



Nevada Natural Resource Education Council

Newsletter

December 2005



Our Places Tell Stories

The Public Lands Institute of UNLV is sponsoring the ***Our Places Tell Stories: Making Connections with Our Audiences*** Educator's Conference, January 24–27 in Las Vegas. The event is an innovative conference for educators and others working at public lands, nature centers, museums, zoos, aquaria, and all nature- and heritage-rich places. It's for anyone interested in learning to effectively connect with audiences to create motivated stewards of the environment.

We are strongly encouraging all our members and friends in nonformal education to attend this conference. The subject matter and professionalism of the event are exactly what NNREC would desire, and so we are joining the institute and its many partners in hosting the conference. NNREC will be working with CHOLLA and others to specifically address efforts to increase capacity in natural resource education through the work of the land and resource agencies and the nonprofit community.

The conference features a keynote by Dr. Sam Ham of the University of Idaho, well-known expert in interpretation, two days of workshops organized into three strands (Knowing Our Audiences, Skills in Delivering Messages to Different Audiences, and Knowing Our Resources). On the last day, field trips offer participants a chance to apply their workshop learning in the field.

The early registration deadline is fast approaching on January 4 (sorry for the late notice), so please immediately check the

conference information at <http://publiclands.unlv.edu/eeconference/>, and register!

Though the program is designed for nonformal educators, strongly interested teachers may also attend, and the formal/nonformal educator interactions can be very valuable for both. NNREC recognizes the needs of our teacher members and friends as well, and will have either an additional conference or a number of teacher workshops this coming year.

PLT Educator Workshops

As a direct result of the October Project Learning Tree Facilitator Workshop held in Las Vegas, we have 13 new Nevada facilitators and two PLT Educator Workshops scheduled, February 18th in the Fallon area and February 25th in Winnemucca. These workshops are sponsored by Nevada Outdoor School, with the support of NNREC and NDF. Please check <http://nnrec.org/programs/plt/ed/> for more information and to register. We are intending to have at least one workshop each in southern and western Nevada this coming year.

Membership Renewal

With the change of year, it is time to renew your membership in NNREC. This year professional, nonprofit, and institutional members will receive a subscription to Clearing Magazine along with their other membership benefits. Go to <http://nnrec.org/membership/> to pay online, or use the form in this newsletter. We already have seven professional members, two regular members, four nonprofits, and two institutional members for 2006.

Advocacy?

As NNREC develops its strategic plan, including revision of our mission and creation of a vision, the issue of advocacy and lobbying comes up at nearly every meeting. At least one person in the room will state that we can't do that, it is illegal. In fact, neither advocacy nor lobbying are illegal for nonprofits.

Advocacy is a term for efforts to get the message of a nonprofit across to a variety of audiences. Advocacy might include publicizing mission and vision, supporting school reform which uses effective place-based education methods, encouraging federal, state and local agencies to fulfill their educational missions, speaking in public forums on the importance of environmental education and funding for it (including field trips!), developing accurate and unbiased curriculum about controversial issues, encouraging members to be involved in local issues, and many other actions. Our educator workshops, a significant part of our activities during the year, are in part direct advocacy for making natural resources and their conservation an

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Members

NNREC is proud to count among its supporters these members, through December 2006:

Professional Members

Dan Allison
Anga Rebane
Stephanie Lefevre
Mark Kimbrough
Chris Miller
Linda Ries
Diana Sjoberg

Regular Members

Sue Jacox
Margie Klein

Institutional

Nevada Department of Environmental Protection
Nevada Division of Forestry

Nonprofit

Friends of Red Rock Canyon
Environmental Education Association of New Mexico
Tahoe Rim Trail Association
Las Vegas Natural History Museum

Why Membership?

This newsletter is brought to you by the members of NNREC.

NNREC operates programs such as our annual statewide conference with professional development activities, Project Learning Tree / Burning Issues workshops, High Sierra Resource Workshop for teens interested in natural resource and education careers, the Summer Institute in Lamoille Canyon for teacher and natural resource professionals, a mini-grant program for teachers and other educators, and many other programs both directly and with partners. We distribute a newsletter via email on environmental education several times a year. Most importantly, we maintain a web site full of the information you want to know to support your work or interest in natural resource education.

We fund some of these activities from government grants, primarily from the Nevada Division of Forestry conservation education and Burning Issues programs, as well as minor funding from other sources. As you can imagine, the level of funding from government sources continues to decline year by year. Our other major source of funding is YOU - our members. Not only do membership dues allow us to maintain the web site and distribute the newsletter, but to supplement the grant funding we receive. Without membership dues we really could not exist!

We hope you will join or renew, supporting and taking part in our efforts to enhance and coordinate environmental education in Nevada! To join, please use the membership application below, or join and pay online at <http://nnrec.org/membership/>.

Membership Application

To join the Nevada Natural Resource Education Council, complete this application form and mail along with your check, payable to NNREC, to: NNREC, PO Box 4741, Carson City NV 89702-4741. The membership year is the calendar year. New members joining in the last quarter (October-November-December) will be extended through the next year. All persons providing an email address will be added to the announcement-only E-Newsletter email list.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip+4 _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Agency/Organization _____

- Regular..... \$20
- Professional \$40
- Nonprofit..... \$60
- Institutional \$80

- Complimentary E-Newsletter only
- You may list my name on membership lists (name only, no other contact info).

I want to help with:

- Board of Directors
- Advisory Council
- Statewide Conference
- Workshops
- Liaison with other organizations
- Fund-raising
- Other _____

important part of our education system and our societal values. There are no legal limits on general advocacy. None!

Lobbying is a specific form of advocacy, an effort to influence specific legislation or government policy. For lobbying, the limit is 20% of the organization's budget for direct and grassroots lobbying, and up to one-quarter of that specifically for grassroots lobbying, which means influencing the public to in turn have an influence on legislation. For these limits to apply, the organization must have made a 501(h) election through IRS Form 5768, which NNREC has done. These IRS regulations provide more specific, and more liberal, guidance on what a nonprofit can do to lobby than the old and vague 'insubstantial' test that we would otherwise fall under. All nonprofits are prohibited from partisan politics, supporting specific candidates for office. However, nonprofits may participate in ballot initiatives without limit.

Obviously the source of our funds controls what we can do with them. For example, our Nevada Division of Forestry grant cannot be used for lobbying as it is restricted to specific purposes (such as hosting PLT workshops). However, unrestricted funds, such as membership dues, can be used for lobbying. While NNREC has never received significant foundation funds, these would be similarly available for lobbying unless the grantor chose to prohibit such use. For lobbying which does not expend funds, there is no limit of any sort. Obviously NNREC must be sensitive to the perceptions of our funders, whether government, foundation or individual, but such sensitivity is wholly different from "you can't do that."

NNREC has rarely advocated for ourselves, our profession, and for natural resource education. I believe this is unfortunate. We have lost ground in a number of areas, as government resources have been allocated to other issues either unrelated to or directly contrary to our interests, and as the state requirement for environmental education disappeared. Schools have shifted away from place-based, integrated, and student-centered education toward high stakes testing and punitive pedagogy that discounts the importance of the student, their family, the community, and the environment to which they belong. Though NNREC cannot by itself make a major difference in education, it can work with other organizations who are speaking for and changing education so that we enhance our own voice. If we do not advocate for real-world education – education

about and *for* the environment and the communities in which we live, we will lose out to all those who are speaking and acting against. And there are plenty of those!

Some educators have shied away from advocacy because they fear crossing the line that has been drawn between environmental education and environmental advocacy, feeling that if we don't steer clear of controversial issues we will be lumped in with environmentalists. The unfortunate result has been, however, that there simply isn't much education going on about controversial issues at all, except sometimes that provided by hardly-unbiased sources such as extractive industries, those who benefit from unbridled growth, and consumer media.



In fact, there is a critical role here for environmental educators, not in counterbalancing these biases (though we might hope others do so), but rather assisting teachers and students in civic engagement with these issues. We can make sure teachers and students: have access to many sources of information and perspective; practice skills for researching and analyzing issues; develop responsible personal values and act on them; deepen their knowledge of and attachment to their environment and community by spending time in it and working to improve it; and most of all, spend significant educational hours on these issues which will affect the quality of life in Nevada for ourselves and all generations to come. If we do not take the time to teach children to be good stewards, we in fact implicitly teach that these are not important issues, or that these issues can be safely left to others who will make decisions for us.

Yes, we do need to be sensitive in how we work with teachers and the public, and how we express our mission and vision. In particular, we need to be sensitive to voices and perspectives from rural areas which are struggling to balance economic and environmental sustainability, and to those who have traditionally been left out of decisions on both environmental issues and educational reform. This won't be easy, and in fact will stretch our abilities and capacity, but we can do it.

Our strategic planning process is designed to listen to the natural resource education community, as broadly defined as possible. We intend in the process to identify and to *focus* on our commonalities, the actions we can take collaboratively to meet the mission of each of our agencies, organizations, schools, businesses, and selves. It is possible that some will choose to not become involved or remain involved in the 'new' NNREC. If so, I wish them well and hope that the process has helped them to clarify their priorities as they have helped us. What I hope that we do not do is water down our mission, diminish our voice, or hide our passion in order to keep them involved.

At the completion of our strategic planning process, NNREC will have a simple and passionate mission statement, and we will have identified our top priorities for action. I hope that we will then move forward, together, with appropriate advocacy

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and lobbying. We have a very important message to share!

✉ Dan Allison, Chair, NNREC

Resources: *Worry-Free Lobbying for Nonprofits*, Alliance for Justice, Washington DC: 2000; *Lobbying, Advocacy, and Nonprofit Boards*, National Center for Non-profit Boards, Washington DC: 1997; Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (2005), *CLPI.org*, <http://clpi.org/> (2005-12-29).

Student Projects in the Community

This school year teachers and students can look forward to many exciting learning opportunities in the outdoor classroom with Great Basin Outdoor School of Reno. The eco-lab at Donner Springs Elementary in Reno has recently been recognized as Nevada's 100th Backyard Habitat as certified by the National Wildlife Federation. Working in partnerships with the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Nevada Wildlife Federation and the Audubon Society, community and AmeriCorps volunteers, teachers and students can learn about their environment through hands-on ecology lessons.



Students from Donner Springs YMCA 21st Century program will also enjoy the Bureau of Land Management's new educational program on the California Gold Rush. The BLM has developed a number of different programs related to the gold

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About NNREC...

Mission

Nevada Natural Resource Education Council is a statewide not-for-profit organization whose goal is to develop and promote natural resource education in Nevada. The membership is composed of those supportive of the goals of the Council, and includes a diversity of individuals, organizations, and agencies.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the Council are:

- To seek implementation of our state law which mandates environmental education in all Nevada public schools and promises statewide coordination, support, materials, and training
- To promote quality environmental education for the entire citizenry and act as a clearinghouse for public information concerning natural resources
- To enter into partnerships with entities sharing common interests in natural resources to foster resource education

Board of Directors

Anga Rebane, Secretary (through 2006)
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89450; 775-831-9456 H; angarebane@hotmail.com

Dan Allison, Chair (through 2006)
PO Box 3644, Carson City NV 89702;
775-882-2375 H; allisondan@sbcglobal.net

Stephanie Lefevre, Treasurer (through 2007)
529 Lay St, Winnemucca NV 89445;
775-625-2480; slefevre@nv.blm.gov

Mark Kimbrough (through 2006)
948 Incline Way, Incline Village NV
89451; 775-298-0012 W; MarkK@tahoerimtrail.org

rush, the California Trail and Nevada history. These programs are available to schools, civic groups and the general public. For information contact the BLM at 775-753-0213.

This spring, hundreds of Great Basin Outdoor School students will tackle conservation projects to protect habitat in the Tahoe Basin during the 2006 spring and fall camp programs. Service-learning and stewardship projects are encouraged as long-term environmental values of the outdoor school program. GBOS students work to prevent further clarity loss of Lake Tahoe and reduce wildfire danger in the area through student service-learning projects in the Tahoe Basin, supported by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection and the Nevada Division of Forestry and in cooperation with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Nevada Tahoe Conservation District. Activities include restoring the function of drainage areas by clearing mud and pine needles, covering bare ground with rock or bark, and establishing or maintaining trails. Students also travel to Spooner Lake to work on a hazardous fuels reduction project to minimize wildfire danger around the lake and the surrounding watershed.

Please consider how you or your business or organization can make a difference for kids and our great outdoors. See <http://greatbasin-os.org/> and call 775-823-8888, 775-742-1454, or 775-849-1890.

✉ Emily Webb, Great Basin Outdoor School

Presentations

NNREC has three new Keynote / Power-Point presentations which you can view on the web site as pdf documents. These were developed for our October 2005 Annual Meeting. The general NNREC presentation highlights all of our activities this last year, and was developed by our partner Nevada Outdoor School. High Sierra Resource Workshop is featured in a presentation developed with the help of facilitators Carol Heinrich and Phyllis Atkinson. The third presentation showcases the highly successful Lamoille Canyon workshop that we sponsor with the Forest Service. View these presentations at <http://nnrec.org/about/index.html#presentations>.

Pinecone Ball Awards

The annual Pinecone Ball is an awards ceremony and social event hosted by Environmental Leadership for the western Nevada

environmental advocacy and education community. This year's award winners were: Public Figure/Servant: Bob Abbey; Agency Representative: Glenn Clemmer; Individual: Jo Anne Garrett; Business: McDonald Carano Wilson LLP; Non-Profit or Agency: IVGID Public Works WASTE NOT; Media: Don Vetter; Legacy Award: Rebecca Solnit.

NAAEE News

Dan Allison attended the NAAEE Conference in Albuquerque NM in October. Dan is the affiliate liaison for Nevada, responsible for communicating to NAAEE Nevada's interests and priorities, and to Nevada NAAEE's initiatives and activities. The Affiliates Pre-Conference workshop was a great success. Each year this workshop focuses on a different topic, but always on information and skills that support the state and provincial affiliate organizations in expanding their capacity to offer environmental education and conduct their business more effectively. The highlight of the pre-conference this year was a working lunch attended by all the NAAEE board members, which greatly increased the understanding by the board of affiliate concerns, and vice-versa. Dan presented a regular workshop on the schoolyard BMP project at Tahoe Lake School, and attended many others. The highest value of the conference is always the informal networking and sharing that occurs in the hallways, bars and restaurants, and on field trips.

I ask that you seriously consider attending the next conference in St. Paul Minnesota, October 10-14, 2006. The conference can provide you a much broader view of environmental education than is possible from our Nevada or even regional activities. In addition, when we bring back home our learnings from the conference, the benefits to NNREC are manifold. NAAEE is offering a discounted membership to new members through January 16, so check the site at <http://naaee.org/> and join.

Dan is also a member of the Affiliate-board-staff communications group which is developing more a more effective and equal partnerships to strengthen our efforts for the whole field.

Web Site Tidbit

Did you know that the NNREC web site has job announcements at <http://nnrec.org/news/joblist.html>? Check it out!

Next Newsletter

Thank you, Emily, for providing an article on Great Basin Outdoor School for this newsletter. We want articles on the activities and missions of our agency and organization partners so that our members and friends can develop a better understanding of the breadth of environmental education in Nevada. Would you like your organization or agency to be next? Please submit articles! You can often repurpose something you've already created. Photos are great, either digital or print, which we can scan. Some articles promised in the last newsletter are not here yet, but will be.

Calendar

- Jan 5 (Thu): NNREC Board Meeting
- Jan 24-27 (Tue-Fri): Out Places Tell Stories
- Feb 18 (Sat): PLT Educator Workshop, Fallon area
- Feb 25 (Sat): PLT Educator Workshop, Winnemucca
- Mar 20 (Mon): Vernal Equinox
- Apr 6 (Thu): NNREC Board Meeting
- Apr 22 (Sat): Earth Day (official day, events will be this weekend and preceding or following weekend in different location)
- Apr 28 (Fri): Arbor Day