Annual Report Fiscal Year 2025

ICEC
IOWA CONSERVATION EDUCATION COALITION

An Overview of Activities and Accomplishments of ICEC

A reflection on the past year as we look ahead!

2025 Accomplishments

Successful Winter Workshop - ICEC hosted a successful Winter Workshop at Ellsworth Community College in Iowa Falls. Themed "Ecosystems of Learning: Fostering Communities of Lifelong Environmental Leaders," the workshop featured an engaging keynote presentation, interactive panels, and collaborative discussions. The event brought together educators, conservation professionals, and partners to explore innovative strategies for cultivating environmental literacy and leadership across Iowa.

Board Leadership, Governance - ICEC welcomed Melissa Haugo and Ellen Carman as new Executive Committee members and congratulated Kyla Burns, Kean Roberts, and Peg Steffen on their election to second terms. We thank David Conrads and Tony Vorwald, who concluded their service on the board this year.

Program and Youth Engagement Support - ICEC continued its support of youth-focused environmental learning initiatives, including Iowa Envirothon and Conservation Game Jam.

Digital Growth and Accessibility - ICEC launched redesigned, mobile-friendly websites for both ICEC and KinderNature. The updated platforms improve navigation and better reflect the organization's mission and resources

Active Subcommittees - ICEC's active subcommittees continued to advance strategic priorities throughout the year. These subcommittees, played a vital role in programming, membership, communications, and partnership development. All ICEC members are welcomed and encouraged to participate in a subcommittees as a meaningful way to contribute to the organization's impact.

2026 Tasks and Targets

Transition of Project WILD Financial Administration - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced plans to shift all Project WILD–related financial transactions from ICEC to another organization to improve their administrative efficiency. When this transition is completed in March 2026, it will formally conclude the financial relationship between ICEC and Project WILD.

ICEC will continue to retain and support KinderNature. The DNR will maintain its organizational commitment to ICEC through the DNR Ex-officio board member. Both organizations anticipate collaborative opportunities as roles evolve.

New Leadership Role: Project WET Iowa - In 2026, ICEC will finalize an agreement to serve as Iowa's state representative for Project WET (Water Education Today), an internationally recognized water education program promoting awareness and stewardship of water resources through hands-on, interdisciplinary activities for K-12 students.

Previously supported by the Iowa Academy of Science, Project WET aligns closely with ICEC's mission. By assuming this role, ICEC will expand professional development offerings and strengthen statewide partnerships for to members and educators across Iowa.

Membership Development and Organizational Sustainability - Like many nonprofits, ICEC faces challenges in sustaining and growing membership. The Executive Committee is addressing them through stronger outreach, engagement, partnerships, and clearer member benefits.

Mission-driven and forward-looking, ICEC is well-positioned to strengthen conservation education in Iowa.

Environmental Game Jam

The ICEC Game Jam for the 2024-2025 school year involved students in grades 3-12. The students were challenged to develop games that help people learn about water pollution, endangered species, invasive species, and renewable energy. ICEC received 53 game submissions from nine schools around the state. Two schools, along with ICEC ExCom members, Peg Steffen, Jim Pifer, and Tiffany Morgan, attended the Iowa State Fair STEM Day to share about the Environmental Game Jam with fair attendees.

Learn more about Game Jam on the ICEC website.

Grades 3-5 Board Games

First Place:

- *Invasopoly* – Cameron, Jonathan, Will; Central Lee Community Schools, Donnellson
- *Waterland* – Kenzie, Christopher, Jackson; Edgewood-Colesburg Community School, Colesburg

Second Place:

- *Go Plant* – Emily, Kaydence; Aldo Leopold Intermediate, Burlington
- *Dice of the Prairie* – Maverick; Boone Schools, Boone

Third Place:

- *Float Your Boat* – Lawson, Nora, Reece; Edgewood-Colesburg Community School, Colesburg
- *Powerboard* – Elaina, Cambrie, Ryker; Edgewood-Colesburg Community School, Colesburg
- *Power Out* – Brooke, Johannes; St. Paul's Lutheran School, Waverly

Grades 3-5 Digital Games

First Place: Butterfly Migration Challenge - Grady, Henry, Timmy; St. Paul's Lutheran School, Waverly

Second Place: River Rescue - Winry, Saul; Aldo Leopold Intermediate, Burlington

Third Place: Plants and Animals Invasive to Iowa - Ryker, Camden, Oakley, Nolan; Central Lee Community Schools, Donnellson

Grades 6-8 Board Games

First Place: Cards Against Extinction – Aila, Suvi; Aldo Leopold Intermediate, Burlington

Second Place: Minnow-Oak-Finch-Rose-Prairie – Evelyn, Maggie; St Paul's Lutheran School, Waverly

Third Place: Protecting Iowa's Waters - Harper, Esa; Calamus-Wheatland Junior High, Wheatland

Grades 6-8 Digital Games

First Place: Save the Sanctuary – Maysn, Julia, Sally, Emmanuel; BCLUW Middle School, Union

Second Place: Endangered Species – Paisley, Maysa, Brylee; BCLUW Middle School, Union

Third Place: Catch and Release - Henry, Tanner, Jace; Aldo Leopold Intermediate, Burlington

Grades 9-12 Digital Games

First Place: Uproot, Fish, Swat – Harley; Harlan Community High School, Harlan

Second Place: Renewal – Grant, Edie; Harlan Community High School, Harlan

Third Place: Blink of an Eye – Keara; Harlan Community High School, Harlan

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Plains Environmental Education Partnership

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.

PEEPs states (IA, MO, NE, KS, WY, CO) launched Phase 2 of our landscape analysis of environmental and conservation education efforts focused on schools and districts in 2024. In 2025, results of the EE landscape analysis highlighted findings like, "teachers and administrators identified the top barriers to taking students outside to learn include logistics such as scheduling, time, distance, staging, and clean up, and student behavior."

Watch these recordings for an overview of the key findings and actionable next steps.

- Recording for Teachers and Administrators
- Recording for Environmental Education Providers

ICEC Executive Committee Fiscal Year 2024

Louis Beck - Retired FFA / Ag Ed Instructor
Kyla Burns - Assoc. Principal, Johnston High School
Ellen Carman, *Sec'y* - Tamarack School
Heather Gamm - Director, Fayette County Conservation
Melissa Haugo - Director, Hugging Tree Nature Preschool
Jared McGovern, *Vice-Chair* - Director, The Wanderwood Gardens
Tiffany Morgan, *Chair* - Iowa PBS
Ted Neal - Clinical Professor Science Education, University of Iowa
Jim Pifer - Science Curriculum Coordinator. Southeast Polk Community School District
Kean Roberts - Ames Community School District / Drake University
Peg Steffen - Retired science teacher, STEM Consultant
Sam Taylor, *Treasurer* - Ph.D. Candidate, Earth & Environmental Science Dept, University of Iowa
Gus Elliott, *Ex-officio* - Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Chris Like, *Ex-officio* - Iowa Department of Education
Dien Judge, *Ex-officio* - Conservation Districts of Iowa
Jerry Neppel, *Ex-officio* - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Statement of Financial Position
as of December 31, 2025 and December 31, 2024

ASSETS

Current Assets	**Dec. 31, 2025**	**Dec. 31,2024**
Cash		
Veridian Checking	$ 1,500.00	$ 1,810.93
Veridian Savings	$ 50,460.11	$ 53,906.48
Veridian MEEC Checking	$ 47.55	$ 47.55
PayPal Balance	$ 577.42	$ 999.83
Total Cash	**$ 52,585.08**	**$ 56,764.79**
Other Current Assets		
	$ -	$ -
Total Current Assets	**$ -**	**$ -**
TOTAL ASSETS	**$ 52,585.08**	**$ 56,764.79**
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities		
None	$ -	$ -
Total Liabilities	**$ -**	**$ -**
Net Assets	**$ 52,585.08**	**$ 56,764.79**
Net Assets without Restrictions	$ 22,157.66	$ 26,453.31
Net Assets with Restrictions		
WILD Resources	$ 23,074.52	$ 22,493.58
PEEPs / Pisces Grant	$ 4,691.25	$ 5,156.25
Big Trees Fund	$ 1,800.48	$ 1,800.48
Scholarship Fund	$ 813.62	$ 813.62
MEEC	$ 47.55	$ 47.55
Total Net Assets with Restrictions	**$ 30,427.42**	**$ 30,311.48**
Total Net Assets	**$ 52,585.08**	**$ 56,764.79**
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	***$ 52,585.08***	***$ 56,764.79***

WILD Resources

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with ICEC, continues to offer Project WILD, Aquatic WILD, and Growing Up WILD (GUW) training.

In 2025, 6 in-person WILD workshops were held that reached 74 formal and informal educators. Trainees were primarily pre-service teachers and environmental educators. Again in 2025, Project WILD was introduced to teachers who participated in School of the Wild (SOW). Eleven new schools and about 30 new teachers received this training as a part of the SOW new teacher training program. 2026 will be a big year for SOW, as Des Moines Public Schools is starting the program.

GUW is offered in partnership with Iowa State University Extension.

The KinderNature website supports GUW and there are a series of ICEC website pages that support WILD and Aquatic WILD!

ICEC–IAN Award Winners 2025

These awards recognize the contributions of conservation educators, partners, and supporters to the advancement of environmental education in Iowa. Read winner bios on the ICEC website.

Ada Hayden Environmental Education Award
Kyle Nuendorf, Boone County Conservation

Aldo Leopold Environmental Education Award
Cari Nicely, The American Gothic House

Bohumil Shimek Environmental Education Award
Katie Cantu, Jasper County Conservation

"Ding" Darling Environmental Education Award
Metro Waste Authority

Chris Holt Youth Environmental Education Award
Greg Oldsen, Jasper County Conservation

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

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

Outstanding Interpretive Print Media Award
Story County Conservation

Outstanding Non-print Media Award
Laura DeCook, Mahaska County Conservation

Outstanding Volunteer Award
Bryanna Huffman

2025 Conservation Teachers of the Year

ICEC and the Iowa Soil Conservation Awards Program, cosponsored by the Iowa State Soil Conservation Committee and the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), annually presents an award to one K-8 and one 9-12 educator who are creating awareness of soil conservation and water quality in their classrooms. Read more on the ICEC website.

Division II (9-12 teacher) Recipients:
Larry Berland, Decorah Community School, Decorah, Iowa

Larry Berland has been an enthusiastic and dedicated supporter of positive environmental and conservation efforts throughout his lifetime. Larry has coached the Iowa Envirothon teams every year since Decorah High School began participating in 2000. That year's initial team of five individuals won the Iowa state competition. Larry's teams have won the Iowa Envirothon competition seven times, including 2025! Decorah brings multiple teams to the Iowa Envirothon every year, every year typically 30-80 students prepare and enter the state competition. In all, more than 1,000 Decorah students have been involved and coached by Larry. Along with his wife, Vicki, they have supported a "Can-Do Scholarship" for Decorah High school graduates since 2010, and in 2024 established a "Can-Do Environmental Fund" with the Winneshiek County Community Foundation to support positive environmental projects and scholarships for students entering environmental science fields.

Linette Bernard and Larry Berland

With support from

ICEC Supports REAP

REAP stands for Resource Enhancement and Protection. This State of Iowa program invests in, as its name implies, the enhancement and protection of the state's natural and cultural resources. Iowa is blessed with a diverse array of natural and cultural resources, and REAP is likewise diverse and far reaching. REAP is funded from the state's Environment First Fund (Iowa gaming receipts) and from the sale of the natural resource license plate. The program is authorized to receive $20 million per year until 2026, but the state legislature sets the amount of REAP funding every year. REAP funds go into eight different programs based upon a percentages that are specified in the law.