

Welcome to the **October 25, 2006** posting to the Education about the Environment Interchange listserv! Any questions, issues, suggestions, or postings should be directed to Allison Brody at: allison.brody@unlv.edu

News/Announcements

Current statistics for the www.enviroedexchange.org website: since it was launched on August 14, 2006, there have been 2,050 successful requests for pages, with about 26% of users accessing the Field Trip Resource Guide. If you would like field trip information for your site or have your organization posted on the site, please send information to: allison.brody@unlv.edu or fax to (702) 895-5166, Attn: Allison Brody.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is hiring a Visual Information Specialist (full-time, term position) at the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. For the complete posting (closes on November 1) visit job announcement FS122409-07-RD at <http://www.usajobs.com/>.

Nevada State Parks Division is looking for volunteers to input survey information from the Visitor Survey Project at the state office in Carson City, 5th Floor. This project will help the division in determining new direction and development of our state parks. For more information, contact Jenny Scanland, NDSP, (775) 684-2787.

NNREC has been awarded a \$7500 grant by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) under the Environmental Education Training Partnership (EETAP) EE Certification Program Development program. This program is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and EETAP partners. The Public Lands Institute is partnering with NNREC on this grant.

Calendar

10/26	Invasive Weed Identification and Control	1:30 – 4:30 p.m. University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, 8050 So. Maryland Parkway, (702) 257-5550.
11/7-11/11	National Association for Interpretation Annual Conference	Albuquerque Convention Center, Albuquerque, NM. www.interpnet.com/niw2006/index.htm
11/10-11/12	Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (AEOE) Southern Fall Conference	Indian Cove Group Campgrounds at Joshua Tree National Park. www.aeoe.org .
11/25	Buy Nothing Day	A campaign to Use Less Stuff. www.adbusters.org/metas/eco/bnd/
11/28-11/30	Workshop on Collaborative Watershed-Scale Management & Research in the Great Basin	Silver Legacy Hotel, Reno, NV. For info and registration, contact Dr. Jeanne Chambers, Research Ecologist, USDA-Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, jchambers@fs.fed.us
1/13/07 and 1/20/07	Mojave Max PDE course	8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Red Rock Canyon NCA. Contact: Stacy Irvin, Project Coordinator, Mojave Max Education Project, (702) 258-7097
1/26 - 1/27/2007	CCSD Math/Science Teachers Conference (K-12)	Green Valley High School, Henderson, NV. (500 people attended last year)

Resources

MEERA, My Environmental Education Evaluation Resource Assistant (<http://meera.snre.umich.edu/>), is a web-based tool for planning and learning about environmental education (EE) evaluation(s).

You can subscribe to the USDA Forest Service Recreation Research Updates to find the latest information about research going on in the Wildland Recreation and Urban Cultures research unit. Check out their website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/recreation>. The latest research update includes synopses of the following articles: *Ecosystem Services And Visitor Perceptions; Connection To The Land, Management Preferences, and Urban Proximate Wilderness Visitors*; and *Interpretation Effectiveness At Schulman Grove*.

The Fostering Sustainable Behavior listserv provides the opportunity for more than 3500 program managers to easily talk to one another regarding a wide range of behavior change programs that support sustainability (e.g., waste reduction, energy and water efficiency, watershed and habitat protection, modal transportation shifts, etc.). If you would like to subscribe, simply send an email to web@cbsm.com with "Subscribe" in the subject.

Tread Lightly! is offering a 20% discount on their Hunting Ethic video through October 31st. As well, one-page hunting tips are downloadable for free at www.treadlightly.org

Hamburger Helper, a General Mills food brand, is looking to lend a "helping hand" to neighborhoods across the United States with its "My Hometown Helper" grant program. For information and deadlines, visit <http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/pnd/10004569/myHometownHelper>

Articles/Info

From: Barba, K. et al. 2004. Designing Evaluation for Education Projects. NOAA, Office of Education and Sustainable Development. (See Attached PDF document.)

We have identified a critical need to evaluate our programs. In fact, a stated objective of Partners for Education about the Environment is to: *"Develop monitoring and assessment tools to determine the successes of educational efforts."*

But evaluation and assessment can be intimidating things. How does one even start? Barba et al.'s "Designing Evaluation for Education Projects" provides a useful overview, background information, and a review of available tools and how to apply them.

To begin with, this manual defines assessment as a practice that "involves gathering data (either formally or informally) to be used in forming judgments" while evaluation is "the systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of projects to make judgments about the project, improve effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming (adapted from Patton, 1987)."

Next, the manual defines five levels of evaluation:

1. Reaction – what is the participant's response to the project or activity?
2. Learning – what did the participant learn?
3. Behavior or Application – did the participants' learning affect their behavior?

4. Results – did participants' behavior change move the original situation towards the objective (desired outcome)?
5. Return on Investment (ROI) – is the cost of implementing this project reflected in the level of benefits received from the results?

The most common evaluation occurs at the first level. For example, at the conclusion of a workshop or program we might hand out a brief questionnaire for the teacher to fill out. This is measuring an immediate response to the program by asking participants to “rate their perceptions about the quality and impact” of the learning experience.

While this is an important tool to measure satisfaction, it does not tell us what was actually *learned*. Did participating in this experience increase the participant's knowledge and/or awareness? This manual reviews some of the tools available for measuring these factors. As well, several relatively simple instruments have been implemented to great effect by Daphne Sewing, Project Manager for Discover Mojave, Outdoor World programs at UNLV's Public Lands Institute.

Arguably, some of the most important measurements occur at Levels 3 and 4. These types of evaluations are “significantly more complex than the first two levels,” in part because they have to occur after participants have had time to apply their new knowledge and skills. These types of evaluations should “focus on relevance of project, whether participants have gone back and used materials provided by the learning experience, how new knowledge has been applied, and use of new skills.”

Although Level 3 and 4 evaluations are complex and difficult, they address a very real need felt by most of us. As argued by Barba et al. in this manual, “there is constant pressure within agencies to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of their programs. In order to actually conclude that a project has had its desired effect, participants have to ‘successfully’ apply the new skills and knowledge This level of long-term feedback is becoming increasingly important particularly when priorities are being set or when decisions to continue or discontinue the project are being made.”

Given the complexity of such evaluations, perhaps it makes sense to pool our resources to design and apply an evaluation instrument that can work across multiple programs, rather than have a single organization or agency tackle this on its own.