

# *Environmental Education Commission*

## **Meeting Minutes**

February 23, 2018

Baton Rouge Marriott, Bonaparte Room

4:15 PM

### **I. Call to order**

Call to Order by Angela Capello at 4:20 pm

### **II. Roll Call/Sign-in**

Commission members present: Jada Lewis, Jessica Dixon, Gary Balsamo, Matt Reonas, Angela Capello, Brian Salvatore, Dean Blackett, Jennifer Roberts, Cole Ruckstuhl, Connie Conner, Melanie Dupre, Heather Egger, Brenda Nixon, Heather Niemic, Kea Sherman,

LEEC Staff: Brian Gautreau, Thomas Gresham

Guests: Deepak Bhatnagar

### **III. New Member Welcome**

Matt Reonas of Louisiana Department of Natural Resources

### **IV. Minutes from last meeting**

The Minutes from the November meeting were presented to the Commission for approval, as there was a quorum. Jennifer Roberts moved to accept the minutes and Cole Ruckstuhl seconded. The minutes were approved by the commission

### **V. Financial Report**

Venise Ortego presented the financial report. She reviewed the Litter Abatement fund, including the funds received and passed through to Keep Louisiana Beautiful. Venise also reviewed the NOAA grant \$150,000 was budgeted, \$90,000 was the actual award and a recent report submitted to NOAA, this project ends July 31, 2018.

#### **Coordinator's Report**

##### **Symposium:**

LDWF received \$5000 Check from Shell from 2017; we expect the same this year. Kea Sherman worked to obtain funds from Entergy and they came through with \$5,000 this year.

There 78 people are registered as attendees. Last year's numbers 107. We expect this downturn is due to high numbers of weather-related office closure days for schools as well as a good number of teachers attending NSTA in New Orleans this year. (NSTA had >1,000 science teachers in New Orleans earlier this year).

There are 27 Exhibit tables—we maxed out and had to turn a group away. The 15 poster session participants are all grant awardees for University Research Grants. Total: 7 short course presenters, 20 for short courses, 11 presenters for round table. 8 people requested assistance with registration. 41 people signed up for short courses compared to 88 last year. We recognize that teachers are short on days they can leave the classroom.

#### Grants program:

Lafayette Parish School System: determining air quality in the Greater Lafayette area. Pilot program enables students to retrieve data. Air quality monitoring is typically incredibly expensive. The company they are working with is offering equipment that is \$100-150 for the equipment and is working with the teacher to enable the students to access air quality data.

#### Staff Outreach:

Staff exhibited at NSTA, a few weeks ago Keep America Beautiful had a big volunteer effort and built 350 picnic tables for state parks and painted murals for the greater New Orleans area.

#### Old Business

##### A. Symposium Committee Reports/Needs

###### 1. **Audio Visual**

Heather Niemic reported that all the AV equipment is present and ready to be set up. Heather identified commission members who could help setting equipment up in the rooms.

###### 2. **Door Prize/Hospitality**

Connie reported that there are two tables in the exhibit hall are ready to go.

###### 3. **Evaluation**

Brian Gautreau reported that the Commission moved to an on-line system this year, paper is available for immediate feedback and the Commission is trying a hybrid this year incorporating both online and paper surveys to obtain feedback.

###### 4. **Exhibitor**

Angela Capello reported that we are at capacity with exhibitors, we have 27.

###### 5. **Finance**

Cole Ruckstuhl reported that everything looks good financially. Venise Ortego included the expense report for the Symposium.

###### 6. **Keynote**

Brian Salvatore reported that we have 2 keynote speakers for the 2018 Symposium. The Warner Foundation in Shreveport enabled us to bring in Professors Ross and Dugan-Haas as keynote speakers.

###### 7. **Programs**

Heather Egger shared the Green Stem 2018 Symposium program booklet noting how nicely it came together with a schedule at a glance on the back cover.

###### 8. **Public Relations**

Kea Sherman shared our symposium outreach strategy which is to send announcements through these various channels: the commissions list of contacts, the Louisiana

Environmental Education Association (LEEAA), through school districts, as well as word of mouth through members and partner list serves.

9. **Registration**

Cole Ruckstuhl reported that registration tables are set up and individuals are working to check people in as they arrive.

10. **Short Course**

Brian Gautreau reported that he attended the KLB short course which took participants to the recycling center. Initial feedback was that this was a great course and participants were engaged and could have stayed all day. In addition, there was an Earth Science trip with Don and Rob at Hilltop Arboretum, BREK Toolkit—Nature Exploration and Dinah Maygarden gave a tour of the Old River control structure in Simmesport.

B. **Art & Language Arts Contest**

Thomas Gresham reported that registration for the Art and Language contest is open now until April 20<sup>th</sup>. We need judges for both art and language art. It covers ages 5-18 so there is a lot of room for judges in both categories. Judging will either take place during the last week in April or the first week in May.

C. **Green Schools Youth Summit**

Brian reported that the Green School network meetings are still ongoing and the next meeting will be held in spring this year. Because the Youth Summit Response was lukewarm, this year it has been cancelled.

D. **Green Ribbon Program,**

Brian Gautreau reported that he had been working with a school in New Orleans but they pulled out, stating a lack of time and incentive. He is now working with a school in Shreveport and a school in Lafayette also plans to apply.

E. **2017 Fall Grants Program**

Brenda Nixon reported that we have identified a few problems with opening the grants program in the fall. Teachers are not allowed to spend until they get their money and state agencies take time to deliver awards. The time it takes from application through receipt of funds can be >5 months and this is bad timing for teachers. The applicant pool was smaller with fall grants. The very beginning of school may be a rough time to write a grant. Spring grants will allow paperwork to continue through the summer and grants will be in place for fall. They have the entire year to spend the money (until May 15). This spring we won't offer grants because of the fall grant cycle. No University grants were offered this year.

F. **Watershed Webs**

Venise shared the LDWF annual report with us. Eight hundred seventy-four (874) students were directly impacted by our work and 75 students and 4 teachers participated in NOAA-sponsored field trips in the last fiscal year. Field trips without LDWF staff or contractors happened as well. There have been 13 service projects implemented. Thomas, Brian, Dinah conducted a 2-day field experience at Fontainebleau State Park for an overnight field trip. See Report for details, quotes, and photos. A second field trip will be held with St. Aloysius School which will involve a clean-up of Dawson's Creek.

G. **Outreach, H. Niemic:** Staff outreach was covered by Venise. Venise: It might be time to discuss the symposium. We are considering changing the symposium. What best suits the classroom teacher, what can we provide to them. We have funds & staff and we want to do what they need. How different could it be?

## **VI. New Business**

- A. 2019 Symposium discussion, *A. Capello*: Symposium what could it look like? We have tried to come up with new things each year. Last year: panel discussion, this year: round robin. Maybe we bring in teachers from LEEA. Maybe our outreach looks different? If anyone has ideas to throw Venise's way we can share them asap. We need to figure out a way to get the word out, it may take personal contact, visiting the districts and asking for a number of teachers to attend. Lodging assistance is usually not spent in its entirety. Funding for professional development for teachers can be first come first serve and once money is taken it's gone. So by spring semester money can be out. Save the Date should go out to teachers in the fall. All costs must come out of a teacher's pocket and they may get reimbursed; sometimes teachers hesitate to commit to anything.

Jada Lewis: American Waste Association Conference may be able to tag on an Environmental Education track. Professionals can maybe mentor the teachers. Their conference is in the spring.

Venise: We tried to tag onto LSTA to build a cooperative meeting but were told that they would require a track for every discipline of sciences.

We do mass email principals and superintendents. We are running out of time.

1. Tentative dates & location: this time of year usually works. Get dates set. Get a commitment from principal early in the year. Marriot was the lowest bidder in Baton Rouge. The Hilton Downtown was expensive, and the Crown Plaza was not available. It's more about what city we choose. Convention Center in Shreveport had poor turnout. Lafayette has been done. Tentative Dates: Mardi Gras is March 5<sup>th</sup> 2019. February 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> or Feb 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. February 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> will be best. Is there a committee? Outreach Committee can host LEEA folks. Outreach Committee: Jen Roberts, Cole R., Heather Niemic, Angela Capello, also Dean Blackett, Brenda Nixon will reach out to LEEA.
  2. Theme: Marine Debris, Energy, Green Energy, Personal and Corporate Responsibility.
- B. Installation of new chair, *A. Capello*: Jessica Dixon will be the New Chair of the Environmental Education Commission.

### **Announcements**

Jessica provided a weekend at a state park as a door prize. Additional door prizes were provided by..., Dean came through to provide \$100 cashier's checks so that folks can purchase their own specialty plate. Pennington meeting with the Department of Education was a great meeting. Can we reach out and interact more with Department of Ed and offer with curriculum development in innovative ways. Web-lessons and support materials will be developed. Jill is our representative with the Department of Education. Would it be possible to develop a network, so that the teachers are developing phenomena where teachers can identify expert mentors. Brian will be working on this with the representatives from LA Department of Education. We could be the connector from teacher to expert resources (people). Jada would be able to connect with professors who would be interested in helping connect professors to K-12 teachers/classes. If we can get Jada a list of phenomena and send it to Jada she can help from LSU to identify professors.

- VII. Next Meeting Dates**: May 8, 2018, August 14, 2018, November 13, 2018

## **VIII. Adjournment**

- IX.** Connie made a motion, seconded by Heather Egger 5:34 pm