear From You!

Developing Conservation Education Benchmarks

Facilitators: Margaret Tudor, Judy Silverberg

The Outdoor Education /Formal Education Connection

Facilitator: Jeff Rucks

Using Core Concepts to Communicate Your Agency Message

Facilitators: Nancy Herron, Warren Gartner

Recruitment, Retention and Stewardship

Facilitator: Ginny Wallace

Is There An Ideal Information and Education Section?

Facilitator: Kevin Frailey

CE Benchmarks Discussion Wednesday Afternoon Breakout session

http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12190 (This is the reference site to the National Science Foundation Book on Informal Science)

We looked at the work Margaret Tudor had done on drafting benchmarks. While this is a place to start perhaps there is a better way to frame them to make them more useable across the country. There was a lot of discussion of the three proposed benchmarks on the following areas: Fish and Wildlife Conservation Literacy: Systems, Fish and Wildlife Stewardship-Civic Participation and Service Learning, Outdoor Participation in Nature Health and Physical Fitness.

Why Benchmarks?

Benchmarks can be used to identify “good” CE in an agency - Benchmarks provide us a way to show how we need to provide and support opportunities

Conservation Education Benchmarks would be useful in helping to develop state EE Literacy Plan if Leave No Child Inside Legislation is passed.

Benchmarks are a reference point - they can be used for self assessment
They also can be used by an individual or team of students - way in which they accomplish the tasks

How to Assess Benchmarks

Develop an event for students to demonstrate

Measurement - need to state outcomes - Logic Model

We might want to consider using IC - Implementation Configuration Maps as a way to delineate the ideal and what intermediate steps would show progress toward the ideal.

Where to go from Arkansas?

Consider framing the benchmarks around the six strands that are in the book.

Learners in Informal Environments: People, Places & Pursuits

6 strands include:

Strand 1: Experience excitement, interest and motivation to learn about phenomena in the natural and physical world.

Strand 2: Come to generate, understand, remember and use concepts, explanations, arguments, models and facts related to science.

Strand 3: Manipulate, test, explore, predict question, observe and make sense of the natural and physical world.

Strand 4: Reflect on science as a way of knowing; on processes, concepts, and institutions of science; and on their own process of learning about phenomena.

Strand 5: Participate in scientific activities and learning practices with others, using scientific language and tools.

Strand 6: Think about themselves as science learners and develop an identity as someone who knows about, uses and sometimes contribute to science.

Strands 2-4 are the same ones as in *Taking Science to School* regarding the formal science education sector.

Suggestion that we develop a NSF grant in informal education for work on the Conservation Education Benchmarks.

Talk to NSF and EPA about funding. There would be real benefit in getting representatives of Science Education Departments and conservation educators to have a dialog about how to best work together.

How can we assess whether we are achieving the benchmarks? Use of others data. (This will need further discussion.

Write a grant NSF for informal science education to develop a national assessment or assessment plan.

NAP Assessment - National Assessment Progress

Submit the NSF grant through Jan – at the NH Department of Education or other organization who is approved to submit grants to NSF.

\$250K - do a meeting with AFWA folks and the State SC³ to discuss how to implement together formal and informal education.

Theresa Alberici from Pennsylvania Game Commission will serve as chair of this subcommittee. Others are welcome to join whether they were at Arkansas or not.

Outdoor Skills Education/Formal Education Connection

Define Outdoors Skills within this context

Fishing

Observation

Outdoor preparedness

Outdoor Ethics (Leave No Trace)

Tracking

Habitat/wildlife I.D.

Shooting Sports (archery, shotgun, rifle)

Gardening/habitat skills

Winter sports (snowshoe, cross-country skiing)

Mountain biking

Boating

Outdoor water sports (swimming, water rescue)

Wilderness first aid

Camping

Backpacking

Primitive living skills

Mapping

Where/When

Residential camps

Parents/families

Schools

- PE classes

- Elective classes (Ag classes, academic)

- College Courses

- Outdoor classrooms

- Health classes/fairs

- Afterschool clubs/activities

- Fieldtrips

Metro parks (parks staff)

Expos and festivals

At risk/high needs kids

Churches ("Centershot Ministries)

Barriers

Where to go? Where to take kids?

Lack of partners

Families don't have skills, interest, time, history, experience

Illegal? (guns in schools)

Urban vs. rural schools

Equipment cost

Secure and adequate storage

Standards

Faculty comfort level

Faculty personal experience (professional development)

Fear

Time

Success Stories

Business partners (Partners of Education)

Conservation Education Centers (residential and others)

Nebraska: Outdoor skills camp

"Physical Education in the Rough"

Texas: Outdoor Education Association

Find the success stories in your state!

Next Steps

Impact education standards: PE, History, Art, Health

Teacher workshops

After-school field days

Tie into health/wellness movement

Partner with other outdoor recreation organizations (Outward Bound)

Marketing wildlife viewing

Core Concepts

Foundation → ACTION



Why?

- The core concepts are intended to make our lives easier because we have an agreed-upon way to talk about fish and wildlife conservation.
- If every agency is talking about the same 10 things with their key audiences, imagine the difference we can make to increase the nation's conservation literacy.



We have the core, now what?



- Go back to your internal agency team
 - Share the results
 - Discuss how they apply to your agency: super-structure agencies, some concepts are more unique to fish & wildlife, but can be applied to forestry
 - Customize for your programming (IN example)
 - Correlate to state programs to help ID gaps in conservation ed efforts
 - **Adaptation → Adoption**

Now what?



- Apply the core concepts to your work
 - They've been applied to the Scope & Sequence, now it's your turn
 - Wildlife diversity management = biodiversity cc
 - Biologists concerns (i.e., habitat loss) = core concept(s) = Project WILD activity
 - Outdoor EXPOs, youth camp activities, other (WHEP, WET)
 - Use to validate existing programs since they can be tied to benchmarks

Beyond the Schoolyard and Garden Club



- Focus on 1-2 when interacting with your audiences
 - Public: media, outreach, materials = human/health benefit
 - Legislatures: showing the monetary benefits of f/w conservation, especially during this economic crisis, healthy kids save \$, wildlife activities create jobs
 - The core concepts should allow you to address current issues.

Who else needs to know?



- State Directors
 - AFWA communications vehicles
 - Special session at Annual Meeting
 - Resolution at Annual Meeting
 - Spell out what we want them to do with the core concepts – incorporate in strategic planning



Who else?

- Other organizations
 - ACI presentation
 - TWS, EE, Science Teachers, NAAEE



What happens after?

- Provide Conservation Education team with examples of how you “implemented” the core concepts
- Tell us where there are message gaps – stewardship?
- Tell us what you need to make it work

LINKING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAMS WITH STEWARDSHIP
DISCUSSION GROUP: ELEMENTS AND CHALLENGES
Reported by Ernie Gammage, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
January 2009

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Recruitment: Outreach to the unengaged and unaware using outdoor skills, environmental education and interpretation to teach people to fish, hunt, paddle, camp, hike, climb, mountain bike, wildlife watch and support our missions and departments.

Retention: keep and or re-engage our customers, users and supporters.

What's this look like?: Imagine a school house in a school yard behind a white picket fence. All day long folks walk by, not noticing or caring about the school yard, much less the school. Recruitment is getting their attention and getting them to open that gate, walk into the school yard and into the school. Retention is educating and communicating with them once they are inside the school house.

On the attached "building stewardship model" we see the four levels of engagement: the bottom one is the recruitment level and the two above characterize retention efforts. This continuum leads to stewardship, from being unengaged and unaware to understanding our roles in conservation and acting on that understanding.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT

1. Set goals and objectives – what do you want to do? What have you got the resources to do? What's the best way to do it?
2. Define targets – who do you want to reach? Different targets require different strategies and programs.
3. Multiply yourself – we simply can't do this by ourselves. Use volunteers and partners, especially non-traditional partners like park and recreation departments, councils of government, Children & Nature interests, faith-based organizations, and community organizations, especially those that deal with children and families. Work to embed *our* programs into their programming. They become us.
4. Deliver multiple contacts – one shot exposures rarely change behaviors or attitudes. Plan to touch the same targets multiple times. If you must do one-shot events, a goal should be to mine that event for other targets and partners that can provide opportunities for multiple touches.
5. Engage families and family equivalents – parents or equivalents are the gatekeepers for youth: if a parent doesn't support and facilitate new behaviors, they won't happen. One of our strengths is that many of what we offer are fun family activities. Who are the gatekeepers for your targets?
6. Meet them where they are – especially for ethnic minorities, participation in cultural events is a wonderful way to reach these communities. Provide fun activities, prospect for partners and keep at it.

7. Cast a wide net – if you invert the stewardship model on page 3, it becomes a funnel. It takes a lot of entry level (outreach/recruitment) activity to produce stewards at the other end. Yes, it *is* a numbers game.

RETENTION ELEMENTS

1. Do we know who our customers – our core customers and our casual customers – are? How can we keep them if we don't?
2. Do we mine the data we have (license information) in useful ways?
3. Do we use this data to communicate with our constituents? Remind them to purchase their expiring license? Take advantage of special promotions? Do we make them feel important? In this group discussion, a significant number of participants said their agencies do not contact license holders!
4. Do we intelligently use our constituent partners (DU, NWTF, etc.) to assist in the retention effort?

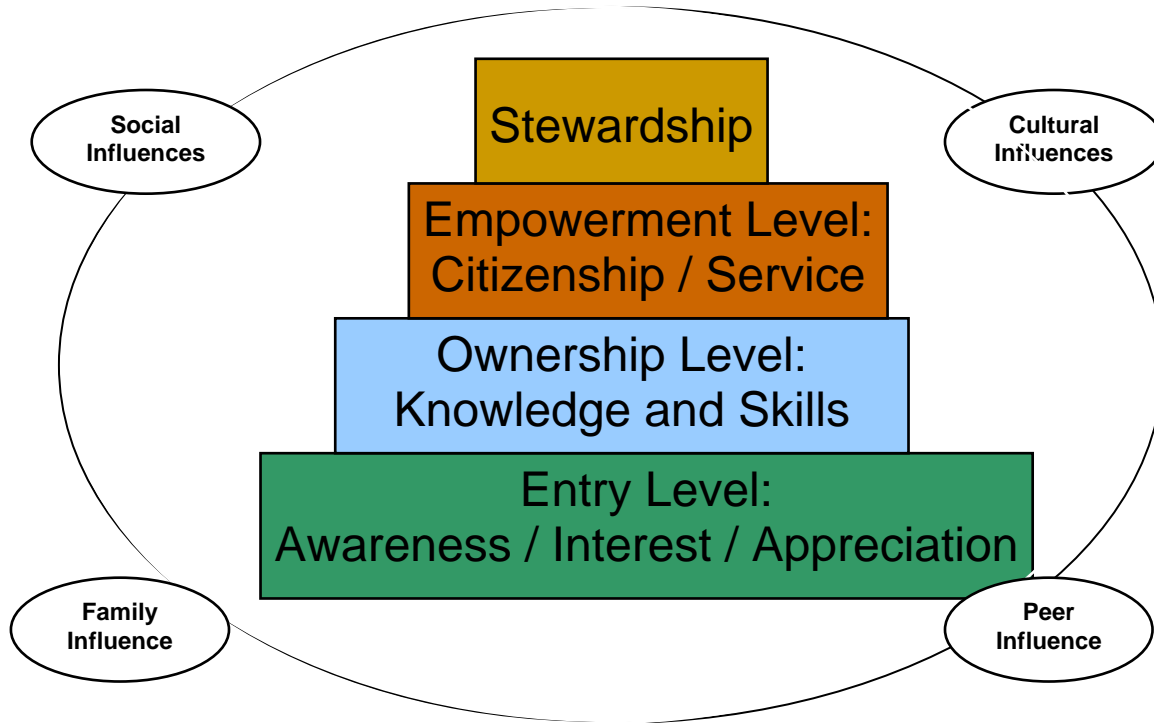
STEWARDSHIP

Becoming a steward of natural resources is a process that travels along a continuum. It's our job to provide programs, information and encouragement along the way that propel the newbie up and along this continuum. Unless we have a range of programs and resources that speak to the entire continuum, success is problematic.

CHALLENGES

1. How do we ensure success with limited staff, time and resources? Do we evaluate for effectiveness and wisely use what we do have? How do we say "no" to programs shoved down from above? If we can't say "no", how do we handle an increased work load? Is it better to do a few things well rather than many poorly?
2. How can hook and bullet agencies that are restricted by philosophy and the drive to generate fees reach beyond their limited spheres to use *every* means available to recruit new hunters and anglers? Q: What lies between the living room and the fishing/hunting experience? A: A great deal.
3. How do we successfully move the newly-engaged along the path and connect them with opportunities (mentors, clubs, etc.) that will contribute to their becoming life-long users and advocates of the outdoors.
4. How do we migrate from 20th century ideas, targets and technologies to the 21st century? Our youth are growing into a world we could only imagine. Are we going to lead them into the future or trot along behind?

Model for Building Stewardship



Entry Level: Awareness / Interest / Appreciation Youth and adults are exposed to new themes, concepts, and activities in a positive way, consistent with the mission of the organization. Focus is on giving participants a “gee-whiz” experience that engages them and makes them want more. Program activities include special events, TV shows, park visits and exhibits, school presentations, etc. Entry-level experiences should lead participants to learn more about and acquire skills regarding the activity.

Ownership Level: Knowledge and Skills As participants gain in experience to an activity or issue, they build “buy-in” or ownership. For example, one might go from saying “I tried fishing” to “I fish.” Examples of ownership-level activities include: park day camps; Becoming an Outdoors Woman; hunter education; boater education; fishing clinics; some Project WILD activities; etc.

Empowerment Level: Citizenship, Service and Critical Thinking Showing participants the impacts their choices and actions have on interconnected natural and social systems can help them understand their place in these systems. This can aid and strengthen their empowerment and facilitate their willingness to adopt stewardship behaviors. It’s important that learners have ample opportunities to “practice” stewardship behaviors at this stage. Examples of empowerment-level activities include: volunteers and friends groups; hunter, boater and angler education instructors; Project WILD facilitators; Master Naturalists; student internships; advisory groups, etc.

Stewardship Level: When participants sustain service and citizenship behaviors over time, they become stewards. Stewards are informed, responsible and ethical and act on behalf of the good of future generations. Examples of stewards include: long-term volunteers; citizens who vote or become active in local natural resource issues; and safe, responsible and mentoring enthusiasts.

Other Influences: Myriad social and cultural factors influence participants every step of the way. Peer activities, structured activities, advertising, television, even the stories families and friends tell around the dinner table, picnics or gatherings influence attitudes and participation in the outdoors.

Breakout Discussion Group: Is There An Ideal Information and Education Section?

Representatives from 16 different state agencies participated in this discussion about how conservation education (CE) programs are nested within the structure of an agency and in turn, the pros and cons on centralized CE (staff/budget working out of one office/bureau) versus a fragmented approach (CE located in various divisions using separate pots of money and staff). Many state agencies remain fragmented and admit a comfort zone in the division approach, some admitting they've not experienced a centralized office for CE. Although there is "respect" and "buy in" from their immediate division, the value of CE is not strong agency wide. Communication and coordination with other CE professionals is also more difficult. Often redundant publications are created. However, many of these same agencies felt that larger centralized programs may prove to be a target for legislators looking for programs to cut so staying under the radar was cited as an advantage.

Those centralized CE programs felt a much more coordinated initiative and a higher "value" quotient among agency leadership. A broader agency outlook assists CE program development from being too "parochial" along division lines and allows big picture planning. A comment from one participant in regards to allowing CE to become centralized and a possible legislative target was, "We cannot and should not hide our CE achievements. Our work is mission critical and the time is now. We must position ourselves to be valuable political assets to our agencies"