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ICEC August 2025 News and Updates

Iowa Conservation Education Coalition <exec@iowaee.org> Wed, Aug 6, 2025 at 6:00 AM
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August 2025

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From the Chair

Hello everyone!

As the summer sun begins to set and our calendars transition from bustling events to the rhythm of the school year, we want to take a moment to welcome you back! We hope you enjoyed a well-deserved break filled with exploration, inspiration and time spent outdoors.

Like many of yours, for our household the summer was packed with exciting events - from summer camps

to nature hikes, from library reading challenges to innumerable fishing trips. As many of us gear up for the whirlwind of Iowa State Fair activity - the event that for many serves as the final "hurrah" of summer - it is yet another reminder that so many of these experiences, our enjoyment and learning, is the result of all the hard work formal and informal environmental educators put into making these experiences memorable.

Now, as we look forward to a new school year, it's time to channel that summer energy into our classrooms and outdoor learning spaces. With the adoption of the new Iowa Science Standards, our communities now face the challenges of implementing those standards into Iowa science classrooms. Together, we can foster a love for science and the environment we enjoyed this summer with our students, encouraging them to ask questions, explore, and engage with the world around them.

We have many exciting resources and opportunities lined up for you this year, and we can't wait to share them. Here's to a productive and inspiring school year ahead!

Take care,

Tiffany Morgan
ExCom Chair, Iowa Conservation Education Coalition

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Winter Workshop 2026

Linking Learning Landscapes: Where Classrooms and Conservation Meet is our theme ICEC's Workshop 2026 (WW26) and will bring together classroom teachers and informal, environmental educators to explore the power of collaboration for place-based environmental education. Through panel discussions and practical examples, participants will leave with innovative strategies for integrating local environmental themes into everyday teaching. Join us to connect with educators committed to conservation across Iowa! This year we are adding a "Innovation Gallery" of recent poster presentations and teaching ideas, and those topics/ideas that don't fit into a session. **Check our website page for the workshop for details** and here is the **Call for Presentations and Innovation Gallery link**!

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Game Jam

Ten students that completed the ICEC Game Jan 2025 are scheduled to show their games at STEM Day at the Iowa State Fair on Sunday, August 17. The students will be supported by teachers and parents. Come visit us if you're at the fair that day! Thanks go ExCom member, Peg Steffen, for taking the lead on this project.

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Iowa Department of Education Science Leadership Summit

Below updates and links from the Iowa Department of Education, Science Leadership Summit. Anyone passionate about improving students' experiences in science education is welcome to join the Iowa Department of Education Leadership Summit.

- **Leadership Summit Slide Deck** (August 4)
- **Science Education Interest Form** - This form puts you in the loop on some of the subgroups that we are looking to continue moving forward. This includes "The Elements" book study.
- **Iowa Science Standards** - New Iowa Academic Standards for Science were adopted by the State

Board of Education on May 8, 2025 and are now available online.

- **Iowa's Essential Elements** - will be updated with a new document soon!
- **Science Newsletter Sign up** - Choose Science Update from the list
- *Learning in Context: Connecting Classrooms to Local Places and Lived Experiences* - The Iowa Department of Education, in association with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and host institutions are excited to announce the dates for this fall's science educator professional learning events. This will be our third year serving Iowa's science educators and we are excited to expand our participation even more. This year's focus will be on the implementation of the newly adopted Iowa Academic Standards for Science. Each of the events will have a consistent morning session with local afternoon offerings for educators. **Registration is now open**. Contact Chris Like (chris.like@iowa.gov) with any questions.
    - Western Iowa- September 19th @ Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium
    - Eastern Iowa- October 9th @ The University of Dubuque
    - Central Iowa- October 15th @ Adventureland

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2025 Conservation Teacher of the Year Awardee

At the Conservation Districts of Iowa annual meeting later in August, ICEC will present the Conservation Teacher of the year for 2025!

ICEC ExCom would like to congratulate Larry Berland as the 9-12 Conservation Teacher of the Year! If you recognize Larry's name, you've probably been involved with Iowa Envirothon! Larry has coached teams from Decorah High School very MANY years and has taken teams to the International Envirothon Contest in 2024 and 2025. Look for more about Larry in the next ICEC newsletter!

The Iowa Soil Conservation Awards Program, co-sponsored by the Iowa State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) and the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), is presented to two educators (one K-8, one 9-12) during the Annual Conference for Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners.

Read about past awardees here!

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PEEPs

Over the past two years, the The Plains Environmental Education Partnership (PEEPs) has gathered data through surveys with school personnel and conservation / environmental education providers to map out the current landscape of conservation / environmental education (CE/EE) across our states, identifying the shape that CE/EE takes on the ground as well as key gaps in resources, reach, and impact.

The latest combined dashboard from GenThrive **found here**. There is also an **Iowa specific map here**.

The two different sessions where everyone's data and the analysis was explained can be viewed on YouTube!
Recording for Teachers & Administrators
Recording for Environmental Education Providers

The Plains Environmental Education Partners (PEEPs) sis made up of neighboring states (Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Wyoming, Iowa, plus Colorado) committed to working together to advance conservation and environmental education in the region.

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ICEC Resources

Check out these resources available on the ICEC website!

- **Calendar of events** and courses from ICEC, co-sponsored by ICEC, our partner organizations, and others.
- **WILD Resources**
  - **Monthly email** to support Project WILD and Aquatic WILD (**sign up here**)
  - **Book search** for PK-12 and parents / educators
  - **Project WILD and Aquatic WILD Workshops and Courses**
- **KinderNature** includes on the homepage weekly tips in "Max's Corner" and highlighted activity from the activity bank in KinderNature
  - **Monthly email** to support Growing Up WILD (**sign up here**)
  - **Book search** for PK-2 and parents / educators
  - **Growing Up WILD Workshops and Courses**
- **Authentic Iowa Data Resources**

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NAAEE Resources

NAAEE 2025 is now **open for registration**!

Superintendents' EE Collaborative (SEEC) - **learn more about SEEC, the collaborative, and download the toolkit**.

From eePro

- Have you checked out eePRO to see all the fabulous resources and opportunities? **Bookmark this page and visit when needing inspiration**.
- **Fresh Takes on Nonformal Environmental Education: 6 Research-Backed Approaches That Actually Work**
- IPA USA 2025 Conference, **The Child's Right to Play, Right Now!**

Natural Start Alliance
Go to this webpage for publications from the Natural Start Alliance.

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Professional Development

Project WILD
Check out these Iowa Project WILD Online Training Modules, available with or without re-certification credit to receive the new Project WILD and Aquatic WILD guides! The goal of Project WILD is to develop awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitment resulting in informed decisions, responsible behavior, and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment. Each online module includes an overview of the guide and resources for Aquatic WILD and Project WILD; you may order a copy of the guide upon completion of the activities included in the "modules" on this site. **Click here to learn about re-certification credit** through Iowa AEAs for Project WILD / Aquatic WILD. **Email the state coordinator for more info on the credit option.**

Midwest Environmental Education Conference
Midwest Environmental Education Conference is in Illinois for 2025 hosted by the Environmental Education Association of Illinois. Early Bird registration available through August 31, 2025. **Learn more here**.

University of Northern Iowa
The University of Northern Iowa MA Science Education graduate program is the only online program in Iowa for K-12 teachers that integrates theory, application, and content, plus allows you to update pedagogy, add endorsement areas or update content knowledge in your specialty area. Learn more at **online.uni.edu/science-education**. If you have any questions, please contact Dawn Del Carlo, UNI Science Education Graduate Coordinator (**sciedgradcoord@uni.edu**)

Iowa Water Center
Iowa Water Conference, Tuesday and Wednesday, September 9-10, 2025, FFA Enrichment Center, Ankeny, Iowa. **See more information here**.

Iowa Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society
Iowa Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society summer meeting, Thursday, August 21, 2025, Madison County Conservation Board Nature Center. Contact Jerry Neppel for additional details regarding the meeting and activities, 515-450-2325.

Blank Park Zoo
Educator Workshops at the Zoo, check their calendar for upcoming opportunities, cost, and more. **Classes currently from November 2025 to March 2026**.

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Resources and Links

Community Commons
Federal websites are disappearing - and with them, critical public data on health, equity, and the environment. Since early 2025, thousands of federal web pages and datasets have been taken offline, disrupting public access to information communities rely on to advocate, plan, and act. Explore the consequences of vanishing federal data, and the role of digital archivists and public interest technologists working to preserve it. **Learn why this moment matters and what's at stake when public data disappears**.

Children & Nature Network (C&NN)
Policy and advocacy for the children and nature movement in July 2025

Green Schools Alliance
The Green Schools Alliance is a worldwide, peer-to-peer network of schools and their sustainability champions, striving to create a brighter future for present and future generations. **Learn more here**! Also check out some of **their Best Practices**.

Iowa PBS Phenomena Project
Iowa Science Phenomena is a website and service dedicated to supporting classrooms through a curated collection of user-generated, Iowa-focused science phenomena. Explore **videos** highlighting Iowa master teachers modeling phenomena-based strategies and practices in their classroom as well as elementary, middle and high school students sharing their experiences learning with Iowa-based phenomena. Explore these videos and learn how you can use and contribute to the Iowa **Science Phenomena website** today!

Project Learning Tree

Check out **PLT's environmental education resources** and items for purchase through the **PLT shop**. Sign up to receive *The Branch*, PLT's monthly newsletter!

Nature Everywhere Communities Lunch & Learns
3rd Wed of every month | 2:30 pm EST
At the Children & Nature Network's Nature Everywhere conference, we heard many of you say you enjoyed connecting and networking with different NECs within the Peer Learning Network. Now, you can continue that networking virtually. Please register for our Lunch & Learns to continue those conversations. Lunch & Learns are monthly open space meetings where our network of communities can connect, share resources and brainstorm ways to address challenges.**Register for the series** and join whichever sessions you can. **Learn about Nature Everywhere Communities**!

Help your community set a goal and get outside: Vitamin N Challenge - The Vitamin N Challenge can help you motivate your community to get outside. The challenge was inspired by our co-founder Richard Louv's book, "**Vitamin N: The Essential Guide to a Nature-Rich Life.**" In it, you'll find 500 fun, practical ideas that will help you design a challenge that fits your community's lifestyle and schedule – or you can share your own ideas to inspire others. **Learn more about the Vitamin N Challenge** and see how you can adapt it to your community.

National League of Cities
How Connecting Children to Nature Can Help Small Cities Achieve Their Goals

Monarch Joint Venture
Insect ID and Their Role in Ecosystems - This Zoom webinar will explore the critters crawling and flying through your garden, while Monarch Joint Venture staff will lead this lively and informative session. **Learn more here**.

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Other News

Merit Badge University - Hawkeye Area Council is holding Merit Badge University (MBU), held at Kirkwood Community College on November 15, 2025, and is a full-day event during which Scouts work toward earning a diverse selection of merit badges. As experts in conservation, we would love to have folks from ICEC teach the Scouts the requirements of the **Nature Badge**. We anticipate having well over 500 students attending and offering over 40 merit badges. If you have any questions about sponsorship, MBU, or special events generally with Hawkeye Area Council, please contact Hanna Leoard at **hannah.leonard@scouting.org** or at (319) 200-2257.

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The Iowa Conservation Education Coalition (ICEC) is a 501(c)3 Iowa non-profit first organized in 1958! We have a long-standing tradition of providing professional development to formal and non-formal educators in conservation and environmental education. ICEC is the unifying voice for conservation and environmental education in Iowa.

ICEC needs you! **If you need to renew your membership, visit our website**. Memberships expire on December 31 and should be renewed by January 31. Your membership supports excellence in conservation education through networking with formal and non-formal educators and their support services, and conservation professionals!

Remember to visit the **ICEC Facebook page**, like it, and share it! The more you comment on a page's post, the more that page will show in your news feed!

Sincerely,
Linette Bernard, Project Coordinator
Iowa Conservation Education Coalition
exec@iowaee.org

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Iowa PBS

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