

Environmental Education Commission

Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2015

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Louisiana Room, Baton Rouge Office

1 PM

I. Call to order

Chairman Cole Ruckstuhl called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.
Noted change of date from November 17 to 18 due to stormy weather

II. Roll call/Sign-in

Commission members: Jessica Dixon, Ann Wilson, Gary Balsamo, Angela Capello, Jonathan Dearbone, Kelley Templet, Dean Blackett, Cole Ruckstuhl, Christopher Rogers (For Adell Brown, Jr), Connie Conner, Dinah Maygarden, Melanie Dupre, Brenda Nixon, Heather Niemic
LDWF/ LEEC Staff: Venise Ortego, Thomas Gresham, Brian Gautreau

III. Introduction of new member and staff

Recognition of new member Heather Niemic representing LSU Ag Center and LDWF/LEEC staff member Brian Gautreau, new Green Schools Coordinator

IV. Minutes from last meeting

Cole noted that voting on the minutes needed to be held until a quorum was reached.

V. Financial Report

Venise Ortego gave a financial report. Alcoa has donated \$25,000.
\$5000 is budgeted for promotional materials and \$1700 was spent on rack cards and brochures.

VI. Coordinator's Report

Venise Ortego reported the following activities:

Discovering Biodiversity workshops - using a \$5000 grant, two workshops will be given. One short course will be held at the EE Symposium and one workshop will be held in Lake Charles this summer.

EE Symposium brochures - 750 have been printed (examples are provided in Commission packets).

LEEC was included in two grant proposals: EPA Gulf of Mexico Program (Thomas)

Watershed Webs Grant has been awarded by NOAA BWET program.

Thomas reported that he conducted a workshop with Mindy Brooks at the LSU Lab School at BREC Park, using the Collector APP.

All three staff members attended and tabled at the Keep Louisiana Beautiful conference and the Louisiana Science Teachers Association Conference. Also, Venise and Thomas gave a presentation at LSTA on securing grant funds for environmental education projects. Brian did a session on Green Ribbon Schools.

Thomas and Brian offered a bird beak adaptation activity at National Hunting and Fishing Day. Thomas and Carrie Salyers exhibited "Manatee Insanity" at Ocean Commotion. This activity included skulls and scar sheets to raise awareness about manatees in Louisiana.

Venise has renewed a contract with Playmakers, which is currently awaiting signatures.

Thomas attended the North American Association for Environmental Education conference (NAAEE) in San Diego. The theme for this conference was increasing diversity in EE.

VII. Old Business

- A. Louisiana Environmental Literacy Plan:** Venise reported that there are no new updates on the Louisiana Environmental Literacy Plan. We are currently waiting until the new administration is seated before a game plan can be enacted to push forward.
- B. Watershed Webs:** Dinah reported that the lessons are in development. She and Dianne are working on writing 3 lessons to be presented at the EE Symposium short course in February. A quarterly report will be submitted to NOAA shortly before the symposium.
- C. Art and Language Arts Program:** Thomas reported that brochures are being distributed to teachers. The theme is Exploring Our Natural World. Thomas is trying to increase the number of participants. Ann said she can send email messages to the schools. He encouraged Commission members to take plenty of brochures for distribution. More can be printed. 2016 calendars are printed and ready for distribution. Ann said she would send a link to the website rather than attach brochures. Adell Brown (LSU AgCenter) said he can post information on the AgCenter website.
- D. Green Schools Program:** Brian explained the difference between the Green Schools Program (GS) and Green Ribbon Schools (GRS). Per the GS program, Commission Members received a brochure with program goals in their packets. Schools can receive grants of up to \$5000. So far Brian has visited 12 schools. He is also seeking corporate donations and sponsorship for the program. He has contacted Coca Cola.
The GRS program is a national awards program. Nominations are made at the state level. Louisiana Department of Education nominates schools in Louisiana. Already more than the maximum allowed to be recognized are applying.
Brian is working on a social media presence for both of these programs. LA Green Schools is on Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter.
Venise requested that if anyone has ideas for corporate sponsorship, let the coordinators know so Brian can make contacts.
- E. 2016 EE Symposium Committee Reports:**
- 1. Outreach and Promotion:** Dean Blackett – a draft brochure has been developed with the goal of reaching students. Dean is looking for ideas for ways to promote the goals of EE through the power of kids. Example program at University of Louisiana Monroe built on the theme of non-point source pollution and agriculture involving bioremediation. Obstacles include lack of funds and getting teachers to the symposium. Cole asked Dean to clarify the goal and suggested that a subcommittee is needed to coordinate with Venise and Thomas to facilitate outreach – e.g., “Student Outreach Committee.” Cole made a proposal for such a committee.
The following commission members volunteered to be on this committee: Brenda Nixon, Dinah, Dean, Chris for Adell, Heather Niemic, Cole, and Angela.
The members of this committee will help to promote the goals of LEEC to youth.
 - 2. Audio Visual:** Dinah reported that progress would be made closer to the Symposium, but checked with Heather and other AgCenter reps that AV equipment would still be available as in previous years. They replied that it would.
 - 3. Door Prizes:** Connie Conner is currently looking for overnight packages. E.g., Golden Nugget, CRT – weekend at a state park. An anonymous donation was made of EE license plates. Some prizes are left from last year.

Connie's 2 daughters will be able to help and have scheduled classes around the symposium.

4. **Exhibits:** Angela reported that to date three exhibitors have paid and this should increase now LSTA is over (contacts were made at LSTA). There is now a PayPal payment system in place.
5. **Evaluation:** Cole reported that the same methods will be used as last year and the surveys will be printed soon.
6. **Finance:** Deepak was not present. Venise provided an income/expenses chart in the packet. Shell has not yet committed the \$5,000 they usually donate. If they do not donate this year, the symposium budget may be in the red. Brian is working on finding additional donors. Dean will be reaching out to Ed at Shell. \$500 has been pledged by Friends of Black Bayou and \$1,000 from BTNEP (National Estuary Foundation).
7. **Keynote:** Kelley reported that C.C. Lockwood has accepted her invitation to be the keynote.
8. **Program:** Brenda Nixon reported that 7 session proposals have been received. We need to encourage more proposals. The closing date is December 14 but this may be extended. Short courses are finalized and printed in the brochure.
9. **Registration:** Ann Wilson reported that Brenda Walkenhorst and others will help on the day. The PayPal system is in place. Square will be used for card payments on site (3% charge). Participants can use PayPal online.

VIII. New Business

- A. **August Minutes accepted:** Jonathan made a motion to adopt the previously tabled approval of August meeting minutes. Brenda seconded and the minutes were accepted.
- B. **Bylaws amendments:** Sec S. 1 and 6 under Article 5: Appointments and Elections: The Commission voted to adopt the following changes: Currently new Commission Chair takes office January 1. This is being changed to commencement of office at the February meeting to allow old Chair to preside over symposium. Ann moved to adopt these two changes. Gary seconded. The Commission voted to adopt changes.
- C. **New Officers:** Gary made a motion to close nominations. Jonathan seconded. The Commission unanimously elected these two officers as both seats were uncontested. The commission elected the following officers:
Chair-elect: Angela Capello
Secretary: Dinah Maygarden

IX. Announcements

X. Next Meeting Dates

February 19, 2016 (at Symposium); May 10, 2016; August 9, 2016 and November 15, 2016
Cole moved to hold the November meeting on Nov 15 because of the national election. Melanie seconded. The motion passed.

XI. Adjournment

Jonathan Dearbone made a motion to adjourn. Angela seconded.
Meeting adjourned at 2:27 p.m.