

## Education Working Group

March 28, 2024

Attendees: 24

### Agenda:

#### Welcome and introductions- Elena Takaki

- Kellie's flight was cancelled and she was unable to attend; Elena will be leading today's working group discussions
- Having regular meetings in conservation education leadership
  - Quarterly meetings
  - Next webinar: April 18 @1pm Eastern

#### Conservation Educators Network

- Next meeting is May 9- invite going out soon
- If you're on our sign-in sheet, we will make sure you get the invite

#### Environmental Education in Michigan

- Most states don't have centralized education in their state FW agencies
- Michigan does have a centralized education division; marketing and outreach Education Division
- Salmon in the Classroom- a successful program in the schools (300 schools); great media event
- Professional Development is important; Academy of Natural Resources (ANR) classic courses: natural resources on curricula, Project WILD, NatureQuest, MEECS, WEE Ones, STEM From Nature etc
  - Program provides salient, long-term results for participants
- COVID pandemic threw a wrench in (outdoor) education programs
  - Looked at doing programs virtual → staff were not very excited about doing this
  - Developed the *Nature at School* program Fall 2020-Spring 2021
    - 12,346 students participated in live (virtual) programming; 458 virtual programs conducted
    - Popular with the teachers
    - [www.Michigan.gov/natureatschool](http://www.Michigan.gov/natureatschool)
    - Nature Awaits- goal to get every 4<sup>th</sup> grader to a Michigan State Park
      - 100K 4<sup>th</sup> graders in MI
      - Inquiry based learning
      - Buses paid for with grants
      - [www.michigan.gov/natureawaits](http://www.michigan.gov/natureawaits)
- Overall- Michigan DNR education programs have done really well
  - Mainly due to networking and partners → very important
  - Have built a great team

#### Early Childhood Field Guide and Field-Testing

- Ohio has a new K-2 field guide
  - An identifications guide for young learners

- Project began in 2018; picked species most likely to be seen by kids this age; requested opinions from Project WILD facilitators that work with that age group
- Brought in experts to review initial texts drafted by agency staff; collected feedback and made a lot of adjustments; Contracted to do field tests in classrooms
- Connected to the state standards
- Lessons learned → field testing is extremely important; check and double check your writing levels; link to state reading and science goals; make it fun
- Will be available on the Ohio DNR website soon
- Soft release was on March 14, 2024; has been extremely popular

### Project WILD Updates

- Project WILD's mission is to provide wildlife-based conservation and environmental education that fosters responsible actions toward wildlife and related natural resources. All curriculum materials are backed by sound educational practices and theory, and represent the work of many professionals within the fields of education and natural resource management from across the country.
- Generally 1 coordinator in every state with a few exceptions
- In 2023
  - Received a MSCG for new online professional development course
  - Launched and administered Year 3 EE360+ Seed grants to states
  - Provided professional development to PW network
  - Continued review and development of PW activities
- Have a Spanish version of Growing Up WILD guide
  - May 4 will be first all Spanish G UW training
- Hired a consultant to create a Business Plan for E-Product Line for Project WILD
- The general public does not know how the vast majority of state FW agencies are funded → part of PW curriculum
- Currently have a suite on PW online courses:
  - Project WILD: Climate & Wildlife
  - Flying WILD Educators Course
  - Aquatic WILD Educators course
  - There are a few under development
- EE360+ grant → finished year 3 and have been invited to apply for year 4 of funding
  - Main goal is to do educator training/professional development
  - Weave Justice 40 into the program—40% of funding goes to underprivileged kids/communities
- Annual Project WILD Conference
  - This year partnering with Project Learning Tree and Project WET as a joint Conference with all three programs: <https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/project-wild-annual-meeting-2024>
  - Project WILD monthly meetings
  - Mat Blitz: a mini-course for educators
  - Webinars: storytelling from a culture perspective

### Student Wildlife Research Symposium

- First held in 2017
- Creating opportunities for high school students to highlight their research

- A networking opportunity; critical focus on Ohio native wildlife
- <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/education-training/environmental-education/student-wildlife-research-symposium>
- Annual Conference: partnerships with EECO- Environmental Education Council of Ohio; keynote each year (HS teacher, professional in wildlife management, etc); encourages students to stay in the field
- Have had phenomenal research presented by high school students at these conferences
- Poster sessions are very popular for interactions between students, teachers and professionals
- No admission fee for any student, teacher or parents
- What we've learned:
  - Keeping it non-competitive
  - Expecting slow growth
  - Planning for hiccups (i.e. busses being late presenter substitutions, etc.)
  - Reaching out to colleges for booths
  - Partnerships are key!
- Received a lot of positive testimonials from students, teachers, advisors, and professionals in attendance

#### Discussion: Tracking & measuring programs (beyond attendance numbers)

- We use data in education to tell a story
- Looking at this mostly through the lens of story telling
- Menti.com Why is education important for your agency? [below are top words submitted]
  - Relevancy
  - Engagement
  - Awareness
  - Future
- What are the stories you want to be telling with your data?
  - Is the engagement continued? Is there a long term impact?
  - Is the ripple effect in place? Participation vs. behavior changes (conservation action)
  - Are we building advocates? Are we building partners? How are education efforts impacting relationships in the long term?
  - What are the educational outcomes? Do they relate to transferable retention of dollars?
  - Have we reached enough people to make an impact that makes economic sense? Is online reach as effective? How do modes and methods for education compare to return on investment? Evaluation on different scales.
  - Are we holding to our safety standards?

#### What are you already doing?

- Surveying WILD school sites—continued participation is challenging. Combining with other programming
- Use of paper surveys for maximizing response rate, and also using electronic surveys.
- Making completion of survey required to get certificate and book (Project WILD book)

## Lightning Round

- IHEA: support educators and the state agencies; online mentoring platform and offering education content through learning management systems
  - Outdoor extended learning network; allows for sharing of resources; helps reduce duplication of resources; makes it fiscally responsible so you're not spending money to create something that has already been created
  - <https://outdooreln.org/>