

Environmental Education Commission

Meeting Minutes

May 13, 2014

Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries

Louisiana Room, Baton Rouge Office

1 PM

I. Call to order

Brenda Nixon welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m.

II. Roll Call/Sign-in

Members present: Ann Wilson, Kelly Templet, Linda Hardy for Alex Appeaning, Gary Balsamo, Angela Capello, Brenda Walkenhorst, Deepak Bhatnagar, Dianne Lindstedt, Cole Ruckstuhl, Brenda Nixon, Judith Miranti, Jonathan Dearborn, Jennifer Roberts (13 members)

Also in attendance were: Venise Ortego and Thomas Gresham

III. Minutes from last meeting

Ann Wilson made a motion to accept the minutes from the last meeting. *Angela Capello seconded*. Brenda Nixon called for a **vote which was unanimous**.

IV. Financial Report

Venise reported that we were doing very well on the budget and we are continuing with the EPA grant account as well. Another "Quantifying Debris" workshop for teachers will be held in June.

V. Coordinator's Report

Venise Ortego included a complete written report in the Commissioners' packet on her activities since the last meeting. She reported that she recently submitted a \$200K grant proposal to EPA and should be hearing within a week or two. She also reported that she and Thomas have been busy with outreach including Envirothon, Earth Day and Black Bear Festival.

VI. Old Business

A. 2014 Symposium Report

Venise reported on the Symposium and provided the Commission with detail in the finances and evaluation in their packets. Overall it was a success except we lost money this year. As per a previous meeting we agreed on some changes to the symposium with box lunches and keynote speaker during the morning for the next symposium.

B. State Environmental Literacy Plan

Venise reported that the ELP was reviewed by the Governor's staff and they requested several changes in the document, including taking NCLI legislation out of the document. Staff members wanted to see more

Louisiana specific examples and actions in environmental literacy as well as information about the Louisiana Act that formed the LEEC and its intent and to re submit the document to the committee by Friday.

A discussion among those present ensued. Venise outlined what the specific points were and how we can address them. -Ann Wilson requested that Venise send the Commission the changes to the ELP document.

Ann Wilson motioned that Venise make the requested revisions with the help of the ELP committee on the document and resubmit it. **Jonathon Dearbone seconded**. Brenda Nixon called for a **vote which was unanimous**.

C. EE Grant Awards

Brenda Nixon reported that there was \$98K in grant awards this year which was higher than usual (\$30K). Brenda said that we had some poor quality entries for the upcoming year.

Venise reported that she has some budget money that we have to use or lose. There were discussions with USDA on a plant ID project but fell through because of timing. There was a discussion on how to appropriate the money. One option is to use it to support Envirothon. Several members thought Envirothon was extinct but Thomas and Venise reported that there were 12 teams this year. Venise requested that Commission members email their ideas for good use of the funds.

D. Environmental Awareness Art & Language Arts Contest

Thomas Gresham reported on the Art contest. Submissions were down this year with 311; last year there were about 1,000. There were entries and winners from all over the state. There was a discussion on why numbers were lower. Most agreed that the theme about watersheds was difficult and misunderstood plus this year was a very stressful year for teachers with evaluations and other changes. The group discussed that we need to do a better job at defining and providing help and resources to the teachers to help them bring the correct concepts to their students.

E. Playmakers update

Thomas Gresham reported on the progress of the Playmaker's performances "Zoe's Watershed Adventure", Dean Blanchard was involved in getting it to some locations and his assessment to Venise was very good. Some locations added activities for students to make it a richer experience. The requested script changes after the performance at EES were made and incorporated into the play. Ten performances have been completed, having reached audiences all over the state and touched about 1,000 students at 10 different schools. One performance was missed and will be performed school next year.

F. EPA Sub-Grant Award update

Venise reported on progress of grants

- Grant programs: Through the EPA grants seven Arkansas students came to EES with their teacher to present their work through the marine debris project. Venise and Ann both praised the effort and delivery of their presentation and the students.
- Venise also reported that several of our grants were represented at the poster session at the State of the Coast conference in March.
- Quantifying Debris Workshop: is June 25-27th. This workshop will use up most of the remaining EPA funds. There may be some funds to support school field trips. It will depend upon whether the Rockefeller Refuge dormitory renovation has been completed and ready to use. The back-up plan is to use McNeese facilities.

VII. New Business

2015 Symposium

- Theme vote: The Commission voted on a theme for next year. The winner: “Biodiversity in our World”. The symposium 2015 will be at the Marriott in Baton Rouge, February 27-28th.
- Committee formation: Members volunteered for Symposium committees.

VIII. Announcements

- The Art Awards Ceremony at the Governor’s mansion will be on June 11th.
- WETSHOP is July 6-11th at LDWF Grand Isle. Spaces still available for teachers and educators.
- Cole Ruckstuhl and Deepak Bhatnagar attended the CWPPRA dedication in April for Southeast Louisiana. The West Belle Pass project was the 100th CWPPRA project.
- Venise Ortego announced the Black Bear festival at Palmetto Island State Park June 17-18th.
- Linda Hardy announced that Claiborne Elementary school in Baton Rouge received 1st place in the National Building Competition to improve energy efficiency in buildings.

IX. Next Meeting Dates: August 12, 2014, November 11, 2014, February 27, 2015

X. Adjournment

Jennifer motioned to adjourn. Deepak Bhatnagar seconded. Vote: unanimous.