

Environmental Education Commission

Meeting Minutes

May 10, 2016

Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries

Louisiana Room, Baton Rouge Office

1 PM

I. Call to order

Brenda Walkenhorst called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

II. Roll Call/Sign-in

Commission Members: Jessica Dixon, Ann Wilson, Denise Bennet (pending), Gary Balsamo, Kelly Templet, Angela Capello, Jonathan Dearbone, Brenda Walkenhorst, Deepak Bhatnager, Dean Blackett, Dinah Maygarden, Jennifer Roberts, Cole Ruckstuhl, Dianne Lindstedt, Brenda Nixon, Heather Niemic, Christopher Rogers (for Adelle Brown).

Welcome to new Commission member, Denise Bennett from LA DEQ. She is currently a non-voting member, pending approval.

LEEC Staff: Venise Ortego, Brian Gautreau, Thomas Gresham

Guest: Madhu Kohli Bhatnagar

III. Minutes from last meeting

The minutes of the February meeting were accepted by the Commission.

IV. Financial Report

Venise Ortego noted a change to the written Financial Report provided to the Commission. This included a correction of the amount awarded by the NOAA BWET grant (\$90,000).

V. Coordinator's Report

Venise stated she was only covering part of the report as other items will be covered under other parts of the agenda.

The Discovering Biodiversity workshop to take place in Lake Charles is seeking more participants. They will receive a \$50 stipend and ~\$50 worth of equipment. LDWF speakers will cover topics on threatened and endangered species.

Ann Wilson, Jessica Dixon, and Chris Rogers offered to distribute the information via various media.

Recent Activities: Venise attended the KLB *Leaders Against Litter* trash pickup and related events at the Capitol in Baton Rouge where Billy Nungesser and other dignitaries spoke out against litter.

Brian and Thomas co-hosted the Wildlife table at the Envirothon.

Brian and Dinah exhibited at the Louisiana Earth Day in Baton Rouge.

Thomas participated in the annual GOMA Education and Engagement Priority Issue Team meeting.

VI. Old Business

A. 2016 Symposium Report: Venise reported that 225 participants attended the symposium. The evaluations were good. Venise has the detailed breakdown.

Expenditures vs. Income for the symposium: we are waiting for a check from LEEA for dues.

After this and PayPal payment, the balance should be clear.

Cole Ruckstuhl asked if anything stood out in the evaluations. Venise replied that she would send details out, but generally, people were happy with the timing. There were requests for a longer symposium and for round table sessions. The venue and food/ layout received good evaluations.

The scavenger hunt improved exhibit hall attendance. There were 20 exhibitors (18 showed), which is up from recent years.

Poster session in the hallway is not the best location. Perhaps move to lunch side of divider or near food. The goal of including research posters is to emphasize the importance of science to teachers.

Brian has the 2017 suggestions.

- B. State Environmental Literacy Plan:** Venise reported as Nancy Rabalais is out of the country. Brenda and Ann have spent time on updating the plan and Brian has made changes. Venise received a letter from LDWF Secretary Melancon today in support of the ELP. It goes to legislators next week. The Department of Education has declined to sign off until the standards (number of science credits required, NGSS, etc.) are finalized. Deepak suggested adding a link to information on GOMA, LDWF & LEEC.
- C. EE Grant Awards:** Brenda Nixon reported that there were a surprisingly low number of teacher applicants (11) and that this is perhaps due to teachers being overwhelmed. The Green School grants are for up to \$5000 – there were only 3 applicants and all were funded. Professional Development grants – received 4 applications and 3 were funded. Research grants are up to \$1200. Posters are shown at the symposium as part of the grant agreement. Brenda W. offered to help get the word out. Deepak suggested providing examples for teachers to follow. Brenda was concerned that it would lead to replication. Also suggested: A short course or 3 hour workshop where teachers peer review and begin writing. A review of the grant guidelines is needed.
- D. Art & Language Arts Contest:** Thomas Gresham reported that judging took place last week and the winning entries are in the room to be viewed. There were over 400 entries – up from previous years. Good quality work was received. ALCOA is no longer funding the contest so we are seeking new sources of funding. The billboards were a way to advertise ALCOA and they cost \$10K. Prizes cost \$3K. Production of the calendars costs \$6-7K. Cole asked about the costs of the billboards in different locations (cost more in larger cities). Chris Rogers suggested asking LPB to help with advertising and publicity. Also press releases, and placing in local newspapers. Advertising begins in September and the contest kicks off after LSTA in November. Other suggestions were to ask Rodrigue Family Foundation, Benson Family, Pelicans, & Saints. Brenda W. said that since the Audubon Nature Institute already receives sponsorship from Pelicans for *Toast for the Coast*, there may be partnership possibilities with A.N.I. Brenda will investigate. Heather Niemic suggested a possible partnership with the Youth Wetlands Program's art contest. She will ask Ashley. They currently happen around the same time.
- E. Watershed Webs Grant:** Dinah and Thomas reported that the NOAA BWET funded Watershed Webs Grant presented a short course at the Symposium in February with 18 participants and will host 2 PD workshops for teachers during the summer, one at LUMCON and one at Rockefeller Refuge. The workshops are open to teachers in coastal counties and parishes Gulf-wide. Spaces are still available at LUMCON but Rockefeller is full.
- F. Green Schools Program:** Brian reported that four K-12 schools, plus ULL applied for the U.S. Green Ribbon Schools Award. Four were awarded: Baton Rouge Magnet High School, Westdale High School, Ben Franklin High School, and ULL. The awards ceremony will take place at the National Conference in Washington D.C. Thus far, Baton Rouge Magnet and Westdale have stated that they will be in attendance. Advertising for next grant cycle: media coverage in New Orleans and Lafayette. Currently making inroads in North Louisiana. 2-3 schools are planning to apply. Brian reported that Aramark: energy management company in EBR schools will present a workshop - 3rd week of June for EBR schools. Brian has been asked to present on the Green Schools program at the Teacher Leader Summit in New Orleans. Evaluation Data – Data are collected to measure impacts of Green Schools projects. A plan is under consideration to bring students to the Symposium to involve them in sustainability education.

Brian is working with the Green Schools organization to develop a Green Schools Coalition in Louisiana. Incorporating renewable energy into the curriculum: EBR Schools have begun magnet Assistance Program for Renewable Energy Theme. Istrouma, Howard Park and Broadmoor Middle are working on integrating in curriculum.

Discussion for LEEC providing support to EBR schools for this.

Cole made a motion to show support for this initiative by way of a letter from the LEEC.

Jonathan seconded the motion. Commission passed the motion.

Kelley clarified that the Commission should be able to review the letter.

Interactive App development: The Appleseed App is a sustainability footprint app.

Brian is applying to Entergy and EPA for funds to develop the App. September 2017 would be the launch date.

G. Outreach: Heather Niemic reported that she would like to begin Outreach Committee meetings in June. She will send a Doodle Poll to members of the Committee.

Dean Blackett reported on N. Louisiana watershed initiative (Calhoun Center for Clean Water Tech Environmental Research and Education). He provided a copy of a PowerPoint on the Center in the packet. The project is an exemplary model for watershed science and education.

VII. New Business

A. 2017 Symposium:

- Theme vote: Brenda Walkenhorst went over previous themes. Several themes were suggested, including endangered/ protected species, human impacts, and conservation. Brenda suggested that we propose a broad theme via email and refine it and hold a vote by email. She will start an email chain.
- Committee formation: The symposium committee sign-up sheet was passed around.
- Venue: Venise has sent the RFP to both Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Low bids: Marriott BR, Westin Canal Place, N.O. The New Orleans venue costs \$17K more (including housing costs). Venise has contacted Shell, but no response yet.

A commitment is needed very soon – likely - For February 3-4 at the BR Marriott.

B. WILD programs: Thomas reported that Wade Dubea could not make it so he is providing information on the WILD, PLT, WET programs. They are all under the Council for Environmental Education – which is represented in each state.

Aquatic WILD, Growing Up WILD do not have an administrator in Louisiana.

LADF administers WILD and PLT. They hold train the trainer workshops. They want to avoid charging teachers. The books cost \$16 each.

LDWF are considering the options and sources of funding. The Sport Fish Restoration Fund may support Aquatic WILD.

Brenda W. commented that A.N.I. charges \$25 for a workshop.

Ann Wilson suggested the workshops could be part of school mandatory PD.

A MOU between LADF and LDWF is proposed, by which LADF would supply the books and LDWF would provide workshops. LDWF administration must first consider before making the commitment.

VIII. Announcements

Angela Capello announced that WETSHOP is July 10 – 15. Angela is still recruiting for participants and requested help with getting the word out.

Dianne announced that Ocean Commotion is October 25.

Dean Blackett handed out literature about the hazards of solar arrays for birds.

IX. Next Meeting Dates

August 9, 2016, November 15, 2016, February 3, 2017 (tentative), May 9, 2017

X. Adjournment

Jennifer Roberts moved to adjourn. Gary seconded. Meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.