

Environmental Education Commission

Meeting Minutes

August 12, 2014

Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries

Enforcement Annex, Baton Rouge Office

1 PM

I. Call to order

Brenda Nixon welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.

II. Roll Call/Sign-in

Members present: Ann Wilson, Alex Appeaning, Kelley Templet, Angela Capello, Deepak Bhatnagar, Dianne Lindstedt, Cole Ruckstuhl, Brenda Nixon, Jonathan Dearbone, Dean Blackett, Dinah Maygarden, Mindy Brooks, (12 members present).

Coordinators: Venise Ortego, Thomas Gresham

Also in attendance: Linda Hardy, DEQ

III. Minutes from last meeting

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

IV. Financial Report

Venise reported that LEEC has stayed within budget for the fiscal year, including the end of fiscal year shut down.

The EPA grant program is waiting for one remaining invoice and this will “zero” out the grant.

This also included funding Playmakers performances.

V. Coordinator’s Report

Venise Ortego included a complete written report in the Commissioners’ packet on her activities since the last meeting. She reported the following items:

- The EPA grant submitted in the spring was not funded, but ranked 3rd with a 95% score. The top 2 grants each received \$125K. EPA requested to share the 2012 proposal with new applicants as a model.
- All the EE Grants program grants were awarded in time for the new school year.
- The 2014 EE symposium business is now complete with all exhibitor fees paid. The 2015 Symposium will take place at Baton Rouge Marriott and a contract has been signed. The short course RFP has been released and ideas are being received. This year exhibitors and participants will be able to register online using credit cards (there is a \$0.17 transaction fee.) Thomas and Venise will be attending a PayPoint training.
- Public outreach activities during this period included a presentation “ID this Tree for Me” (Venise); Quantifying Debris Workshop (Venise, Thomas and facilitators); LDWF Fur Camp at

Waddill (week long) camp with 25 kids aged 12-16. The students received hunter and fishing certification. Venise and Thomas did a Whooping Crane and endangered species presentation.

- Committee involvement: Venise is serving on the LDWF building committee for the new Lake Charles facility, which has dedicated outdoor education space.
- Venise and Thomas attended the “Facing the Coastal Challenges” leadership workshop held by the National Wildlife Federation.

VI. Old Business

- A. **State Environmental Literacy Plan update and discussion:** Venise reported that she met with staff from the Governor’s office and they offered support with suggested updates. These include 2014 oil and gas statistics. Also added is research by Pam Blanchard. Once all updates are made, it will be sent to the Governor’s office for consideration of endorsement.

Some Commission members said they would like to review the final version before providing approval so Thomas will send it to the Commission via Dropbox. Changes are due by Monday August 25th.

- B. **EPA Sub-Grant Award update:** Venise reported that EPA Region 6 would like to nominate Sustainably Yours grant project for national recognition. The accolades go particularly to the grants program for the success in staying on top of implementation in schools and for administration of funds. Over \$90,000 has been administered in EPA grant funds. The monthly conference calls contributed greatly to this success.

- C. **Quantifying Debris Workshop report:** Dinah reported that a three-day professional development workshop took place June 25-27 at McNeese State University and Rockefeller Refuge. This included classroom based activities and a field based component that took place at Rutherford Beach during which the teachers collected and documented data on the debris found on the beach. The data was organized and graphed the following day and will provide material for lessons during the school year. The participants are responsible for developing a lesson related to the experience in order to receive a professional services payment. The teachers will receive a professional services contract, the amount of which is based on time so those who traveled further will be paid more. About 50% of the participants were from Texas. One was from Arkansas and the others from Louisiana. Very positive feedback was received via the post-workshop survey.

- D. **Environmental Awareness Art & Language Arts Contest:** Thomas reported that the Art and Language Arts contest winners received awards at the reception at the Governor’s Mansion on June 11, 2014. The event was attended by 108 people and Alex served in M.C. capacity. Students had a wonderful time.

- E. **2015 Symposium Committee break-out session:** Brenda Nixon organized a committee breakout as follows:

- a. Door Prize/Hospitality – (Amy Ouchley, Connie Conner and her daughters)
- b. Evaluation – (Cole R will work with Thomas): *Evaluation will be done using online forms and QR codes.*
- c. Exhibits – (Angela Capello and Kelley Templet): *Typically exhibitors do not register until after LSTA in November. Deadline should allow for latecomers. Target mid-December-mid-January deadline.*
- d. Finance – (Gary Balsamo, Deepak Bhatnagar, and Brenda Nixon): *Need for more sponsorship requests and to apply for grants – e.g., Entergy.*

- e. Keynote speaker – need to be filled (Nancy Rabalais?, Deepak, and Jonathon): *Anyone can provide suggestions. Jonathan suggested a speaker from EPA as they have funded and championed our grants program.*
- f. Programs – (Jennifer Roberts, Gary B., and Dianne L): *Will need to select 20 presenters. Thomas will send out call for proposals and format sessions. Possibility of varied time allotments?*
- g. Promotion – (Dean Blackett and Ann Wilson): *New contacts will be identified and contacted. The committee will split up the state into geographic regions to be covered.*
- h. Registration – (Brenda Walkenhorst, Judith Miranti, and Ann Wilson): *Venise will send the spreadsheet to Ann. Ann will use the template.*
- i. Short Courses – (Dinah and Dianne): *Need approximately 5 short courses. One already planned – CWPPRA field trip to Big Branch. Dianne will propose Invasives short course.*
- j. Audio-visual – (Dinah, Deepak, and Mindy): *Should have all AV equipment via Ag Center and need time for set up and break down. Will need to get into building on Thursday afternoon. Outlets at Marriott need to work.*

Discussion related to symposium:

Promotion ideas were discussed, including reaching out to events such as super Science Saturday, putting out flyers.

Angela suggested sending out a “Save the Date” postcard and email to previous exhibitors and attendees. Dianne said she would share the Ocean Commotion database.

Venise stated that she hopes that Shell will continue to support with a \$5000 grant and that BTNEP will provide \$1000.

F. Playmakers Update: Dean Blackett reported on the performances of Zoe’s Watershed play in parishes in poorest parts northern Louisiana, including Concordia and Ouachita Parishes. He provided a list of all performances in a handout in Commission folders. The overall message was that although it did not go perfectly, it was worthwhile and he said that he would recommend using Baton Rouge Playmakers again. He recommended targeting an older age group of students, and utilize local colleges as resources. He requested that LEEC members attend the performances in the future.

Thomas reported that the Playmakers performances reached more than 4000 students in 16 schools in 10 parishes. The total cost was about \$9000.

VII. New Business

A. New outreach ideas, Dean Blackett: Dean recommended reaching out to teachers “bottom up” instead of administration “top down” as an effective way of scheduling the performances and increasing attendance. He also recommended a promo video for the website. Angela suggested tapping into high school drama clubs as an alternate to Playmakers. Dianne mentioned that Murt would like S. Terrebonne High School drama club to be able to use script to perform the play. Venise stated that the script is the property of the state. Other suggestions: leverage resources to do a lot more teaching, contact schools earlier, and create a brochure with testimonials, pictures, etc.

Brenda Nixon suggested a sub-committee to address this. Dean, Cole, Dianne, Angela, Mindy, Brenda and Venise will comprise sub-committee. Dianne suggested making the script available to high school drama clubs. Dean recommended involving college groups too. Thomas will gather post-survey data from teachers. Mindy suggested providing stipends to drama clubs for materials.

Ann Wilson stated that there is a need for funds for LEEA to provide professional development on new science standards. Five P.D. workshops were funded last year. LEEA can fund 2-3 PD workshops for new science standards.

- B. 2015 Art & Language Arts Contest, T. Gresham:** The theme is Biodiversity in Our World. Thomas designed the logo. Thomas presented to Alcoa in Lake Charles, resulting in \$25,000 in 2014 Alcoa funding. \$5000 is to be used for a day-long Biodiversity workshop to be co-facilitated by Carrie Salyers, who would use some of Mindy's LSU AgCenter curriculum. The PD workshop is to be held in southwest Louisiana. The Ag Center representative in that area (Natalie) may help. Deepak suggested contacting Alcoa to request more funds for the symposium
- C. Nominating Committee appointments, Brenda Nixon:** Brenda requested volunteers for the nominating committee. She will check the by-laws for rules on who should be on the committee. There is a minimum of three members. Gary, Dean, and Jonathan will be on the nominating committee. They will need to send out a slate of nominations by mid-October.

B. Announcements:

Venise announced that Gary just became grandfather of twin granddaughters.

Dianne announced the date of Ocean Commotion: October 28, 2014. Save the date cards were passed out.

Super Science Saturday is November 1st.

- C. Next Meeting Dates:** November 12, 2014 (original date of November 11 is a Federal holiday), February 27, 2015, May 12, 2015, August 11, 2015

- D. Adjournment:** Brenda made a motion for adjournment, Dianne seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 3:27 pm.