An overview of activities and accomplishments of ICEC

April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019

The Big Trees Innovation Fund

The Big Trees Innovation Fund was established to honor the work and commitment of a long list of passionate educators and advocates in Iowa, the “Big Trees” whose work and encouragement “plant” new leaders and inspire action in conservation education. The purpose of the Big Trees Innovation Fund is to honor the legacy of these individuals while providing for the future of conservation education in Iowa by supporting innovative projects and outreach efforts.

ICEC Awarded REAP Conservation Education Program Grants

Charting a Course for the Future of CE in Iowa: A needs Assessment and Action Plan

ICEC’s year-and-a-half long project will assess the state of conservation education (CE) in Iowa. Using surveys, interviews, and a statewide summit, ICEC will gather information and bring together CE stakeholders from across Iowa to discuss CE priorities and make recommendations for building CE capacity. Results and recommendations will be provided to stakeholders and the public in a report and action plan.

The Conservation Education Summit was held in February 2019 at Blank Park Zoo the day before Winter Workshop 2019.

The Iowa Conservation and Environmental Education Survey was available in October 2018 through January 2019 and was announced broadly via our members and member networks. The survey for teachers, non-formal educators, administrators, and other professionals in the education and environmental fields that will help us determine what is currently happening in EE across Iowa and what support is needed to strengthen EE in the future. Additional telephone interviews will be conducted.

The assessment and final report will inform an action plan to build capacity for conservation and environmental education (EE) across our state.

Connecting to Iowa Core: Authentic Data Training

This follow up grant to Connecting to Iowa Core: Authentic Iowa Wildlife and Natural Resources Data for the Classroom, will help ICEC develop and host training for teachers on how to use the authentic data materials, address Iowa Core Science Standards, and connect students to real-world conservation science. Online training modules and additional support materials to will be developed.

REAP-CEP Grant Completed

ICEC completed the work for the REAP-CEP Connecting to Iowa Core: Authentic Iowa Wildlife and Natural Resources Data for the Classroom in January 2019. The storylines and lessons developed for this grant were completed and added to the ICEC website.
Winter Workshop 2019

STEM and EE: Diving into Data with Authentic Applications

February 22-23, Drake University - Des Moines, Iowa

The 2019 Winter Workshop (WW) focused on the integration of environmental education and STEM (E-STEM) using authentic data to create real-world context for developing critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Dr. Jeff Weld, Executive Director, of the Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council opened the Winter Workshop, followed by a panel presentation from participants of STEM Externships.

Then, participants dove right in and spent most of the workshop in deep, expertly facilitated exploration of how they can use authentic, real-time data in their classrooms. Participants had hands-on experience with tools, resources, apps, and data sources, which each grade band focused on a different topic area(s):

- Elementary School: Chicks in the Classroom and Schoolyard Habitats
- Middle School: Watersheds and Water Quality
- High School: Climate Change

Saturday’s Keynote presentation was provided virtually by Dr. Gabriele Villarini of the Iowa Flood Center and the IIHR-Hydroscience and Engineering. Dr. Villarini shared the wide variety of real-time data, flood models and tools, and research available to all Iowans through the Iowa Flood Center.

Deep Dive Facilitators

- Leslie Berckes, Program Development & Innovation Director, Trees Forever
- Linette Bernard, Communications Director, SOAR - Saving Our Avian Resources
- Barb Gigar, Training Specialists, Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Maryanne Huey, Associate Professor of Mathematics, Drake University
- Karen Koenig, K-12 TAG / Science Club / TLC Teacher Mentor, Iowa Falls Alden CSD
- Jenny Koska, Education and Outreach Coordinator, Metro Waste Authority
- Kim Richman, STEM Teacher, Joshua Christian Academy, Des Moines
- Peg Steffen, STEM Consultant, Ready, Set, STEM LLC; Retired NOAA Education Program Manager
- Joel Van Roekel, Environmental Education Supervisor, Des Moines Parks and Recreation

Organizational Support for Winter Workshop 2019

- Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council
- Drake University
- Iowa Flood Center
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Metro Waste Authority
- Trees Forever
- SOAR - Saving Our Avian Resources
- City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation
- Project WILD

Outdoor Learning Environments Conference

ICEC partnered with Prairie Rivers of Iowa to host the Outdoor Learning Environments Conference June 18-19, 2018 in Ames, Iowa. Eighty-six participants explored how to intentionally design outdoor spaces for exploration, inquiry, and learning to empower environmental literacy and education in any discipline. Conference tracks tackled every aspect of establishing, using, and maintaining an Outdoor Learning Environment, from gaining community support, to designing and maintaining the outdoor learning environment, to creating appropriate curriculum and educational programs.
Strategic Planning
On July 13, 2018 board members gathered for a strategic planning retreat in Hamilton County. Members completed an organizational assessment tool, reviewed and updated ICEC’s vision statement, and discussed pathways for membership growth.

Thank You Alicia, Changes at ICEC
ICEC’s Executive Director Alicia Vasto submitted her resignation to pursue other opportunities with the Iowa Environmental Council. ICEC’s ExCom thanks Alicia for her service and dedication to ICEC and wishes her well. ExCom has decided to move forward without an Executive Director position for the time being. Linette Bernard will serve as a part-time, contracted project administrator to assist with various duties as needed.

ICEC Receives STEM Innovation Grant
ICEC was awarded a grant from the STEM Innovation Fund, a program of the Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council, to coordinate a Water Quality Game Jam. ICEC will work with teams of students from across Iowa to design and build games as a way of inspiring curiosity, collaboration, and problem solving skills through the lens of water quality. Game Jam will take place in late Spring 2019.

WILD Resources
ICEC, in partnership with Iowa Department of Natural Resources, continues to offer Project WILD / Aquatic WILD and Growing Up WILD (GUW) trainings. WILD training is offered both in person and online. Workshop style formats are offered for GUW with Department of Human Services early childhood training hours available. The KinderNature website supports GUW.

Statement of Financial Activity
April 2018 – March 2019
Condensed from an Applegate Tax and Accounting report

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**Net Fiscal Year-end 2019**  -4,365.94

ICEC Executive Committee CY2018
Emily Klein, Chair - Poweshiek County Conservation Board
Mary Bulger, Vice Chair - Iowa County Conservation Board
Barb Gigar, Secretary - Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Lisa Ralls, Treasurer - Winnebago County Conservation Board
Lilly Jensen - Winneshiek County Conservation Board
Karess Knudtson - Environmental Educator
Beth Martin - Des Moines Schools
Craig Edmondson, Ex Officio - Heartland Area Education Agency
Jerry Neppel, Ex Officio - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

ICEC Executive Committee CY2019
Mary Bulger, Chair - Iowa County Conservation Board
Lilly Jensen, Vice Chair - Winneshiek County Conservation Board
Barb Gigar, Treasurer - Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Tony Vorwald, Secretary - Jackson County Conservation Board
Lisa Ralls - Winnebago County Conservation Board
Emily Klein - Poweshiek County Conservation Board
Beth Martin - Des Moines Schools
Jenny Koska - Metro Waste Authority
Logan Roberts - Tama County Conservation Board
Jerry Neppel, Ex Officio - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Craig Edmondson, Ex Officio - Heartland Area Education Agency
**ICEC–IAN Award Winners 2018**

**Aldo Leopold Environmental Education Award for Lifetime Achievement in EE Excellence and Leadership**

Jean Eells, E Resources

Jean C Eells, PhD, is a familiar face for many in IAN and ICEC. Jean’s influence on environmental education started in 1982 as the EE Coordinator for Hamilton County Conservation. Jean has been a board member for numerous organizations through the years and the list of her accomplishments is astounding. Her most current work focuses on conservation outreach to women farmland owners via her business, E Resources Group.

**Bohumil Shimek Environmental Educator Award for Outstanding Efforts by an Environmental Educator**

Audra Faber, Pella Christian High School

Audra Faber is a 20-year high school teacher of biology, anatomy and physiology, environmental studies, and co-teacher of a few ag classes at Pella Christian High School. Audra has poured countless hours into revamping her classes, keeping up with the rapidly changing standards through the years. Audra helped design a 4.5 acre prairie at their school. For the past 15 years Audra’s goal has been to take all sophomore students on an all-day field trip to creeks and wetlands in the Pella area.

**“Ding” Darling Environmental Education Award**

Blank Park Zoo for their Iowa Hunters: Leading the Way Program

The Blank Park Zoo, along with collaborators, created three interactive, portable displays to increase awareness about the harmful effects of lead ammunition on wildlife, along brochures and information on the BPZ website. The display compares lead ammunition to alternatives, has interview videos of hunters that have switched to non-lead ammunition, the effects of lead ammunition on eagles and other wildlife, and more.

**Frederic Leopold Environmental Education Award: For outstanding EE efforts by Business, Industry, or Labor**

SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources)

Kay Neumann started the non-profit, SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources), over twenty years ago. With the use of non-releasable, live raptors SOAR conducts programs bringing attention to conservation issues like lead ammunition and tackle in our environment. From 2004-2014, SOAR and other rehabilitators in Iowa collected data on bald eagles admitted for rehabilitation. After analyzing the data, a research paper was published. The findings indicated that adult bald eagles had higher lead concentration than young eagles. Also lead concentration were highest across all ages of bald eagles during October through January, which is the same time frame as hunting and trapping seasons in Iowa.

**Sylvan Runkel Environmental Education School Award: For Outstanding Whole-School EE Program**

Pella Christian High School, Biology Department

Leaf it to Audra Faber of Pella Christian High School to help beautify the school campus with trees and shrubs. When the school moved to their new location in 2007, the trees were quite sparse. In 2018, Audra coordinated the Iowa DNR “Trees for Kids” grant application and received $5,000 to plant 54 native trees and shrubs on the Pella Christian High School 33-acre campus. The Biology II class learned how to properly plant trees, and then coordinated the tree planting. The Biology II students studied the benefits of planting trees and wrote a master plan noting location and care needed.

**Chris Holt Youth EE Award for an Outstanding EE Program for Youth or Conducted by Youth (PreK-12)**

Decorah Seventh Grade “One Well” Unit

The Decorah Seventh Grade Team brings together science, geography, and English with a year-long unit called “One Well” that focuses on local and global water issues. Speakers, hands-on activities, field trips to diverse water resources, and a book discussion about the struggles that African girls often face bringing dirty water from a well for their families culminates with the students walking almost four miles to the Upper Iowa River. Then they collect water and haul it back in ice cream buckets and open milk jugs, trying to bring back as much water as possible, just like in the book they read.

**Outstanding County Conservation Board EE Program (2 or less interpreters)**

O’Brien County Conservation

Since 2001, Charlene Elyea has been the naturalist for O’Brien County Conservation. O’Brien County is in the prairie pothole, northwest corner of Iowa, with a rural population of 13,000. Charlene sees almost every classroom in the entire county every year. By the end of November 2018, Charlene had seen 17,111 participants. She also oversees the Prairie Heritage Center. Charlene is also an active member of several committees including O’Brien County Tourism, O’Brien County Community Foundation, Glacial Trail Scenic Byway, REAP CEP Review Board, IAN Professional Development and Scholarship Committees.

**Outstanding Volunteer**

Coralee and Ruby Bodeker

This mother-daughter duo are truly outstanding volunteers. In 2013, sixth-grader Coralee started volunteering for conservation efforts with her mother Ruby. Coralee wrote and illustrated a series called: “A Prairie Girl’s Notebook.” These notebook essays were published in the Benton County quarterly conservation newsletter. Coralee and Ruby have volunteered as nature center hosts for both Benton and Buchanan County Conservation. Coralee has even led a few program sessions for Benton County Conservation and has led two field trips with the Iowa Young Birders. Besides working with Benton and Buchanan County Conservation, Coralee and Ruby are also winter raptor counters for the Iowa Raptor Project.