

Environmental Education in New Jersey: A Plan of Action

Revised, 2008

Basic Information about the Revised Plan

Mission of Commission and Purpose of Plan

The mission of the New Jersey Commission on Environmental Education and Interagency Work Group is to encourage environmentally literate individuals throughout New Jersey. It is the intent of the commission and work group to pursue this mission through this revised plan by:

- Presenting globally-accepted guiding principles for the delivery and practice of environmental education in New Jersey;
- Encouraging the use of sound instructional strategies by environmental education professionals and practitioners;
- Providing goal-oriented content knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that environmentally literate persons should understand or practice; and
- Promoting the importance, benefits and opportunities regarding environmental education to New Jersey's citizenry.

Description of Environmental Literacy

The commission and work group determined that the description below for "environmental literacy" best suits their mission and the purpose of this plan. This description is a combination of definitions for environmental literacy that are used by the Environmental Education and Training Partnership and the Environmental Literacy Council. It reads as follows:

Environmentally literate persons understand:

- *The systems of the natural world and the relationships and interactions between the living and non-living environment;*
- *That choices they make as humans and as consumers affect the environment;*
- *How these choices can either help or harm the environment and the earth's ability to sustain human and other life;*
- *How to deal sensibly with problems that involve scientific evidence, uncertainty, and economic, aesthetic and ethical considerations; and*
- *What they need to do – individually or as part of a community – to keep the environment healthy and sustain its resources so that people can create and enjoy a good quality of life for themselves and their children.*

Targeted Audiences and Users of this Plan

This plan is designed to unite the delivery efforts of environmental education providers and practitioners statewide through common purpose and guidance, state level assistance and support, information sharing and networking opportunities, and recognition of exemplary efforts.

Intended users include school and higher education faculty; interpretive naturalists and environmental educators; environmental, natural resource and science professionals; youth, community and religious group leaders; government and private sector employees; and, volunteers, parents and students. The ultimate beneficiaries of these collective environmental education efforts are the current and future citizens of this state.

Contents and Design of Plan

The contents of this plan provide environmental education providers and practitioners with greater awareness of the breadth and depth of the field of environmental education and related goals and learner outcomes. It emphasizes theme-based programmatic needs that are based on current state and/or national environmental or educational priorities and it suggests methods for delivering these programs to specific audiences. It also lists specific action items that the commission, work group and DEP will undertake at the state level to facilitate the promotion, delivery and oversight of this plan and related activities. This plan identifies state-level guiding principles for the practice of environmental education as well as national environmental education guidelines for program and resource development and the training of environmental education professionals. Finally, this plan features a diverse array of established examples of existing environmental education initiatives that provide readers with greater awareness of New Jersey's rich array of opportunities related to this field of practice.

Timeframe for Delivery

The timeframe for the delivery of this plan is 2008 through 2013 and this revision is considered to be a five-year planning and action tool. The commission and work group will begin the third revision process of *Environmental Education in New Jersey: A Plan of Action* in 2012.

The Revision Process

This revised *Environmental Education in New Jersey: A Plan of Action 2008* edition was developed by the commission and work group in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Additional partners in the revision process include the Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education and the New Jersey Audubon Society.

In 2005 three regional focus group meetings were conducted to gather input from interested professionals and practitioners on statewide goals, needs and strategies regarding the future and current status of environmental education in New Jersey. Commission and work group members are grateful to those persons who attended these meetings or submitted comments in writing as this input helped guide and determine the contents of this revised plan. The commission and work group would also like to recognize the facilities that hosted these meetings:

- Central Region Natural Resources Conservation Service Office, Freehold June 15
- Northern Region Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morristown June 20
- Southern Region Jacques Cousteau Education Center, Tuckerton June 30

A public comment period on the draft version of this plan was conducted in early 2008. Copies of the final plan were presented in spring to Governor Jon S. Corzine, DEP Commissioner Lisa Jackson and other members of the cabinet; the New Jersey State Legislature; leadership representing environmental education, education and science-based organizations and affiliates; and, members of the Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education.

The New Jersey State Legislature established the commission and work group in 1996 (N.J.S.A. 18A:6-91.1 et seq.) to implement a master plan for environmental education in New Jersey. The commission was first established by executive order in 1988 and both groups are "in but not of" DEP with administrative support provided by the department. To learn more about the commission and work group visit www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/njcee/index.htm.