

***Environmental Education Commission***  
**Meeting Minutes**

February 27, 2015

Baton Rouge Marriott, Bonaparte Room

4 PM

During to the 2015 Environmental Education Symposium

**I. Call to order**

Chairman Cole Ruckstuhl called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm.

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

Ann Wilson, Alex Appeaning, Gary Balsamo, Angela Capello, Jonathan Dearbone, Brenda Walkenhorst, Deepak Bhatnagar, Dean Blackett, Dinah Maygarden, Jennifer Roberts, Cole Ruckstuhl, Connie Conner, Melanie Dupre, Dianne Lindstedt, Heather Egger, Brenda Nixon.

Coordinator: Venise Ortego

Guests: Kelia Bingham, CWPPRA

**III. Minutes from last meeting**

Alex Appeaning made a motion to adopt the minutes. Deepak seconded. The minutes were accepted by the Commission.

**IV. Financial Report,**

Venise Ortego reported that because LDWF is under a state spending freeze, the budget expenditures are limited to grants and prior commitments. This includes the Symposium and the Grants Program. The Grants Program should be fine.

**V. Coordinator's Report,**

Venise reported that most of her time has been taken up with symposium preparation so there is not a lot of detail to report at this point, although there have been some educational activities recently.

**VI. Old Business**

**A. Symposium Committee Reports/Needs**

1. **Audio Visual:** Dinah M. reported that things are going well; most equipment is covered for the symposium, although there may be a need for a couple of laptops.
2. **Door Prize/Hospitality:** Connie C. reported that there are some special door prizes for symposium including whooping crane trip to White Lake, whooping crane kits, and a donation of several EE license plates (cashier's check for purchase of license plate). Everyone is encouraged to stay to the end of the symposium for the final drawings at the end of the day. Exhibitors will have a special drawing (they have an "E" on their nametags).
3. **Evaluation:** Cole R. reported that the evaluations are all set and delivered to Venise. The electronic version was not done as planned this time – hopefully they will be next year.
4. **Exhibitors:** Angela C. reported that tables are all set up and things are going well.

5. **Finance:** Gary B. reported that there were no significant items to report. Venise commented that she updated the spreadsheet provided to the Commission. The numbers for the symposium are higher than ever at more than 200 anticipated. The balance will change once the food has been paid for, but the budget will be fine.
6. **Keynote:** Venise reported that all is set for the keynote speaker (Bob Thomas).
7. **Programs:** Jen Roberts reported that more proposals were received than there was room for on the agenda. All 24 sessions are good to go.
8. **Public Relations:** Dean Blackett combined this report with item D. The Outreach Program includes the Playmakers performances. He felt that the model used was OK but it was a lot of work to cover the area and more work needs to be done, including increasing outreach to schools via contact lists and through the use of photos and video. A photographer and videographer will document the performance at the symposium. Also we need more sponsors for next year. He has 2 sponsors lined up for next year so far.
9. **Registration:** Brenda Walkenhorst reported that registration is going smoothly.
10. **Short Courses:** Heather E. and Angela C. reported that the short courses they attended or were involved with presenting went very well.

**B. Symposium Volunteer Assignments**

Venise reported that all the jobs assigned seem to be going smoothly. She needs help with checking session numbers. Also the centerpieces need to be set on tables for lunch.

**C. Environmental Literacy Plan Status**

Venise reported for Nancy Rabalais that there has been no response from the new person in the Governor's office regarding getting the Governor's signature to make the ELP official. Venise commented that we could post the ELP to the LEEC web site even without a signature because of our mandate. We will continue to work on getting the Governor's signature, however.

**D. Outreach Program**

Dean Blackett – see above.

**E. Art & Language Arts Contest update and call for judges**

Venise (on behalf of Thomas) said that June 23 is the reception at the Governor's Mansion. Everything is going fine with the contest. Thomas is looking for judges so let him know if you can judge or recommend an artist, biologist, ELA person, etc. The date for judging will be announced shortly.

Award plaques will be awarded to Shell/Alcoa for 5/10 years of support for our programs. Sponsors will receive recognition at 5, 10, and 15 years of continuous service.

**VII. New Business**

**A. 2016 Symposium**

Cole introduced the discussion of the 2016 symposium. Dean is working on sponsorship. A theme and venue are needed.

Venue: Baton Rouge attracts better attendance. Deepak suggested a travel stipend. It was agreed that we will again host the symposium in Baton Rouge and the tentative date will be February 26-27, 2016.

Theme: need to tie the theme to the Art and Language Arts contest. Need to gather theme ideas in next 30 days and finalize at May meeting. Ideas were floated: Nature play, families outdoors; endangered species. Heather and Brenda supported the nature play theme. Alex suggested People and Nature. We need to collect ideas and verbiage by next meeting when we will take a vote.

**B. 2015 Grants Program**

Venise reported that the online registration is going well. The deadline is in mid-March.

**C. Nominations for vacant LEEC seats**

Cole R. announced that nominations are needed for open commission seats, including industry and local government. Jen R. suggested Emily Federer at the Port of New Orleans. She is an informal educator and was recently hired. Deepak suggested Ed Landgraf with Shell. Venise mentioned that he had been reluctant before and needs to be asked by a member of Commission. Alex suggested Jonathan Dearbone to represent small business as he has changed jobs and owns a printing business. Dean said he would research names in N. LA in local government. Deepak suggested a Baton Rouge local government person. Connie said she would also check on a couple of local government people in her area. Connie also suggested Tom Hatfield at PPG for industry seat and will check about his willingness.

**D. Change of November meeting date**

Due to a conflict with LSTA conference the November date must change. Alex made a motion to have November 17 as the new date. Jonathan seconded. Commission voted that November meeting will be on Nov 17.

**VIII. Announcements:** There were no announcements.

**IX. Next Meeting Dates:** May 12, 2015, August 11, 2015, November 17, 2015

**X. Adjournment:** Alex made a motion to adjourn and Connie seconded. Meeting adjourned at 5:01 pm.