Annual Report Fiscal Year 2023

ICEC
IOWA CONSERVATION EDUCATION COALITION

An Overview of Activities and Accomplishments of ICEC

A reflection on the past year with an eye to the next!

2023 in the rearview

A wise man once said, "Change is the only constant." So while ICEC continues with some signature programs, we are always looking to give each event a refresh -- change!

Our 2023 Winter Workshop and Annual Meeting were held in February at Drake University in Des Moines. ICEC thanked ExCom member Barb Gigar for her two terms of service at the Annual Membership meeting.

Right after Winter Workshop, we welcomed two part-time Green Iowa AmeriCorps members that helped with program outreach for this volunteer-led organization. Our thanks to the Holthues Trust for their support.

Then, we learned that our grant application to the National Envirothon Conservation Foundation to help expand student team participation in the Iowa Envirothon program was funded for the 2024 competition year! ICEC ExCom members helped with the 2023 Regional and Iowa Envirothon.

ICEC continues to work with a group of plains and mountain states via a group dubbed PEEPs or the Plains Environmental Education Partnership. You can read more about the PEEPs project in this report.

The ExCom continued to grow the groups' expertise by adding ex-officio members from the Departments of Education and Natural Resources plus the Conservation Districts of Iowa.

2023 was the year for the Midwest Environmental Education Conference. The Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education hosted the conference in Onalaska, WI. With a conference title of *To Hinųkwaseja: Restoring connections to land and each other*, highlighted the increasing importance of place-based relationships to a sustainable future.

Looking ahead to 2024

There will be change in the year ahead, but some signature programs continue.

Winter Workshop 2024, "Climate Smart Agriculture: Rethinking Iowa's Land, Water, and Food Production" will help bridge the gap between food production and conservation through education. Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, Iowa, is our host site.

The Iowa Environmental Game Jam is open for student teams from 3rd through 12th grade. This program is a collaborative effort between ICEC and Iowa Project WILD. Learn more at https://iowaee.org/ee-science-in-iowa/game-jam/

ICEC continues to work with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to provide support to trainers and trainees for Project WILD / Aquatic WILD and Growing Up WILD .

ICEC will help the Conservation Districts of Iowa promote the Iowa Envirothon Competition. We are recruiting school teams from urban areas and rural areas with a diverse student population. You can learn more at https://iowaee.org/ee-science-in-iowa/envirothon/

The PEEPs group is wrapping up Phase 1 of the landscape analysis and will look to Phase 2 roll-out this year. Read more below.

The support from the Holthues Trust continues in 2024 - we will have the ability to provide scholarships for professional development to Iowa's classroom teachers and non-formal educators and encourage expanded participation in school-based conservation programming through stipends to teachers to help defray some expenses.

Here's to the change that 2024 will bring!

Game Jam

The Iowa Game Jam for the 2022-2023 school year was a collaborative effort between ICEC, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Project WILD, and AmeriCorps members. Funding support came from the Holthues Trust. Topics available to student teams were water pollution, endangered species, invasive species, and renewable energy. Elementary and middle school students from around Iowa developed games that helped to teach others about environmental issues in Iowa. Twenty-two teams submitted game descriptions and 4-minute videos for judging in grades 3 to middle school. Judges represented the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Learn more about Game Jam here: https://iowaee.org/ee-science-in-iowa/game-jam/.

1st Place - 3rd Grade

Endangered Species Matching Game – Cedar River Academy at Taylor, Cedar Rapids (Kacidee, Giovanna, Aire)

1st Place - 5th Grade

Birdyland – Edgewood-Colesburg Elementary School (Arianna, Kathryn, Sienna)

Water Player – Edgewood-Colesburg Elementary School (Miles, Noah, Paul)

2nd Place - 5th Grade

Infestation – Edgewood-Colesburg Elementary School (Connor, Aidden, Ryan

Endangered – Edgewood-Colesburg Elementary School (Collin, Holden, Conner)

3rd Place - 5th Grade

Waterball – Edgewood-Colesburg Elementary School (Dagny, Janett, Caleb, Jenna)

Endangered Animals – Edgewood-Colesburg Elementary School (Cruz, Alivia, Eden)

Honorable Mention - 5th Grade

Wheel of Ospreys – Edgewood-Colesburg Elementary School (Clayton, Maddox, Grady O)

Wildlife Cornhole – Edgewood-Colesburg Elementary School (Max, Maci, Bentley)

Sorry for Endangering your Habitat – Cedar River Academy at Taylor Elementary, Cedar Rapids (Aariah and Aleigha)

1st Place - Middle School

Conservation Digital Game – BCLUW Middle School (Ethan, Garett, Tommy, Olin)

PEEPs Collaboration Work

The Plains Environmental Education Partnership (PEEPs), under a grant from the Pisces Foundation continues to work together to build capacity for environmental and conservation education.

In April 2023, the Plains Environmental Education Partnership (PEEPs) launched a Phase 1 Landscape Analysis of environmental education and conservation education (EE/CE) programs, services, and reach of these providers in KS, CO, MO, NE, IA, and WY. (Colorado joined the original PEEPs group because that affiliate was ready to implement the survey at the same time.) This will provide critical data to help us identify gaps and barriers to access that prevent successful implementation of EE/CE in the region. The Phase 1 data will also allow the network to equip organizations conducting environmental and conservation-related work in the region with the resources they need to allocate their own resources more effectively and to ultimately serve as a guide for future strategic planning efforts at the local, state, and regional level. With this critical data, the PEEPs states can determine next steps for increasing environmental literacy efforts in each state and region.

PEEPs proposes to launch Phase 2 of our landscape analysis of environmental and conservation education efforts in our six states focused on schools and districts in 2024. The Phase 2 EE/CE Landscape Assessment will help to identify how much EE/CE is currently taking place in schools and districts, at what grade levels/subject areas, support for integration of EE/CE in the curriculum and challenges and barriers to implementation.

ICEC Executive Committee Fiscal Year 2023

Louis Beck, *Chair* - Retired FFA / Ag Ed Instructor
Clark Porter, *Vice-Chair* - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Lilly Jensen, *Treasurer* - Northeast Iowa RC&D
Tiffany Morgan, *Secretary* - Iowa PBS
Kyla Burns - Johnston High School
David Conrads - UI Wild, University of Iowa College of Education
Heather Gamm - Bremer County Conservation
Ted Neal - University of Iowa College of Education
Kean Roberts - Ames Community School District / Drake University
Peg Steffen - Retired science teacher, STEM Consultant
Sam Taylor - Ph.D. Candidate, University of Iowa
Tony Vorwald - Jackson County Conservation
Chris Like, *Ex Officio* - Iowa Department of Education
Jerry Neppel, *Ex Officio* - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Carlee Sabus, *Ex Officio* - Conservation Districts of Iowa
Megan Wisecup, *Ex Officio* - Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Statement of Financial Position
as of December 31, 2023 and December 31, 2022

ASSETS

Current Assets	**Dec. 31, 2023**	**Dec. 31,2022**
Cash		
Veridian Checking	$ 1,585.40	$ 4,000.30
Veridian Savings	$ 70,424.79	$ 82,689.71
Veridian MEEC Checking	$ 47.55	$ 137.55
PayPal Balance	$ 571.78	$ 500.00
Total Cash	**$ 72,629.52**	**$ 87,327.56**
Other Current Assets		
	$ -	$ -
Total Current Assets	**$ -**	**$ -**
TOTAL ASSETS	**$ 72,629.52**	**$ 87,327.56**
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities		
None	$ -	$ -
Total Liabilities	**$ -**	**$ -**
Net Assets	**$ 72,629.52**	**$ 87,327.56**
Net Assets without Restrictions	$ 46,161.24	$ 53,245.98
Net Assets with Donor Restrictions		
WILD Resources	$ 23,806.63	$ 26,069.33
Big Trees Fund	$ 1,800.48	$ 1,860.48
Scholarship Fund	$ 813.62	$ 888.62
MEEC	$ 47.55	$ 137.55
REAP CEP 22-16	$ 0.00	$ 5,125.60
Total Net Assets w/Donor Restrictions	**$ 26,468.28**	**$ 34,081.58**
Total Net Assets	**$ 72,629.52**	**$ 87,327.56**
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	***$ 72,629.52***	***$ 87,327.56***

WILD Resources

ICEC, in partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, continues to offer Project WILD, Aquatic WILD, and Growing Up WILD (GUW) training. WILD and GUW training is offered both in person and online. GUW is offered in partnership with Iowa State University Extension, with participants able to receive early childhood training hours. The KinderNature website supports GUW and there are a series of ICEC website pages that support WILD and Aquatic WILD!

In 2023, the Iowa DNR and ICEC bid adieu and happy retirement to the long-time Project WILD Coordinator and welcomed someone new in that role! Barb Gigar departed from her 35-year career at the Iowa DNR at the end of August. Gus Elliott has joined the Iowa DNR as a new statewide Conservation Education Specialist and is now the Iowa Project WILD Coordinator! Email Gus at gus.elliott@dnr.iowa.gov

ICEC–IAN Award Winners 2023

These awards recognize the contributions of conservation educators, partners, and supporters to the advancement of environmental education in Iowa. Full winner bios here: https://iowaee.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023-IAN-ICEC-winner-bios.pdf

Aldo Leopold Environmental Education Award
Dan Cohen, Buchanan County Conservation

Bohumil Shimek Environmental Education Award
Brianne Blom, Clay County Conservation

"Ding" Darling Environmental Education Award
DISCOVER the WILD Days, Blank Park Zoo

Chris Holt Youth Environmental Education Award
Lynn Campbell, Iowa State University Extension & Outreach 4-H Youth Development

Outstanding Environmental Education Program (two or less full-time equivalent naturalists) for excellence in environmental education programming by an agency or institution
Kossuth County Conservation

Outstanding Environmental Education Program (three or more full-time equivalent naturalists) for excellence in environmental education programming by an agency or institution
Nahant Marsh

Outstanding Interpretive Non-Print Media Award
Polk County Conservation

Winter Workshop 2023

Enhancing Education - Naturally

The last couple years have again reminded us that student-centered experiences in the natural environment are essential. Structured and unstructured experiences in the outdoors help each of us "reset" and recharge, can help us concentrate, increase our creativity, help us become better problem solvers, help us become better students - no matter our age - and improve our mental health.

Iowa educators could earn one recertification credit through AEA Learning Online!

Thanks to Drake University and the South Central STEM Hub for their assistance with Winter Workshop.

2023 Conservation Teachers of the Year

ICEC and the Iowa Soil Conservation Awards Program, co-sponsored by the Iowa State Soil Conservation Committee and the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), annually presents an award to two educators who are creating awareness of soil conservation and water quality in their classrooms. Full bios here: https://iowaee.org/awards-scholarships/soil-conservation-teacher-of-the-year/

Division I (K-8 teacher) Recipient:
Stacey Snyder, Orange and Cunningham Elementary, Waterloo Community Schools, Waterloo, Iowa

Stacey Snyder's teaching revolves around the theme of exploration! She plans field trips that welcome students into the natural world. On the school grounds her students learn about the restored prairie, help with school gardens, and monitor bluebird nest boxes and chimney swift towers. Stacey's teaching units include citizen science, Iowa agriculture, Iowa landscapes, Iowa endangered species, and more. (Stacey Snyder and Shaffer Ridgeway, District Conservationist, Natural Resource Conservation Service in Black Hawk County pictured below left.)

Division II (9-12 teacher) Recipient:
Renee Borglum, Waverly-Shell Rock High School, Waverly, Iowa

Throughout all her courses taught, Renee Borglum ties back her lessons to the earth, water, and soil health helping her students understand that we are all intrinsically connected to our natural world. Renee has had her Science Issues students write essays for the World Food Prize, taken her Science Issues and Biology students to the prairie at the Middle School to learn about plants and ecosystems, and explored the Rockford Fossil Park with her Earth Science students to learn about Iowa's long-ago history. Additionally she runs the science club that exposes students to kayaking, hiking, star gazing, and other outside engagements. (Rene Borglum and Linette Bernard, ICEC Project Coordinator above right.)

With support from