



Taking the Next Step — Naturally

In this issue of the *Link*, we focus on walking the talk. As environmental educators, our goal is to provide the information and skills people need to make informed decisions and actions regarding our environmental future. Part of this involves doing what we say others should do in the interest of environmental sustainability. To do this, a general framework and process is needed to guide an organization to a more sustainable operating philosophy. The Natural Step® is an international organization that uses a science-based, systems framework to help organizations and communities understand and move toward sustainability. **Here, we introduce the Natural Step and the Natural Step Framework.**

The Natural Step Framework is based on systems science, and defines an approach to organizational planning for sustainability. It is comprised of three components: the funnel, system conditions, and a strategy for action.

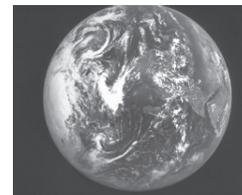
The Funnel – The funnel sets the stage for the Natural Step Framework by providing a metaphor for understanding the current situation. Globally, people will continually find themselves with less room to maneuver, as if in a funnel. This is partly because our life-supporting resources, such as clean water, clean air, and productive topsoil, are in decline. Another reason for the increasingly constrictive situation is that society's demand for life-supporting resources continues to increase.

System Conditions – The system conditions describe four fundamentals of a global sustainable society. They define a set of basic conditions that must be met

to make a society sustainable. The first three of these conditions are based on observations from the natural world. These conditions suggest that in a sustainable society, nature is **not** subject to **systematically increasing**: 1) concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust; 2) concentrations of substances produced by society; and 3) degradation by physical means. The fourth condition describes what it means to be a sustainable society from a human perspective. Sustainability means that human needs are being met worldwide, now and into the future.

Strategy for Action – The Natural Step has developed an analytical approach to help organizations and communities move toward sustainability as defined by the system conditions described above. This approach includes: 1) Developing a common awareness of how your organization or community fits into the broader economic, social, and ecological picture; 2) Describing the current condition of your organization or community; 3) Developing a vision of what your organization or community would look like in a sustainable society; and 4) Developing an action plan and setting priorities. Examples of actions include recycling or waste elimination, lowering consumption, or changing to renewable energy sources.

The Natural Step Framework is more than a blueprint for creating a sustainable society. It may also be viewed as a collaborative educational process. If you are interested in learning more about the activities of the Natural Step in Georgia and the southeast, contact Sue Wootton at swootton@bellsouth.net.



The Natural Step as Environmental Education

Is your organization or community interested in exploring the Natural Step Framework? If so, you can turn this interest into an environmental education project (for adults and kids!). The fundamental scientific principles that underlie the Natural Step Framework are: **1) Nothing disappears** (First Law of Thermodynamics); **2) Everything spreads** (Second Law of Thermodynamics); **3) There is value in order**; and **4) Plants create structure and order by using energy from the sun.**

Other potential learning projects include attending Natural Step seminars and taking field trips to organizations and communities that have adopted the Natural Step Framework. After learning how others have implemented the Natural Step Framework, your organization or community can begin a collaborative and self-directed learning process that includes the analytical steps outlined above. For more information, visit www.naturalstep.org.

Georgia EE Providers: Statewide



Editor's Note: With publication of The Georgia Environmental Education Teacher Resource Guide, EEA and The Link continue to share with our members and readers a sampling of EE providers. In this issue, we highlight a statewide organization, The Georgia Conservancy, 1776 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 400 South, Atlanta, GA 30309.

By Paul McClendon, Chattahoochee Nature Center, Roswell

Sometimes when I imagine the pioneers traveling west in wagons, I am filled with awe and wonder at their bravery and determination. However, sometimes I am also perplexed by this seemingly illogical journey. To leave what may have been a more comfortable and familiar existence to endure the hardship and dangers of the road seems crazy. This comes back to haunt me as I travel in bumper-to-bumper traffic on I-285. Discussions about traffic, water pollution and deteriorating air quality have become so commonplace around Atlanta that it's almost a joke. It's heartening to know that there are organizations in Georgia looking more closely at where this urban sprawl is taking us, and beginning to do something about planning smarter communities now and for the future.

The Georgia Conservancy (TGC) is one such organization. Rather than fighting against growth, TGC believes there is a way to grow that keeps the environmental impact to a more manageable level. In its "Blueprints for Successful Communities" program, the Conservancy takes this message of sustainable development to community decision makers such as bankers, developers and local officials. TGC raises awareness by introducing the

premise that many environmental problems can be addressed by a proactive approach to better land development practices.

In addition to education, the Conservancy provides communities with technical assistance. Following a proven model, TGC brings together professionals and community leaders to develop a strategy for future development that protects the characteristics of the community they value most. Based on linking community members and helping them find understanding on the issues, a professional panel of planners, architects, engineers and others combines community input with information about projected growth in a variety of development options. The process culminates in a weekend workshop, open to the entire community and facilitated by The Georgia Conservancy, to develop consensus about community goals. The final report serves as a strategic guide for the community.

In this way, The Georgia Conservancy is altering the footprint we leave on our planet. Perhaps with the work that it and many others are doing, the arduous and courageous journey that our forebears began so long ago will culminate in the creation of more rational and coherent communities for our descendants. For more information about The Georgia Conservancy or "Blueprints for Successful Communities" call (404) 876-2900 or visit www.georgiaconservancy.org.

SHARPENING the Educator's Saw*



"What's the nature of the place? The proper approach to any kind of land use begins with that question. 'What is the nature of this place?' And then: 'What will nature permit me to do here?'" — from Wendell Berry, during an interview with Jordan Fisher

"We all need to spend less time watching television and more time looking at the geography of natural resources, asking questions about who owns them and how much of each there is and how fast they are being used." — Wes Jackson, founder of the Land Institute, from his essay "Building a Sustainable Society"

*Inspired by Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Share your ideas for renewal in this regular feature!

EEA Spotlight: Karen Garland

Even though The Georgia Conservancy is most often thought of as an advocacy organization, the staff is quick to state that educating children is key to the future. As EEA board member Karen Garland puts it, "Today's children are tomorrow's decision makers."

Just over a year ago, Karen became the Environmental Education Coordinator at The Georgia Conservancy. Using her skills and knowledge as a beekeeper, Karen has developed two interactive presentations complete with honey tasting and a booklet of classroom activities. Continuing her interest in pollinating insects, Karen is also helping to develop a plan to take the "Monarchs in the Classroom" project statewide.

To help develop students who are more knowledgeable about environmental issues, Karen also organizes the annual Youth Environmental Symposium (YES) competition for Georgia middle and high school students.

The Georgia Conservancy is working to ensure that Georgians have clean air, healthy rivers, and streams, and unspoiled wild places, both today and tomorrow. However, without taking the proper steps now, this cannot happen. Karen Garland is taking those steps in the form of educating our young people. As she says, "You don't have to write a letter or picket to be an activist - the simple act of planting a tree is taking action."

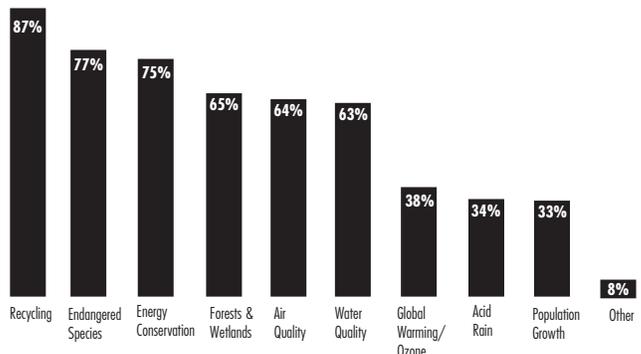


Environmental Education in K-12 Classrooms: Broad but not Deep

The environment is a popular topic for elementary and secondary teachers across the United States, but teachers rarely address environmental topics in depth. This was one of the findings of a newly released study, *Environmental Studies in the K-12 Classroom: A Teacher's View*. Environmental education is far more prevalent in the elementary grades. Eighty-three percent of K-4 teachers report that they teach environmental topics. That percentage drops to 59% for teachers of grades 5-8, and to 45% for teachers of grades 9-12. The topic of recycling is the most widely taught of environmental topics, with 87% of teachers reporting that they teach recycling. Environmental teaching materials come from a variety of sources, including textbooks, news articles, environmental groups, and government agencies. Less than one percent of teachers said that controversy or parental or administrative complaints were reasons they did not teach environmental topics. A majority of 51% said that they want to encourage students to protect the environment, and 22% said that environmental topics help to reinforce the applicability of classroom learning to everyday life.

The report may be ordered in print from www.naaee.org and the survey may be viewed online at <http://eelink.net/eepublications-online.html>. (This article was abstracted from the *NAAEE Communicator*: Spring 2001, p. 3.)

What are the most taught Environmental Topics?



How much time is spent on Environmental Topics?

Classroom hours/year Percentage of Teachers

Under 50	63%
51-100	20%
101-200	10%
Over 200	8%

NEWS, NOTES, AND UP-COMING EVENTS

EEA and the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences are partnering to create the **Environmental Leadership Project (ELP)**. This project is designed to establish and implement professional standards for environmental educators. The ELP is housed at UGA. For more information contact Richard Osorio at rosorio@arches.uga.edu

In partnership with The Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation, the Georgia Recycling Coalition facilitates the annual **Excellence in School Recycling Awards** program. Georgia schools compete for ten \$1,000 grants for implementation or improvement of school recycling programs. Applications for 2001 must be postmarked by September 26, 2001. For more information, visit www.gerogiarecycles.org/resources/features.asp or contact the GRC office at (404) 634-3095 or via e-mail at garecycles@mindspring.com

Habitat Stewards Training, October 9-27, 2001, metro Atlanta area. Are you interested in learning how to assist members of your community to enhance, restore and create wildlife and watershed friendly habitats - in backyards, schoolyards, churchyards, libraries, and other private and public spaces - and increase your knowledge of native plants, habitats, wildlife species and more? Habitat Stewards is the volunteer mentoring arm of National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat™ program. Twenty-four hours of training over 3 weeks; 50 hours of community service over one year. \$30 materials fee. Contact Vicki Seastrom, seastrom@nwf.org, 404-876-2602, extension 223.

Outdoor Classroom Council 5th Annual Symposium, **"Flower Power: Reaching and Teaching Through Plants and Animals,"** Tuesday, October 16, 2001, at ZooAtlanta. Keynote speaker

is UGA Extension Service Horticulture Specialist **Dr. Paul Thomas**. Pre-register by September 28th for discounted fees (\$35 for EEA members, \$50 for non-members). After September 28th, fees will be \$45 for EEA members and \$60 for non-members. Registration fees include lunch, door prizes, refreshments and resources. Call 770-394-3322 to be placed on the mailing list, or visit www.eealliance.org after August 15th to download registration materials.



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EEA is a self-governed, non-profit organization that promotes communication and education among professionals in the field of environmental education in Georgia. EEA is an affiliate of the North American Association for Environmental Education.

**Time to renew your EEA membership?
Check your mailing label for your membership expiration date.**



EEA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Become a Member Today!

Fill out this form and mail it along with a check to Elachee Nature Science Center at the address above.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

Quarterly Newsletter – Provides educational resources, legislative updates, notice of workshops and events, grant opportunities, and much more.

Annual Spring Conference and Fall Retreat – Held at different sites throughout Georgia with guest speakers, workshops and field trips. A great opportunity to meet people and share.

Sharing and Exchanging Exhibits – The opportunity to find out and exchange exhibits from member organizations.

The Georgia Environmental Education Teacher Resource Guide – 132 pages of environmental education resources and learning opportunities in Georgia.

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

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- Membership Category: Individual \$15
 Organizational* \$50
 Corporate* \$100

**Please Note: organizations and businesses can list up to five representatives to receive EEA mailings and information.*

Please check the category of your affiliation so that we may serve you better:

- Community Outreach Private and/or Non-profit
 Government Agency Business and Industry
 Environmental Education Center
 Formal Post Secondary Education
 Formal Education, Pre-K through 6
 Formal Education, 7 through 12

Newsletter Committee

Vicki Seastrom, National Wildlife Federation & Barbara McDonald, U.S. Forest Service, *Managing Editors*

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Kristen Smith, *Production Artist*

The Link is published four times annually. EEA member contributions are encouraged. Deadlines for articles and news of interest are:

Issue	Deadline
Winter	December 1
Spring	March 15
Summer	June 15
Fall	September 15

E-mail articles to: Vicki Seastrom, seastrom@nwf.org, (404) 876-2602, ext. 223 or to Barbara McDonald, barmac@bigfoot.com, (706) 559-4224.

Thanks for your support of the EEA 2001 Conference!

**2002 Conference
March 22-24**

Unicoi State Park
Helen, Georgia



**Environmental Education . . .
everyone, everywhere, everyday**

"Call for Presentations" will be mailed in September