

Winter 2016

KEEC Legacy

A newsletter of the Kentucky Environmental Education Council

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Kentucky's Professional Environmental Educator Certification program earns national accreditation

Kentucky's Professional Environmental Educator Certification (PEEC) program recently earned national accreditation by the North American Association for Environmental Education. Since its launch in 2004, 187 participants from 41 counties have graduated from the rigorous program, according to Kentucky Environmental Education Council (KEEC) Executive Director Elizabeth Schmitz.

"The course was designed and launched by KEEC's previous executive director, Jane Eller, who deserves significant praise for her vision and hard work in putting together this outstanding program, along with Ms. Schmitz for reaching this level of national recognition," said KEEC Chairman Horace Brown.

The international, membership-based organization, also has accredited programs in Georgia and Colorado, and Utah has applied. Other states with active environmental education certification programs include Ohio, North Carolina and Maryland.

Deadline to renew Certified Professional Environmental Educators credentials Jan. 31

Thanks to all who participated in the live webcast of the Renewal Course on December 10. If you were not able to participate, you can view the recording of the webcast at mediaportal.education.ky.gov/uncategorized/2015/12/professional-environmental-educator-certification-renewal-course-2/. After viewing the webcast, confirm your attendance and give us your feedback by completing a brief survey at surveymonkey.com/r/SXS7LDV.

Remember to complete all of your renewal requirements by Jan.31, 2016. **Note that this is a Sunday, and KEEC staff will not be in the office to answer questions, so please do not wait until the last minute.** The list of renewal requirements is at keec.ky.gov/EECertification/Pages/CER.aspx.

Recertification available for lapsed renewal through pilot Reinstatement Course

If you graduated from the Professional Environmental Educator Certification (PEEC) course, but missed the deadline for renewing your certification in 2014 or 2015, you may now apply for reinstatement of your certification through a new program.

KEEC is rolling out a Reinstatement Course pilot that was developed with input from our Certification Advisory Committee. The goal is to engage our highly qualified community of graduates in contributing to the needs in the field of environmental education. In addition to completing your annual renewal requirements, you will spend 20 hours working on evaluating an EE program or implementing a component of Kentucky's five-year EE master plan. The application is available under the "Lapsed Certification" heading at keec.ky.gov/EECertification/Pages/CER.aspx.

During the pilot in 2015 and 2016, graduates of the PEEC course will be eligible for reinstatement. The Reinstatement Course fee is \$25. After 2017, only graduates whose certification has lapsed for three years or less will be eligible for reinstatement. At that time, the Reinstatement Course fee will be \$25 for those whose certification has been lapsed for one year, \$50 for two years, and \$75 for three years.

If you are interested in the course, now is the time to contact Wesley Bullock at wesley.bullock@ky.gov or 502-564-5937 for further information.

Interest being gauged in possible Kentucky Academic Standards for Science workshops

Help us gauge the interest level in a regional professional learning and networking series for nonformal environmental educators about connecting EE lessons to Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS), with emphasis on science. KEEC Executive Director Elizabeth Schmitz and Kentucky Department for Education (KDE) Science Consultant Rae McEntyre are planning the workshops and would like to know what structure/location would work best for nonformal educators, and what are your other professional development needs. Please provide your input through this brief survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KYGTSFQ> by Jan. 15.

Preorder your Let's Go Outside specialty license plate today and support EE in Kentucky

Thank you to everyone who has already applied for the "Let's Go Outside" license plate. If you have not already done so, show your support for the outdoors and EE in Kentucky by sending in your application. Applications are available at keec.ky.gov/LetsGoOutside and can be submitted to KEEC with a \$25 check that will be credited toward your future registration for the plate. We have a good start toward our goal of 900 applications, but we need your help!

Not only will the plates provide financial support to KEEC, they will be mobile advertisements for EE in Kentucky. We hope that each of you, in addition to applying for yourselves, will share the license plate application with your friends and family and encourage them to apply.

Spotlight on Kentucky Environmental Education Council Member: Cheryl Messenger

Cheryl Messenger has a positive outlook for the future of environmental education in Kentucky. This was clear as Kentucky Environmental Education Council (KEEC) Executive Director Elizabeth Schmitz sat down with the KEEC member to learn more about her path to and personal vision for the future of the council.

“The future of environmental education in Kentucky is encouraging,” Messenger said. “We need to keep strengthening our network of environmental educators and through them help the legislature understand that many environmental opportunities promote economic growth through ecotourism – including parks, agri-tourism, adventure tourism, fishing and hunting. The public’s interest in these opportunities means that we can turn Kentucky into an environmental vacation site – a win-win for the economy, the state budget and the environment.”

Messenger has served on the KEEC since 2006, representing the field of education. Each council member represents education, government, business or the environment. This blend of different perspectives helps the council balance the different perspectives of each, working together to achieve the mission of promoting an informed and knowledgeable citizenry with the skills and attributes necessary to effectively and constructively solve existing environmental problems, prevent new ones, and maintain a balanced and economically healthy environment for future generations, said Messenger.

Messenger began to work at Mammoth Cave National Park (MCNP) after her husband retired and they were temporarily staying with family while searching the country for the next chapter in their lives – where to live and work post-retirement. After teaching in military schools for years, Messenger fell naturally into substituting for teachers in the Edmonson County school district, where a teacher suggested she work at MCNP. She started as a seasonal cave guide 1991, and by 2005 was hired for her current role of education director.

Messenger said her favorite parts of her work include sharing the core mission of the National Park System, “to preserve and protect,” with other educators – who then take that mandate and integrate it into the classroom. She loves working with new people and seeing their skills and confidence grow. She also loves the challenge of trying to educate as many students and educators as possible.

Her favorite aspect of the job is variety. “Every day I teach in a variety of different ways and to a variety of audiences from working with pre-service teachers on how to use the environment in their own classroom, to helping university parks and recreation students understand how to lead a tour, and also sometimes working directly with K-12 students to help them understand systems and how they fit together,” she said.

An understanding of the interconnectedness of environmental and human systems is something that Messenger strives for when working with her core audiences. When people understand how clean air and clean water can drive economic growth through ecotourism – especially in rural areas – while also supporting human health, then individuals can grasp the personal stake we all have in taking care of our local environment, she said.

“The core of human existence is environmental quality,” said Messenger. “And with environmental quality we have the potential to boost the economy along with individual happiness through access to beautiful, safe and healthy outdoor places.”

As for vision, Messenger would like to see the council increase its focus on KRS 157.915(7) by “bringing national trends, ideas and partnerships back to Kentucky, to garner more excitement” about environmental education. The council has historically helped Kentucky shine as a national leader in environmental education, developing programs like the Professional Environmental Educator Certification course and the Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools program as national pilots. KEEC has continued to bring national trends in environmental education and environmental literacy to Kentucky.

Among these national trends, in the last five years KEEC has developed a statewide Kentucky Environmental Literacy Plan (KELP); partnered with the KDE to join the US Department of Education’s Green Ribbon Schools (GRS) program since its inaugural year of 2011; and worked with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education to include

postsecondary institutions in the GRS program in 2015, the first year the national program was opened up to such institutions. In addition, KEEC has continued to lead nationally with its EE certification program, as the third state in the country (after Georgia and Colorado) to receive national accreditation for the program.

Scholarships available for agriculture, natural resource students

The Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts Auxiliary sponsors three \$1,000 scholarships each year for college students who will be going into the agricultural or natural resources fields. The George Crafton Scholarship is for graduating high school seniors, the Natural Resource Scholarship is for college students, and the Betty Barrick Non-Traditional Scholarship is for college students who are at least 25 years old.

The rules and applications for these three scholarships can be found online at conservation.ky.gov/Pages/Scholarships.aspx. The application, along with letters of recommendation and a transcript, are due to the student's local conservation district before March 1, 2016.

For more information, please contact Johnna McHugh at the Division of Conservation at 502-564-2320 or email Johnna.mchugh@ky.gov.

Envirothon for Kentucky high school students gets underway in April

Teams of high school students will compete to solve environmental problems at the Kentucky Envirothon this spring.. The contests combine hands-on education, exciting competition and a fun day outdoors.

This year's regional competitions will be held on April 15 at the FFA Camp in Breckinridge County and April 23 at May Woods in Garrard County. Regional winners move on to the state competition May 18-19 at the University of Kentucky Leadership Center in Jabez. The top state team will continue on to the North American Envirothon in Petersborough, Ontario, Canada. The 2016 focus topic is "Invasive Species: A Challenge to the Environment, Economy and Society."

For more information, contact Johnna McHugh at 502-564-2320, or email at Johnna.mchugh@ky.gov. Envirothon information is also available at conservation.ky.gov/Pages/Envirothon.aspx or at the North American Envirothon Site envirothon.org.

Popular Kentucky biodiversity book now in public schools

The Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission (KSNPC) has announced that a copy of "Kentucky's Natural Heritage, An Illustrated Guide to Biodiversity" is now available at every middle school, high school, college and university library in the Commonwealth. The popular coffee-table book, now in its second printing, is a to Kentucky's school libraries that was made possible by a grant from the Owsley Brown Charitable Foundation, and is available to the public through retail outlets.

Don Dott, executive director of KSNPC, said the beautifully illustrated book promotes the mission of the commission and makes young Kentuckians aware of the amazing biological diversity that is unique to Kentucky. KSNPC is partnering with Kentucky Educational Television (KET) and the University Press of Kentucky to develop online resources for grades 4-12. These interactive sessions are based on images and information from the book, and can be found at pbslearningmedia.org/collection/kentuckys-natural-heritage-an-interactive-guide-to-biodiversity/.

Western Kentucky teacher workshops to be held in April

Murray State University's Center for Environmental Education will be hosting a Project WILD and Project Underground teacher training on Saturday, April 23, 2016, at Hancock Biological Station. Estimated cost is \$30 to cover materials and food. The workshops are limited to 20 participants. Please contact Dr. David Allen (dallen4@murraystate.edu) for more details.

Every Student Succeeds Act includes grant funding for environmental education

Environmental education will be eligible for federal funding under the new Every Student Succeeds Act, which was signed into law with bipartisan support on December 10, 2015. The Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaces No Child Left Behind, includes provisions for funding environmental education under a "well-rounded education" grants program and a 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. KEEC will continue to provide updates about these grant programs as more information becomes available.

National Environmental Education Foundation releases report on environmental literacy

The new National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) "Environmental Literacy in the United States" report is now available at neefusa.org/resource/environmental-literacy-report-2015. The report explores how environmental education links to major trends and innovations in technology, employee engagement, nature appreciation, K-12 teaching, and building sustainable communities.

Post your environmental education events and resources on EEinKentucky.org

EEinKentucky.org is the place to go for environmental education events and resources in Kentucky. Post your upcoming events, grant opportunities, and job openings, and search others' posts. Events are listed on the homepage calendar. Use the "News" menu to find other resources. For help with using the site, contact Elizabeth.Schmitz@ky.gov.

Follow KEEC and KAEE on Facebook and Twitter

Keep up with the latest news from KEEC by following us on Facebook (facebook.com/kyeecouncil) and Twitter (twitter.com/kyeecouncil).

You can also learn about the Kentucky Association for Environmental Education (KAEE), Kentucky's statewide EE nonprofit organization, by following KAEE at facebook.com/KY4EnvEd and twitter.com/KY4EnvEd.

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