

Project WILD Subcommittee Meeting

Chair: Rusty Garrison

Thursday, March 29, 2018

10-11AM

Attendees = 15

Elena: Welcome, first Project WILD subcommittee meeting at North American! Elena touched on the history of Project WILD, started through WAFWA 35 years ago!

We have been doing monthly webinars with our coordinators. One of AFWA's core principles is transparency. We want to be in communication with our Project WILD coordinators so we know what they need and can provide relevant support accordingly.

We have published the new guide! We are so excited to have this done!

We are on Twitter, Facebook, and soon on Pinterest! We have been putting more energy into our social media efforts and have increased our followers and outreach. Please follow us.

We combined the Facebook pages we had for our multiple programs (e.g., Flying WILD, Growing Up WILD, Project WILD) into one consolidated Project WILD page/account. This way everything is in the same place, folks only have one page to find and follow, and they can like and share whatever is relevant to them. We are putting content together that coordinators and others can share to help promote Project WILD and environmental and conservation education.

AFWA launched a new website in February! The Project WILD content is under construction as we migrate content over from our current webpages. We will be building it out over the next year.

We have been forming and signing new Letters of Agreements with states. Five new organizations have come on board that will be offering training in all the major Project WILD curricula: Project WILD, Aquatic WILD, Growing Up WILD, and Flying WILD.

We held a Project WILD strategic planning meeting in Austin, TX. A lot of ideas that have been bubbling up over the years – we are putting some concrete steps together in support of those ideas.

Elena provided a brief review of the Project WILD delivery model for folks who might not know:

National staff (AFWA) > Coordinator > Facilitator > Educators > Kids

We have been collecting and compiling coordinator annual data – 77% of reports received so far. Total educators trained in PW in 2017: 19,056. We estimate over 1.5 million kids reached each year (using the multiplier estimate of 78 kids reached per educator per year).

Who hosts project WILD? Kelly reviewed the map showing where Project WILD is offered (47 states) and what type of agency hosts the program.

Elena reviewed some budget items. One of the main goal for Project WILD in coming on board with the Association was to look at the program budget and ensure we can operate way in a way that is sustainable. We cut costs my moving/downsizing office space, eliminating redundant services (e.g., SurveyMonkey). We are focusing now on fundraising – we have a good opportunity within AFWA to

leverage existing partnerships. We received \$10,000 from NWF and have received some other small donations to help support the program.

We are putting forth a motion via the Education, Outreach & Diversity committee for agencies to support, participate, and contribute to Project WILD from a financial and programmatic standpoint. The text of the motion is as follows:

“Mr. Chairperson, I move that this committee recognize the significant contributions that Project WILD has made since joining the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) one year ago. Since joining AFWA, Project WILD has celebrated numerous accomplishments, including completing the revision of the Project WILD guide to make it more relevant to the missions of our state agencies, focusing more specifically on the North American Model of Wildlife Management, and distributing that guide to the states. Project WILD continues to rely on the support and funding from state wildlife agencies to provide wildlife-focused conservation education programs to America’s youth. In previous years, before becoming a part of AFWA, Project WILD depended on the annual financial contributions in the range of \$2,000 to \$5,000 each from many different states. It is important to note that the program will still require these contributions to achieve financial stability.

This committee would like to recognize the continued support of the states that currently provide annual sponsorship of Project WILD and encourage those states who have not provided funding to consider strengthening their educational programs by doing so this year. Therefore, I move that this committee recommend that those state fish and wildlife agencies currently using the program continue to support Project WILD by allocating resources including funding to the program within their agencies, and state fish and wildlife agencies without formal relationships with Project WILD consider opportunities for participating and contributing to the stability and success of the program.”

Kelly reviewed guide sale trends for Project WILD K-12, Aquatic WILD, Growing Up WILD, and Flying WILD.

Terrestrial Guide Update (Marc) – biggest update to the Project WILD guide since the program’s beginning:

- 1) Six new activities
- 2) Greater diversity of topics
- 3) Greater diversity of species
- 4) Educator resources
- 5) Outdoor components,
- 6) WILD Work,
- 7) In step with STEM,
- 8) 16 Field Investigations

Future of Project WILD (Elena) – Where are we headed this next year?

- We will focus on providing support to the states – responding to feedback from the annual surveys, listening to Project WILD coordinators during our monthly-ish webinars.
- Growing Up WILD is available online, but we mostly sell to coordinators. This year we will be re-doing the layout from an 11” x 17” book format to an 8.5 x 11” book format.
 - Lindsay Rogers requested to keep it spiral bound!
- We will be hosting additional webinars this year. In June we will host a climate change and wildlife webinar. There are many resources out there relating to climate change education, but there are not many educational materials relating to wildlife responses to climate change and what agencies are doing about it.
 - Lindsay asked if in those webinars we will address communicating those topics to the public – i.e., why people should care. Elena said it will not be the focus for the June webinar, but we can certainly address that in future webinars.

Questions? Round-table.

Renny – WY Game and Fish does not host Project WILD. The folks that host it right now have really married Project WILD & Project Learning Tree (PLT) – they almost never deliver a workshop without delivering both. The workshops are great. A lot of people who go through those workshops are avid users (i.e. similar to the people that buys lots of licenses, to draw a comparison). At the same time, however, the agency gets a lot of last-minute requests for educational programming – “Can you come to my school tomorrow?” How can we get Project WILD into more hands so agency folks can access Project WILD resources as they work to fill those requests? The agency is hoping to get more folks trained. How else can we increase that access?

Elena mentioned that one of the stipulations of our new letters of agreement is that any new non-agency partners reach out to and work with the state agency/AFWA member. We want whoever is hosting Project WILD to be delivering agency messages. For example, with Missouri State University, they do and will continue to work with the Missouri Department of Conservation to offer training in Project WILD.

We continue to work with states to help increase capacity. For example, we are focusing on supporting California. We have five regional partners that offer training in the state. Compared to the population size, however, many more educators could be trained than the partners currently have capacity to train. Let us know if you want us to work with your state (to move up on the priority list) to figure out how we can better implement Project WILD in your state.

Natalie says in Michigan they combine PLT and WILD early childhood education trainings, but not for the K-8, since educators get overwhelmed with the amount of material. Lindsay (Nebraska) echoed that.

Elena pointed out that a lot of people think PLT, WET, and WILD are all run out of the same group. That is not the case, but the models and guide layout are very similar. One of our goals at AFWA is working more closely with these similar national education programs. We will sink or swim together – we want to help each other improve and meet our goals.

Johnnie said in Texas they used to do more combined workshops, but they decreased those offerings when they started charging for workshops. It was too much of a burden cost-wise to pay for both books. Johnnie noted it is hard when they see that the schools that most need this type of training are the same

ones that can least afford to pay for it. Last year they had a bit of extra money leftover (\$12K), that they are now allowing schools to apply for scholarships to attend workshops. That has worked well. Natalie said they do the exact same thing in Michigan.

Elena remarked that some states charge for workshops, and some do not. It can be the case that sometimes when you do not charge, people do not show up. It is a matter of finding a balance of how much to charge. It is frustrating to coordinators when they do so much work and preparation to set up a workshop, and then only half of the people show up. Lindsay pointed out that there is also a perceived value when you make it cost a little bit. In Nebraska they do not charge, and she struggles with the issue as well.

Johnnie pointed out that it is important to TPWD that the requirement is in place to package the book with the training. Elena echoed that just throwing some materials at a teacher without showing them how to use it/implement it is ineffective.

Jennifer with ATA asked if there a way for educators who have been trained in Project WILD to connect. Elena said we do not have plans to invest in a specific platform for that (because some programs have and they have not gotten a lot of use), but we have been building our social media presence to help facilitate WILD educators connecting both with us and with each other.

Kelly pointed out that some states do have platforms in place to help their facilitators connect with each other – e.g. Facebook groups, newsletters, listservs. There are some services that we are trying to figure out whether they are fruitful/worthwhile to offer at the national level versus the state level.

Thank you for attending!