

Project WILD Sub-Committee Notes
AFWA Annual Meeting
Wednesday September 9, 2020
1:00 pm -3:00 pm Central Time

Elena: Welcome! Glad you are here. Amazing plenary session! This panel had lots of wonderful ideas - very inspirational. Hoping AFWA, state agencies, nonprofits can put those ideas to life. Hope you enjoyed it as well!

Elena provided quick overview of Zoom functions.

WILD team introduced themselves - Rusty, Elena, Kelly, Marc (Johnnie not able to make it.)

Rusty - thank you to staff and to Johnnie.

Elena: Johnnie couldn't join us, but he has been a great help guiding the direction of Project WILD.

Elena, Kelly, and Marc introduced themselves. Elena reviewed the agenda.

Rusty called for approval of minutes from the March meeting. Barb Gigar made a motion to approve, Angie Haywood seconded. All those in favor give a thumbs up or wave. No one opposes, the motion passes.

Rusty reviewed subcommittee charge. When AFWA took over, there was an understanding that AFWA would be financially stable within five years. The Project WILD staff made it happen within one year. Very good news, and we want to keep it that way.

Kelly: Update of Guide Sales.

Increase in sales in 2017, corresponding to release of new guide. But pandemic has taken its toll. Sales are very low now. All guide sales have taken a serious hit.

Re-formatted GUW guide will be released, probably this fall.

Flying WILD--planning to update, but due to COVID pandemic, plans are changing.

Elena:

Restructuring to help handle lower revenue due to COVID-19 and reduced guide sales. Elena and Kelly will be moving half of their time to support AFWA's Management Assistance Team. For coordinators who were able to attend the session we offered by Tom Kalouse, that was put on through the MAT Team. Elena and Kelly will be able to code half of their time to the MAT Team, which has funding available.

After the Annual Meeting we will figure out the details of what exactly Elena and Kelly will be doing. The downside is the loss of staff time for Project WILD. We want to be careful to keep providing support to coordinators. Elena paused to ask for questions. Tabbi asked if this is a permanent change or for the time being.

Elena: Good question. We will take a look at where we're at in a year - hopefully guide sales will rebound and things can return. It's temporary, but we will reassess in a year. We will keep you all posted. We try to be transparent in our decision-making process.

Rusty - you'll still have monthly-ish meetings, right?

Elena: Correct. We have one Thursday next week actually.

We have been frantically trying to get things online. We have a Growing Up WILD online course. Some states have taken advantage of this. This is an example of a resource we hope to offer to coordinators. We are finalizing a course in Project WILD - some coordinators have volunteered to review that. We have plans to develop other online courses as well. Let us know if you would like to help!

Marc: Reviewed other online resources. Some of you have participated in our weekly online WILD Learning Lab. Educators get together online for an hour to try out WILD activities that have been re-developed for online implementation. For example, "Oh Deer!" involves rolling dice in a Yahtzee! Style simulation. Last week we did "Sustainability: Then, Now, Later," and we've done "Dragonfly Pond" as well. Marc will be updating the schedule with new activities. We will also repeat some activities.

Using Google apps helps test using online tools and applications to do activities.

We also have a Safe Learning & Responsible Recreation Activity Adaptations sheet to help gather ideas and suggestions for adapting WILD procedures to socially distant learning. There are categories that apply to different learning scenarios - e.g., in-person educator professional development, online learning with students, etc.

Michelle asked if anyone can access this sheet. Currently you can comment, and contribute via a form. Marc would be happy to share editing access temporarily. We also have a preliminary snapshot of a Google Site where we will have activities that are being redeveloped to take advantage of online resources. We are working with KACEE on this - they are helping us with these adaptations. This will be launched at the end of September or October. We hope to offer PD training to go along with this.

Elena: If you have questions, let us know. We did receive some funding from a Responsible Recreation grant to help make this happen. We are focusing on outdoor activities to help students get outside.

PR Funding: Rusty - there have been some emails going back and forth about the interpretation about how to use those funds. Some states have used PR funds for Project WILD, while other states have not. In GA, they use aquatic ed. Funds for Aquatic WILD. What are states experiencing? Angie said they also use DJ funds for aquatic. They do not use PR now but are looking into it to see if it could support WILD. Ditto for Jen. Would love to hear how they could.

Elena gave a quick overview of PR and how it works.

Project WILD is not R3, but there are activities that include hunting and angling and their role in conservation in North America. Where WILD activities have been used with Hunter Ed. or R3 programming, using PR for WILD would likely be eligible.

Kerry: frustrating that conservation education is not included in PR now, whereas DJ includes education.

Marc - Someone from USFWS shared with him once that DJ, which came later, people were more focused on the role of education, but when PR was established earlier, that was not a focus area.

Rusty - work with your federal aid coordinator to write the grant in such a way that includes teaching wildlife management principles using Project WILD. If it is approved, then you are good to go.

Kristen - plenary speakers reiterated importance of conservation education, meanwhile funding sources are narrowing in scope.

Elena - we did invite coordinators to share at last year's Project WILD Subcommittee at the annual meeting - we could share more information on that front.

Share R3 doc that I put together. Jen suggested we share that with directors too - may be more helpful coming from us than from the bottom up.

Lindsay: Also look at other sources of funding. Tie in the relevancy issue to reach folks who are not hunting and fishing. Project WILD is a key way to reach other audiences. Connecting WILD and R3 is a piece of the conversation.

Lisa Van Alstyne - tried to leave things open to allow room for states to demonstrate that WILD fits. Let's keep having conversations about this to get this to a sweet spot for everyone.

Rusty - yes, work with your grant coordinator.

Elena - This is not the end of the conversation. We can continue this to see how the national office can support you.

Kerry shared about Project WILD in Maryland. Her work is all about helping people and educators feel comfortable outside - Maryland is over 80% urban. Kerry shared about her Maryland G UW online course. Using Edmodo, FlipGrid, Google Forms, and Nearpod. Educators had to do a final project to summarize how they were going to use G UW. First course was pretty successful! Good responses and a lot of interest. People did want a live piece with more interaction with other educators. Next session will be half self-paced and half live. Kerry is also scheduling some trainings that will be all live. Kerry is happy to share! Kerry is going to be putting together more resources for Project WILD, based on what they've learned from doing Growing Up WILD. Did an online course with college students - 2 hours together, two hour break, then another two hours over a week. Included Maryland EE certification. Kerry did an open Project WILD workshop in the same format. They used Padlet for introductions, since FlipGrid was a tech barrier for some participants. They did Limiting Factors, Dragonfly Pond, First Impressions together, and they did other activities like Monarch Marathon on their own. Worked out pretty well, though not the same as being together in person outside.

Keep it simple - not everyone is tech savvy. Always have a buddy to help run things on Zoom. Increase reminders. More participation that way. Increase time allotted for doing activities - getting people used to the online format and explaining things takes time. Offer options. Build in accessibility - including subtitles, slides, materials, etc.

Jen asked if folks can get certified in WILD training right now. Depends on the state - some folks are offering online training, and others have done limited capacity, socially distant in-person workshops. We are working on an online course for Project WILD, though that is not ready yet.

Michelle asked how to get people to do homework. Kerry incentivized homework completion by offering prizes!

State Roundtable:

Barb in Iowa-Has been compiling resources to share this fall.

Lindsay in NE- they are working on virtual programs and on-demand videos. 80 people on average attending their virtual programs each week. They have a new ed. Strategic plan, and one of the things they focused on is identifying underserved audiences and what they want from the agency. They'll be sending out a survey to collect data on that.

They are meeting with partners to help them spread the survey out to stakeholders. Provide a kids magazine with a flyer that says please take our survey - partnering with foodbank. Putting up posters in grocery stores in diverse neighborhoods.

David in TN - needs some training. Kerry offered her upcoming course for folks to attend. Kelly will get David connected with Kerry & G UW online course.

Tabbie in AR: Started virtual nature center. AZGFnaturecenter.com. Will start building out teacher resources for a digital platform.

Holly Sanders (in AR): Holly worked in Project WILD program work group for Arkansas to adapt to online workshop. Activities were adapted for online. Facilitators provided with Zoom training. They have completed two workshops-- 2 half day workshops. More scheduled for September, October, November, and December.

Jen Dennison in OH: Pilot testing of online G UW course next week with pre-school center. Agency restrictions will require use of TEAMS. Three meetings-- introduction, followed by two voluntary meetings. One week long. Using Flipgrid for videos and Nearpod for explaining lessons. Ohio will be piloting a combined Terrestrial and Aquatic workshop in November. COSI and Children's Hunger Alliance Partnership-- distributes STEM kits, is partnering with agency to help distribute the agency's kid magazine. Also, after school program titled Conservation Adventures, will expand to high school program. Sportsman Alliance is helping with that.

Carl Richardson in PA: Much accomplished in developing new materials to adapt to pandemic. Connecting Trout in the Classroom to Project WILD activities. They will be sending out virtual packets to teachers, coloring pages, updating online portal, updating academic standards in Pennsylvania. Trying a program known as STREAM Girls (the "R" is recreation in the STEAM acronym). Activities scheduled this summer is seven locations. Also working with nonformal educators associated with Girl Scouts. Carl has seen a shift in R3 efforts to include more substance beyond the traditional kids programs during the Pandemic.

Kimberly in RI: Gearing up for online training. Three modules in Google Classrooms that teachers have to complete in advance. It is a challenge to manage teachers getting work complete and turn in assignments. Also considering Edmodo.

KI Romanoff in Alaska: Trying to make WILD and other resources more accessible. Developing online activities, short videos, audio clips around different themes (Examples: Spring Migration, All About Bears). One package involves Caribou populations. Also provided social media training for education team. Use of inquiry challenges for students near their homes, encouraging outdoor exploration of students and their parents. Very positive feedback thus far. AK will continue to build on these thematic packages. We are all learning a lot about virtual presentations! More connection to rural communities is one of the positive opportunities.

Daniel from FL: Director for FL Youth Conservation Networks for past 8 months. One of first tasks was to hire new Project WILD coordinator (Gina Long). Gina will be completing her third online training next week. Key question: how can we get more of our content out virtually? Future data collection about training will include more demographic data about who is using Project WILD.

Josh Gold from Archery Trade Association: New conservation initiative from ATA. If anyone wants to connect about bow hunting and Project WILD, contact Josh.

Rusty Garrison--retiring December 1st. Rusty's been involved in Project WILD since the '90s.