

Environmental Education Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 9, 2016
Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries
Louisiana Room, Baton Rouge Office
1 PM

I. Call to order

Brenda called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm

II. Roll Call/Sign-in

Commission Members present: Jessica Dixon, Tomeka Prioleau for Denise Bennett, Kelly Temple, Angela Capello, Brenda Walkenhorst, Dinah Maygarden, Jennifer Roberts, Cole Ruckstuhl, Dianne Lindstedt, Heather Niemic

Commission Staff present: Venise Ortego, Brian Gautreaux, Thomas Gresham

Guest present: Kyle Balkum, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

III. Minutes from last meeting

There were not enough members present for a quorum so no vote on the minutes from the previous meeting took place.

Kyle Balkum was introduced and welcomed to the meeting. He is Venise's supervisor.

IV. Financial Report

Venise Ortego presented the financial report. She explained that the NOAA BWET grant budget shows a balance of \$132,683. The actual amount left of the \$90,000 grant is \$75,783.

Angela Capello asked how these funds have been spent. Venise explained the tiered stipends received by the teachers, which were designed in part to offset the travel time incurred as teachers came from states across the Gulf Coast.

A projected budget sheet was included in the Commission's packet.

V. Coordinator's Report

Venise presented the Coordinator's report. She explained that most of the activities will be described in the body of the meeting.

1. Brian and Thomas presented at the Teacher Leader Summit in New Orleans. Thomas presented the Mapping Watershed lesson that is part of Watershed Webs. Brian presented on the Green Schools Program.
2. Brian presented at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).
3. Brian presented a half-day workshop for teachers interested in implementing Green School programs.
4. Thomas presented at LDWF Enforcement's Conservation Camp.
5. Thomas serves on the GOMA steering committee and attended the GOMA All Hands Meeting in Baton Rouge.
6. Venise reported on the Whooping Crane Program. She explained that it is necessary to pool resources to find efficient ways to provide education, particularly formal education on whooping

cranes. Brian made a suggestion for an activity modeled after the World War II Museum's online education game where participants receive prizes when they complete tasks.

Brenda W. asked about the possibility of developing a partnership with Audubon Nature Institute. ANI has a whooping crane program. Staff for outreach may be able to help with education.

VI. Old Business

A. State Environmental Literacy Plan update: Venise presented for Nancy Rabalais who is out of town. A signed letter has been sent to the Governor's office. A proclamation has been provided and now we are waiting for a response.

B. Watershed Webs grant update: Dinah, Dianne and Thomas reported on the Watershed Webs. Summer P.D. workshops were held at Rockefeller and LUMCON, reaching 29 total teachers. They participated in mapping activities, beach debris data collection, and water quality sampling. They will receive stipends for follow up activities with their students, including field experiences. Angela asked what will happen if the teachers do not do follow up activities. One solution may be to offer another workshop. Typically several teachers will do follow up field trips. Heather Niemic offered the use of Youth Wetland Program canoes for field experiences in different areas across the coast.

Watershed Webs agendas and evaluations were supplied in the Commissioners' packets.

C. Environmental Awareness Art & Language Arts Contest: Thomas reported that 82 people, including several commission members, attended the Awards Ceremony at the Governor's Mansion in June. The First Lady presented the awards and the Assistant Secretary of CRT gave the keynote speech.

For next year's contest, funding will be an issue, but leftover funds will allow the contest to take place. \$5,000 will be rolled over. It will not allow for billboards, however.

D. Discovering Biodiversity Workshop: Thomas reported that Brian, Thomas, and Carrie facilitated the workshop in Lake Charles. Twenty teachers attended, mostly from Southwest Louisiana, Baton Rouge and Alexandria. The workshop was funded by a \$5,000 grant from ALCOA. Lessons were presented on the concepts of biodiversity and endangered species. Species featured included red cockaded woodpeckers and diamond backed terrapins.

E. Green Ribbon Schools Program: Brian reported that this year's Louisiana winners of the Green Schools competition were: University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Baton Rouge Magnet High School, Ben Franklin High School, and Westdale Heights Academic Magnet. All received their awards in Washington D.C. They will also receive a plaque from the Governor's Office. A 3-minute video was shown of the awards ceremony. Twenty-seven schools received Green Ribbon Schools recognition nationwide.

The application for this year is available online. Applicants currently working on applications include LSU, Hammond, Recovery School District, and Oil City Magnet. They send Brian the applications and he reviews them, edits and applies a rubric to rank them. He is working with LA Dept. Education, which is helping to open doors for future environmental education initiatives. LDOE has scheduled webinars for principals on August 29 and teachers on September 1.

Brian has applied for an EPA EE grant (90K) to support the Green Schools Program.

F. 2017 Symposium Committee break-out session: Brenda W. passed around the committee sign-up sheet. The committees are:

A/V: Dinah Maygarden, Heather Niemic, Deepak Bhatnagar

Hospitality, door prizes: Jessica Dixon, (Venise offered that Connie will likely be on this committee again)

Evaluation: Cole Ruckstuhl and Jennifer Roberts

Exhibits: Angela Capello and Dianne Lindstedt

Finance: Deepak Bhatnagar and Gary Balsamo

Keynote: Kelley Templet and Denise Bennett

Programs: Brenda Nixon and Thomas Gresham

Promotion: Dean Blackett & Jennifer Roberts

Registration: Jonathan Dearbone and Ann Wilson

Short Course: Dinah Maygarden

Discussion on Short Courses for the Symposium:

Short courses will take place on February 3. Biodiversity is the theme of the symposium.

Brenda W. would like to do a short course at Baton Rouge Zoo.

Angela proposed a wetlands or basic Project Wild short course.

Tours may include: Bald Eagle Tour (BTNEP) – numbers limited by van and boat to 8. Thomas asked Jessica about a state parks/ CRT tour.

Venise suggested including a tour to a restoration site. There was a previous one to Big Branch Refuge CWPPRA site with USFWS.

Old River Control Structure was another well received previous tour.

The Burden Center may be a location for a short course as they do Project Learning Tree.

Project WET and WILD trainings – Audubon offers Growing Up Wild.

Brenda Nixon will most likely offer Growing Up Wild for pre-school teachers.

Dianne would like to offer a Wetland themed short course.

All of the short courses must provide 7 contact hours for the participants.

VII. New Business

- A. Youth Summit:** Brian stated that he is currently planning the Green Schools Youth Summit. The location is set for Audubon Zoo, where there is room to accommodate up to 100 participants.

The objective is for a one-day summit for students to learn about green schools while becoming leaders. There will be break-outs for presenting projects.

It will take place at the end of March (possible dates March 22-24 – one day).

The date needs to be between testing. Brenda W. will need to know the date soon.

USGBC and LDOE are partners.

The goal is to have 70 students in the audience. Teams presenting will be accompanied by a teacher and chaperones. Target grades are 6-12.

Participants need to be involved in a “green schools” type project such as the schools in Lafayette that are part of city wide recycling.

Need to raise funds for travel and lodging.

A sub-committee needs to be formed to help with the planning. Jen and Brenda W. offered to be on the sub-committee.

Brenda will need the ANI infrastructure requests.

Possible camping option? (Brenda)

An email will be sent regarding the sub-committee's activities and to garner support.

- B. Nominating Committee appointments:** The Nominating Committee needs 2 more members. Cole is the past chair and therefore chairs this committee. The election will take place at the November meeting – electing chair-elect and secretary. Jen offered to be on the committee. Brenda W. will send an email to the commission to see who wants to be on the committee.

VIII. Announcements

Dianne announced that Ocean Commotion is on October 27. The theme is ocean lore (mermaids, etc.)

Jen offered to share mermaid storm drain markers.

Venise circulated a photo/video release form for commission members to sign.

Dianne also mentioned the upcoming NOAA Ocean Education Retreat.

IX. Upcoming Meeting Dates

November 15, 2016, February 3, 2017 (at Symposium), May 9, 2017, August 8, 2017

X. Adjournment

Jennifer moved to adjourn and Angela seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm.