



# THE PLAIN FACTS

## About The New Jersey Commission on Environmental Education and Interagency Work Group (on Environmental Education)



### What is the purpose of the commission and work group?

The New Jersey Commission on Environmental Education and Interagency Work Group (on Environmental Education) are state level groups charged with guiding the delivery of environmental education for all ages, in formal and informal educational settings, through the development and administration of a state environmental education master plan. Their goal is to nurture an environmentally literate citizenry.

### How were the commission and work group established?

The commission has formally existed through Executive and Administrative Orders since 1989. Both the commission and work group were statutorily established in 1996 through passage of the New Jersey Environmental Education Act (N.J.S.A. 18A:6-91.1 et seq.).

### How is the work of the commission and work group administered?

The commission and work group are administered as "in but not of" groups of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Environmental education staff in DEP's Office of Constituent Services provide support and administer any state funds designated for environmental education and/or for use by the commission and work group.

### What is the membership makeup of the commission?

Commission membership includes representation from environmental, conservation, civic, youth and faith-based organizations, public and private teachers and administrators, school boards, colleges and universities, businesses and industry, environmental commissions, state and local government, agriculture and environmental health. There are 29 voting members on the commission, each of whom are appointed to serve by the governor.

### Which state agencies make up the work group and/or commission?

Membership includes representation from the State Departments of Environmental Protection, Education, Agriculture, Community Affairs, Human Services, Children and Families and the Commission for Higher Education. Some of these agencies also hold voting positions on the commission.

### When and where do the commission and work group meet?

The commission and work group meet jointly at least seven times per year (usually in September, October, November, January, March, May and June). These meetings are held in Trenton at DEP headquarters or in other central locations in New Jersey. They are open to interested members of the public. There are also committee meetings held at various locations around the state that focus on specific projects.

### What is ANJEE's involvement with commission and work group activities?

Members of the state's nonprofit membership association for environmental education, the Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education (ANJEE), played pivotal roles in establishing the commission, pursuing passage of the 1996 law, and supporting the continued work of the commission and work group. The Alliance continues to be an active partner in many statewide commission and work group environmental education efforts. Common goals shared by ANJEE, DEP, and the commission and work group, ensure that planning efforts are communicated between groups and that their efforts compliment the needs, goals and activities of each other as well as the field of environmental education. Commission and work group members participate in the annual ANJEE environmental education conference and leadership retreat. Occasional planning meetings are held between these groups and ANJEE members regularly attend commission and work group meetings.

### How and why was the *Plan of Action* developed?

New Jersey was one of the first states in the country to develop a statewide environmental education master plan back in 1993, titled *Environmental Education in New Jersey: A Plan of Action*. Its goal was to “develop in the citizens of New Jersey the knowledge, attitudes and values, skills and behaviors needed to maintain, protect and improve the environment.” Its purpose has been to provide long-term support and direction for environmental education in the state. Throughout the 1990s the *Plan of Action* was a sought after planning tool for environmental education professionals in New Jersey as well as in other states and globally. Thousands of copies have been distributed for use as a reference and planning document for environmental education programs for all ages.

### Is the New Jersey environmental education master plan being revised?

The master plan is under revision. The new draft, *Environmental Education in New Jersey: A Call to Action*, was available for public comment this autumn (2009) and the final plan will be made available sometime in 2010. The purpose of *A Call to Action* is to encourage environmentally literate individuals throughout New Jersey. The plan features goals and related strategies that:

- Strengthen New Jersey’s ability to support environmental education statewide through infrastructure, networking, communications support and the leveraging of state funds and resources;
- Recommend four goal-oriented strategic initiatives that guide and/or support the work of New Jersey’s environmental education providers;
- Identify the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that environmentally literate persons should demonstrate;
- Present globally-accepted guiding principles for the practice of environmental education; and
- Encourage the use of sound instructional strategies by environmental education providers.

The *Call to Action* is designed to unite the delivery efforts of New Jersey’s environmental education community through common purpose, recognition of emerging needs and trends, guidance and support, information sharing, leveraging of available finances and services, and recognition of exemplary efforts. Formation of the plan was based on direction provided at three focus group meetings, the review of environmental education planning documents in use in other states, and interaction with national and state environmental education and formal education leaders. Once finalized, copies of *A Call to Action* will be presented to the Governor, the State Legislature, members of the cabinet, and environmental, scientific and educational professionals throughout the state. It will also be available online at the commission web site. This will be New Jersey’s third environmental education master plan. A *Call to Action* is designed for use as a five-year reference and action tool with a timeframe for delivery from 2010 through 2015.

### What are some commission and work group accomplishments?

- A) Inclusion of environmental content in the state core curriculum content standards for grades K-12;
- B) Availability of dozens of environmental education professional development providers recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education as able to provide environmental education training for New Jersey educators;
- C) Implementation of environment-based student improvement models and special projects, such as the delivery of the *EIC Approach* in nine schools and use of energy education modules as part of green school practices;
- D) Funds for mini-grants for environmental education programs and projects (when available);
- E) Development of educational publications, such as the *New Jersey Environmental Primer*;
- F) Sponsorship of state’s annual environmental education conference, leadership retreat and newsletter; and
- G) Promotion of annual Environmental Education Week and Earth Day efforts.

### Who can I contact regarding commission or work group activities?

Persons interested in being appointed to the commission and/or participating in commission and work group activities should contact Tanya Oznowich, Environmental Education Supervisor, DEP Office of Constituent Services, P.O. Box 402, Trenton, New Jersey, 08625-0402. She can be reached at (609) 984-9802 or at [tanya.oznowich@dep.state.nj.us](mailto:tanya.oznowich@dep.state.nj.us).

Visit the commission and work group’s Web site at [www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/njcee](http://www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/njcee).