

Environmental Education Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2015
Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries
Louisiana Room, Baton Rouge Office
1 PM

I. Call to order

Chairman Cole Ruckstuhl called the meeting to order at 1.05 pm. There was an insufficient number of Commission members present for a quorum.

II. Roll Call/Sign-in

Commission members:

Ann Wilson, Jonathan Dearbone, Deepak Bhatnagar, Dean Blackett, Dinah Maygarden, Jennifer Roberts, Cole Ruckstuhl, Dianne Lindstedt, Brenda Nixon, Kelley Templet, Jessica Dixon.

Assistant Coordinator: Thomas Gresham

Guests: Kelia Bingham, CWPPRA

III. Minutes from last meeting

The commission members have received the minutes from the February meeting. Approval was deferred until a quorum is achieved.

IV. Financial Report

Thomas Gresham reported that the budget is on target. More details will be provided in the symposium report. Some funds are to be set aside for the Green Ribbon Schools program. The fiscal year will end in the black.

V. Coordinator's Report

Thomas reported on Eco-friendly awards at the Symposium. Commission members viewed the certificate from the awards vendor pledging to plant a tree in the name of the commission.

Thomas reported that he and Venise represented the LEEC at the Louisiana Envirothon.

Symposium 2016: coordinators are in the final steps of securing the Marriott in Baton Rouge. The date will be February 19 when the Marriott (lowest bidder) is available.

Green Ribbon School Grants: LEEC/LDWF has signed an MOU with DOE to collaborate on the Green Ribbon Schools (awards/recognition) program (GRS). The LEEC will offer a complement grants program (\$5000 each). Reviewers are needed for grant proposals.

All regular EE grant proposals have been reviewed and finalists have been announced.

LEEC has been approved to receive a NOAA BWET grant. \$90K is being awarded (asked for \$100K). The budget has been modified. The intention was to use litter abatement funds to build a website, but NOAA does not want a website so ARC GIS software is to be used and modified in-house using the LDWF server.

VI. Old Business

A. 2015 Symposium Report: Thomas reported that the symposium did well financially – leaving a balance of \$6K. This will be reduced when the overhead for the online registration is paid.

B. State Environmental Literacy Plan:

Thomas reported for Nancy Rabalais that the ELP has not yet gone before the Legislature. Venise had recommended previously that one option is to post the ELP to the LEEC website as-is. Susan Bergeron offered her support in moving it forward in the next session. A discussion took place on how this should be done. Meanwhile the ELP can be published as a draft on the LEEC website. There is a general consensus supporting this.

C. EE Grant Awards:

Brenda Nixon: All EE grant proposals have been reviewed and finalists have been announced. Brenda stated that she would assist the grant recipients as they get started on their projects.

D. Art & Language Arts Contest:

Thomas reported that there were more than 500 entrants. Announcement of the winners was made via the E-news. The reception will take place on June 23 at 10:00 am at the Governor's Mansion. A keynote speaker is needed. Deepak suggested inviting legislators. Kelley suggested inviting established artists such as CC Lockwood. Kelley will investigate possibilities. ALCOA is providing the funds (\$20K) for billboards and newspaper ads in communities where the winners live.

E. Watershed Webs Grant:

Thomas reported that the above mentioned NOAA BWET grant to LEEC/LDWF will allow the continuation of the work on marine debris education begun with the EPA EE grant. It will be open to teachers in the Gulf States, and limited to coastal parishes/ counties. The goal is to reach 50 teachers with PD and include 8 field experiences for students. The length of the workshops have been increased to 4 days. The participants will use mobile devices to record data. This is in place of the interactive web site that had been proposed. An interactive ArcGIS App / web based GIS will be used in conjunction with USGS Streamer. Water quality data as well as debris data will be collected and recorded.

VII. New Business

A. 2016 Symposium

1. Themes

Cole introduced the discussion on themes for the 2016 symposium. Due to the lack of quorum a vote on themes could not take place. Instead, a number of ideas were floated.

Cole suggested that we collect a few ideas and Thomas can receive further ideas and send out a survey with theme ideas for vote.

2. Committee Formation

Need committee lead and members. Volunteers for committees were as follows:

Registration: Ann Wilson

Finance: Deepak

A/V: Dinah

Evaluation: Cole

Short Courses: Jen

Chairs are needed for the following committees: Program, Keynote, Door Prize

Brenda Nixon mentioned the need to expand reach of the symposium and LEEC statewide. The Playmakers helped to begin this effort.

A brochure is being created to be shared with LDWF units around state, and with other agencies (e.g., AgCenter), as well as tabling at events. This will include a Q/R code linking to web site.

Dean has been working on northern connections.

We need to create short video clips and reach out to informal education venues such as zoos, museums, etc.

Thomas has created a prototype for a brochure and needs to move forward with it (tri-fold with Q/R code).

Dianne commented that the video could be a student project.

Jen commented that she can work on making a list of potential partners for distribution (watershed coordinators, etc.)

Brenda, Thomas, and Dean will work on brochure and get it out in next few weeks.

B. Green Ribbon Schools

Brenda Nixon and Ann Wilson reported that an MOU between Department of Education and LEEC initiates the Green Ribbon Schools grants program.

The RFP closed May 11. Five applicants were received. Reviewers are needed.

LEEC Coordinators office and DoE will collaborate on coordination.

Grants are up to \$5,000 for schools to implement a school-based project.

A part-time staff person will be hired – residing in Lafayette to share a vehicle with Carrie Salyers.

C. Other Business

Cole raised the question of how to change when the new Chair takes office. Currently the old Chair position ends on Dec 31. This means that the past chair is Symposium chair. We will need a Bylaws Committee to draft amended language. A draft will be needed for a vote next meeting. Thomas will email bylaws to LEEC. Commissioners need to read and make suggestions.

VIII. Next Meeting Dates: August 11, 2015, November 17, 2015, February 19, 2016.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at **2:30** pm.