

Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature

Mark J. Belton, Chair
Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Jack R. Smith, Ph.D., Chair
Interim State Superintendent of Schools, Maryland State Department of Education

January 20, 2016 – Quarterly Partnership Meeting

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

at U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office,
177 Admiral Cochrane Dr., Annapolis, MD 21401 (2nd floor conference room)

Agenda

10:00 **Welcome and Introductions** –

Genevieve LaRouche, Field Office Supervisor, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office
Mark Belton, Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Dr. Henry Johnson, MD State Dept. of Education, Interim Deputy Superintendent/ Chief Academic Officer

10:20 **New Opportunities to Grow Environmental Literacy:**

- **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** – *Sarah Bodor, North American Assoc. for Environmental Education (NAAEE)* – The Federal ESSA has passed – what will it mean in MD and how can we best support schools? What is the niche or role for The Partnership as a group and for individual EE providers? **Q&A**
- **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and Environmental Literacy** – *Shannon Sprague, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, Chesapeake Bay Program E-Lit Workgroup Chair* – Plans for a regional Bay Watershed education leadership event.
- **The Watershed Report Card** in Howard County – *Mary Weller, Coordinator, Secondary Science, Howard County Public School System* – an example of a systemic environmental literacy initiative supporting MWEEs and student action, with potential for sharing with other school systems.

11:00 **The Partnership's Actions** – *facilitated by Mark Belton, Secretary, MD DNR*
Progress updates on accomplishments from 2015:

- **Community Planning, Access to Nature, and Nature Play Spaces** – *Sandi Olek, DNR*
Highlights of technical assistance provided in various forms: the annual workshop, college student greening project designs, demonstration projects and working with local planners.
- **Environmental Literacy Highlights:**
 - **Agriculture Education, Farm-Based Educator curriculum project** – *Peggy Eppig, Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF)*
 - **2015 Regional E-Lit and MWEE planning workshops** – synopsis of workshops and key findings on local education agencies' plans – *Gary Hedges, MSDE and Laura Collard, MAEOE*
 - **Environmental Literacy Implementation Tool (“ELIT”)** state level survey results summary – *Shannon Sprague, NOAA and Jamie Baxter, Chesapeake Bay Trust*

11:30 **Partnership Priorities for 2016** – interactive / discussion – *facilitated by Britt Slattery, DNR*
Help identify order of priority for actions and needs regarding environmental literacy (educator professional learning, student field experiences, sustainable schools, etc.), community connections to nature, green careers pathways, and building support.

11:50 **General Announcements**

12:00 **Adjourn** – *Thank you to all participants and to U.S. Fish and Wildlife for hosting us today!*
Next meeting April 20 – to be confirmed

Environmental Education in the Every Student Succeeds Act (S.1177)

Summary provided by Sarah Bodor, NAAEE

Background

Large numbers of environmental education providers, conservation organizations, businesses, sportsman's groups, health care workers, school administrators and others have advocated for increased federal support for environmental education through amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (formerly No Child Left Behind). In 2007, Senator Jack Reed and Congressman John Sarbanes first introduced the No Child Left Inside Act (NCLI) which would amend ESEA to include federal funds that state could use for implementation of state-wide environmental literacy plans. The legislation has enjoyed bipartisan support since that time and a modified version of the bill passed the House in 2008.

The years of advocacy and support for NCLI have yielded critical and unprecedented gains for environmental education. States across the country have begun or completed comprehensive environmental literacy plans that address opportunities to embed EE in K-12 schools as well as increase access to nature at the community level. Working closely with Senator Reed's office, NAAEE, along with its affiliates and partners secured some key language for EE in the Senate version of a reauthorization bill for the ESEA which passed in July. A House version also passed in July, but it was remarkably different than the Senate version and contained no language referencing environmental education or environmental literacy.

NAAEE closely monitored negotiations between Senate and House leadership as they sought to draft compromise legislation late this fall. While the final proposal looked more like the House version than the Senate, the language supporting environmental education remains intact.

EE Language

The key language sits in **Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act—21st Century Schools**:

- Environmental education is called out as eligible for funding under a \$1.6B "well-rounded education" grants program.
- Environmental literacy programs are eligible for funding as part of the \$1B 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.
- The prioritization of STEM activities including "hands-on learning" and "field-based or service learning" to enhance understanding of STEM subjects may provide additional opportunities for environmental science education programs.

Overwhelming support

- The Every Student Succeeds Act passed the House on December 2, 2015 with a vote of 359-64.
- It passed in the Senate on December 9, 2015 with a vote of 85-12.

Next Steps

While we are celebrating this advance for EE after many years of hard work, there is a great deal that will need to happen after the legislation is signed into law. NAAEE, its Affiliates and partners will work to:

- Make recommendations to the U.S. Department of Education regarding the design of the grant programs described in Title IV of the bill,
- Develop fact sheets and messages that provide state and local education agencies and their partners important information about how ESSA funds can be used to support essential environmental education programs and implementation of environmental literacy plans,
- Identify and disseminate models for the use of U.S. Education grant funds to support effective environmental education in K-12 schools.

NAAEE will continue to analyze the full bill and develop communications to inform affiliates, EE providers, and state and local education agencies how the law may benefit their environmental literacy work. NAAEE continues to work closely with Senator Reed and Congressman Sarbanes to assess additional opportunities to strengthen federal support for EE.