

## **Project WILD Sub-Committee Meeting Notes**

### **AFWA Annual Meeting**

**Wednesday, September 8, 2021**

**10:30 am -12:30 pm Eastern Time**

#### **10:30 AM Call to Order/ Review Agenda**

#### **10:35 Introductions**

Johnnie Smith, Vice Chair, introduced himself, along with Project WILD staff. Currently we do not have a chair for this subcommittee. Marc reviewed the agenda. Johnnie reviewed the charge of the Project WILD Subcommittee.

#### **10:40 Approval of Minutes for the 2021 North American Annual Meeting**

The minutes from the previous subcommittee meeting were shared, and time was given for review. The minutes were approved by a vote.

#### **10:45 Report from Project WILD Staff**

##### **WILD Host Organizations**

Kelly provided a snapshot of who coordinates Project WILD across the country.

##### **Guide Sales**

Guide sales took a dip during the pandemic, but in 2021, we've already surpassed all of last year's sales. Coordinators have been very creative with online and hybrid offerings. We are ultimately optimistic.

##### **Restructure**

About a year ago, we restructured. Kelly and Elena code half of their time to the Management Assistance Team. Project WILD is essentially working with two full-time staff. This is pretty small compared to similar programs such as Project WET and Project Learning Tree. We each have a lot on our plate, and it might take us a bit more time to get back to you. The benefit is that it has made the financial picture for Project WILD much better than it would have been otherwise.

##### **Accomplishments During Past Year**

The online store has been a learning process for all of us. We have a non-public store where coordinators can send people to purchase guides on their own for the coordinator price. We did this to help facilitate the ease of coordinators shipping guides as they do online workshops. There are some coordinators who do not pay for the guides; the participants pay. That is one way for participants to pay for their own guides. Since it's not a public store, not everyone has access. There have been challenges and a learning curve for us all.

We had a fundraising campaign in October last year. We did an escape room that raised about \$500. Our fundraising efforts are small. We don't want to compete with other programs. Kelly has found sponsors for our Project WILD conference.

Second goal was to launch additional online courses. We have two courses running currently – Project WILD (PW) online and Growing Up WILD (GUW) online. Elena starts those courses on January 1 and ends them on December 31. Some coordinators use these quite a bit. For example, North Carolina uses it a lot, so we created a unique instance of the courses just for them.

We will be creating several new online courses as part of the EPA Grant we are a part of. Flying WILD is about ready to go – we are just waiting to sign the agreement with NAAEE. We hope to launch a climate and wildlife online courses and Aquatic WILD online course in Spring 2022.

We developed the WILD Learning Lab online website and enhanced resources online for specific activity links, plus additional online teaching and learning resources. We created a large matrix in March of 2020 to support online learning.

We created four Project WILD promotional videos. Each one has its own theme, though they overlap. Marc played one of the videos. A big thanks to folks in Texas, Georgia, and New Jersey who helped make those videos happen! These videos are currently accessible on the Project WILD Coordinator's Corner. We will also be making them more visible on the Project WILD website.

Goal 4: Training for PW Coordinators. We had several new coordinators come on board during the pandemic. We hosted an online educator training for new coordinators and followed up with a facilitator training online. Many coordinators attended the Conservation Education Conference on Virtual Learning. This year, we held our annual coordinator conference online again. About 40 facilitators also attended. We hope to be in person in North Carolina next May.

Goal 5: Update and reprint PW curricula. Ongoing efforts to reprint as needed. Last fall, we began distributing the new format of the GUW guide. Some coordinators still have stocks of the larger layout, but many states have gone to using the reformatted 2nd edition. The PW guide is at the printer's now.

Goal 6: Still looking for a subcommittee chair.

### **Goals for Next 12 Months**

- Update Project WILD Coordinator Handbook
  - We are revisiting the handbook again with an eye to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Provide Coordinators with DEI Training
- Develop online courses
- Reprint Project WILD Curricula
- Launch and administer EE360+ seed grants to states
  - This is the EPA grant led by the North American Association for Environmental Education, which AFWA is a partner on.

- Provide Professional Development for Project WILD Network
  - Annual conference, webinars, special trainings, new coordinator orientation, etc.

### **11:15 Project WILD Goal Statement Revisited**

A team of coordinators has been working on strengthening the handbook through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. One outcome was to look closely at the Project WILD goal statement.

Current mission statement: The mission of Project WILD is to provide wildlife-based conservation and environmental education that fosters responsible actions toward wildlife and related natural resources.

Current goal statement: The goal of Project WILD is to assist learners of any age in developing awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitment to result in informed decisions, responsible behavior, and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment upon which all life depends.

One flag was the “learners of any age” phrase – this is a limited way to look at diversity. How about “all learners”? Is that enough? Do we really need to look at some of the words here – what is it that we’re developing? Where did it come from? That question led to new ideas.

Various goal statements for consideration:

Existing goal:

The goal of Project WILD is to assist learners of any age in developing awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitment to result in informed decisions, responsible behavior, and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment upon which all life depends.

Draft goal #2:

The goal of Project WILD is to inspire and affirm all learners in strengthening knowledge, skills, commitment, and culturally-relevant connections that support beneficial and responsible actions for wildlife and nature upon which all life depends.

Draft goal #3 (with “reduce-barriers”):

The goal of Project WILD is to inspire, affirm, and reduce barriers for all learners in strengthening knowledge, skills, commitment, and culturally-relevant connections that support beneficial and responsible actions for wildlife and nature upon which all life depends.

Draft goal statement #4:

The goal of Project WILD is to assist all learners in developing awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitment that support informed decisions, responsible behavior, and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment upon which all life depends.

This will take some time to narrow this down. What direction do coordinators want to go in? Something more expansive? Something closer to the original? When we get to a stopping point, we will propose this to AFWA leadership for potential adoption. Any thoughts?

Thanks to the team of coordinators who have helped work on this!

### **11:30 State Spotlight: Rhode Island's Project WILD Program**

Kimberly Sullivan has been with RI DEM for 22 years. She has been coordinating the division's aquatic resources education program for 18 years. She became the Project WILD coordinator in 2012. Kim gave a great summary of her WILD work in Rhode Island.

### **11:40 Other Updates: - EE360+ Grant – Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow's (CLFT's) module update**

The most significant update on the grant is that there is no update. A federal grant is a federal grant – they move on their own time frame unfortunately. Thanks to the coordinators who have submitted an application for a mini-grant. We welcome others to submit their applications!

We have two contractors on standby – one to help us finish up the online courses and one to help us with DEI initiatives. As soon as we sign our agreement with NAAEE, we'll be able to get them going. We are excited about our coordinators getting to work with the DEI contractor. We hope she will help us make sure workshops are inclusive and that we're doing our best to provide materials that are inclusive of diverse populations. We are looking forward to this all getting started and are waiting on the agreement being signed.

CLFT's module: Wildlife Resources and Conservation in North America: An Educational Guide

A key piece of this publication (around 50 pages) is that some of the pages include the Project WILD activity "Oh Deer!" There is also a lot of context and resources for including the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/7816/2802/9343/Wildlife-Resources-Classroom-FINAL-Web.pdf>

The module is available on the web, and we can also send the files for those who want to print their own copies. We are sending hard copies to coordinators who indicated they would like some.

We will be involved in BatWeek 2021 – leading a session of "Bat Blitz" online.

We've also been in discussion with Suzanne Fellows with the Jr. Duck Stamp program. On Wednesday, 11/17, we'll be hosting "Wildlife Sketching with Rebecca Knight." She is a past winner of the Jr. Duck Stamp program and is a big supporter of the program.

### **12:00 PM State Roundtable**

Lori Adams in ID: They have been doing virtual classes. They do hybrid classes. This fall they are launching a bird migration class. Tying in in-person bird banding. WILD About Bees, tied with Xerxes society. They do 15-hour trainings – that is the carrot they provide. Teachers want the continuing ed. credits. The participants loved it! Lori is using Google Sites; it has been working well. They are offering WILD About Turkeys again. They have to take Hunter Ed. Or Turkey Hunting 101 to get the full hours that they need.

Gina Long in FL: Project WILD has been chugging along pretty consistently in Florida. They bounced back in the pandemic doing online trainings. They have a few facilitators doing small workshops in person now. They are still offering fully virtual workshops. It has helped with reaching new people around the

state – like in Key West. They do have some fun plans for next summer. First, they are doing a summer teacher camp and working with state parks, offering a week-long immersive experience in Florida's outdoors. Getting Project WILD certification and doing other fun stuff along the way. They plan to offer volunteer opportunities for educators to work one-on-one with biologists, spending a couple of weeks in the field.

Julie Bless in NV: Their Project WILD program is rocking and rolling in the Las Vegas area. They have a huge waitlist. They are offering it for free as long as they can. That limits the size. That program is heavily Aquatic WILD – their angler ed. coordinator leads a lot of those. They will likely do some joint workshops with Project WET. They are doing their Nevada Knockout program again this year. They added a whole section in their resources that aligns Project WILD lessons to the knockout. They have three pilot Project WILD programs in the works: e.g., urban wildlife HS program, very career focused.

Barb in IA: They have been doing G UW. They have reorganized in their department, and Project WILD has moved a little higher up the list. They will be offering more in the upcoming year.

Lindsay in NE: They are doing lots of Project WILD – they have moved online. They are reaching more diverse audiences through doing online offerings. They have a weekly “Science of” series, plus Nature Nerd nights. They have also added a community science specialist to their team. They have been diversifying how they are able to reach audiences by looking at what types of programming they are offering.

#### **12:15 Wrap-up Discussion 12:30 Adjourn**

The pandemic has highlighted the creativity and passion of the people we work with!

Kiki made a motion to adjourn. Gina seconded. Meeting adjourned!