



Building Capacity for EE in Georgia

by Deron Davis, Georgia Environmental Protection Division

I stared at the survey form in front of me. First question: "Check all of the following components of a comprehensive EE program in place in your state as a result of capacity building."

"Capacity building?" I wondered. What is that? I did not want Georgia left out of the National Environmental Education Advancement Project's survey, so I read each question and tried to answer it honestly.

Survey: "Does your state have EE Model Schools?"

Me: "There are schools doing EE in incredible outdoor classrooms—so, YES."

Survey: "Is there a State Master Plan for environmental education?"

Me: "The Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia has a strategic plan for the organization—so, YES."

Survey: "Does your state have training for those who provide EE Professional Development?"

Me: "I'm a Project Learning Tree, WET and WILD facilitator—so, YES."

Survey: "Does your state have a comprehensive online database of state EE

practitioners and resources?"

Me: "A what?—No."

Apparently these accomplishments, and many others on the survey, are the result of **capacity building**. It all seemed a little out of my grasp. After all, I worked with students at a nature center. Our state organization, EEA, was bringing professionals together, but our work focused on keeping the organization afloat—not accomplishing the goals listed on the survey. According to NEEAP, "EE capacity building is developing effective organizations and individual leaders in order to achieve comprehensive EE programs at the state and local level. **Comprehensive EE programs are a combination of structure, funding and program components, which serve to incorporate EE into educational institutions at the state and local level.**"

I now know I answered some of those survey questions wrong. Just because I knew of schools across the state that were using EE, it did not mean that Georgia has an EE Model Schools program. An organizational strategic plan

isn't the same as a state master plan for EE, and facilitator training isn't the same as ensuring professional competencies through a certification program.

At EEA's annual conference last month, I spoke with Diane Davies, State 4-H Specialist for Environmental Education. She said that EE providers in Georgia are all vying to reach the same 5% of the population and in order to affect real change, we need to cultivate a larger percentage who request and receive environmental education programs. That will only happen through capacity building.

Today, EEA answers those survey questions with a better understanding of capacity building. Now when we say, "YES," we know what we're doing and why it's important. By sharing ideas and resources through membership, newsletters, conferences, workshops and committees, the members of EEA set and accomplish goals that allow us all to reach more people, more effectively. If our bottom line is to create an environmentally literate citizenry, then building capacity for environmental education is the best way to achieve it.

A wide variety of people teach about Georgia's environment, from classrooms, local, state and national parks, nature centers, zoos, and botanical gardens to corporations, universities, government agencies and nonprofit organizations. They are building capacity for environmental education through EEA and its comprehensive EE program components. Some capac-

In this issue of the Link, we focus on state-wide capacity building. Capacity building has a number of definitions, however in general it is concerned with the development of organizational and individual leadership to more effectively accomplish professional goals. Although the focus here is on building statewide capacity in EE, you may build capacity at any organizational level by applying many of these ideas and components.

Certification Program Opportunity for Georgia Environmental Educators

Editor's Note: This month, we spotlight a statewide EE capacity building program, the Georgia Project for Excellence in Environmental Education Certification Program.

by Paul McClendon, Chattahoochee Nature Center

“Our goal,” says Richard Osorio, “is to provide a purposeful and deliberate framework for learning that increases content knowledge and skill level for environmental educators.”

The Georgia Project for Excellence in Environmental Education, an initiative of the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the Environmental Education Alliance (EEA) of Georgia, is designing and implementing the EE Certification Program to address state and national issues related to professional standards, competencies and continuing education standards in the field.

“Environmental education can provide rich, meaningful and positive learning experiences for youth and adult audiences,” states Richard. “However, for environmental educators, the absence of peer-approved, research-based standards and competencies for practice makes it impossible to objectively evaluate and assess whether we are—or are not—effective and informed practitioners.”

Modeled after the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) *Guidelines for the*

Initial Preparation of Environmental Educators, the EE Certification Program will integrate six themes that are designed to establish a foundation for EE providers. Included in the certification courses are topics that investigate environmental literacy, foundations of environmental education, evaluation and assessment, program planning and professional responsibilities.

The voluntary certification program will require participants to enroll and complete six certification courses (see www.eeingorgia.org for additional details) as well as participate in community service and continuing education. The program is targeting formal and nonformal educators.

Two courses are offered this summer. Course titles and locations are:

- * **Environmental Literacy** (July 8-10, Zoo Atlanta; July 15-17, Bainbridge)
- * **Foundations of EE** (July 10-12, Zoo Atlanta; July 17-19, Bainbridge)

For more information about the certification program (e.g., registration fee, staff development credit and deadlines), contact Richard E. Osorio (University of Georgia, Department of Environmental Health Science) at 706.542.8905 or via e-mail at rosorio@uga.edu.

EEA Spotlight Richard Osorio

by Paul McClendon, Chattahoochee Nature Center

As a University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service agent in Ben Hill and Stewart counties, Richard never dreamed that his professional career would take such a different path as when he was offered and accepted the opportunity to lead and manage the residential 4-H environmental education program at the Rock Eagle 4-H Center. “I went from working with young people and adults in the context of small, rural communities to hiring and training seasonal staff and coordinating a large-scale program that had a wonderful history and legacy.”

What intrigued Richard most during his tenure at Rock Eagle was working with staff that came to work as eager instructors but who collectively represented a tremendous diversity of academic backgrounds and life experiences. “Almost by accident, how we provided training and resources for such a diverse EE staff made me take a closer look at both the process and outcomes of learning experiences, particularly for adults,” says Richard. “This eventually led



me to seek a doctoral degree in adult education.”

Living in Athens while completing his degree, Richard has put to practice his interests and training in adult education through the Georgia Project for Excellence in Environmental Education. “This is an amazing opportunity. The University of Georgia and the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia are supportive and committed partners in the process of establishing a framework for learning that successfully utilizes and blends the tremendous resources of these two stakeholders.”

SHARPENING the EDUCATOR'S SAW*

“A shared vision is not an idea. It is not even an important idea such as freedom. It is, rather, a force in people's hearts, a force of impressive power. It may be inspired by an idea, but once it goes further—if it is compelling enough to acquire the support of more than one person—then it is no longer an abstraction. People begin to see it as if it exists. Few, if any, forces in human affairs are as powerful as shared vision.”

From Senge, Peter M. 1990. *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Currency Doubleday. p. 206.

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

2002 EEA Conference a Success

by Eric Lindberg, City of Rome, Georgia

After attending last year's EEA conference, it was hard to imagine a more energizing, informative, and over-all successful event.

But that is just what happened at the 2002 conference at Unicoi State Park near Helen, Georgia (held in March).

Unicoi Lodge was fabulous, with comfortable rooms, great food, wonderful exhibit spaces (and exhibits!), and ample areas for the numerous workshops, discussions, award ceremonies, meals, panels, and other sessions (although future sessions involving acorn whistles and the like may be encouraged to meet outdoors!). Speaking of



outdoors, the weather was absolutely perfect to enjoy the splendor of north-east Georgia's mountains—cold enough at night to keep us humble and close to the campfire, yet warm and sunny during the days so that field trip participants and “Buzzard Hikers” could wear t-shirts and shorts.

Evaluation results show that EEA really knows how to put on a conference! Attendance numbers topped 250. Participants gave the conference an overall rating of 4.77 out of a possible high score of 5. We also received many thoughtful comments to help next year's conference planners make the “Conference on the Coast” even

better. Thanks to all who took the time to return the evaluations. They tell us a lot about how EEA can best serve the diverse group of dedicated people who are involved in environmental education.



Special thanks to the staffs at Unicoi State Park and Smithgall Woods for all of their help and support, without which the events would never have flowed so smoothly.

See you all at the March 2003 “Conference on the Coast” in Savannah, Georgia!

continued from pg. 1

ity building projects of EEA and its partners include:

1. The Georgia Project for Excellence in Environmental Education certification program. The University of Georgia Environmental Health Science Department in cooperation with EEA and others have launched this program, based on the North American Association for Environmental Education's *Guidelines for Excellence*. For more information, see page 2 of this newsletter.

2. The www.EEInGEORGIA.org web site. In a collaborative effort, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, in partnership with the Department of Community Affairs Keep Georgia Beautiful Program, the Georgia Department of Education, and EEA established the EEInGEORGIA.org web site in January 2002. The web site serves as Georgia's clearinghouse for Environmental Education. It includes QCC-correlated EE lesson plans for all grades

and subjects, a searchable directory of the state's EE providers and resources, facts about Georgia's environment, a calendar of EE events, bulletin board, news, and more.

3. The “Using the Environment as an Integrating Context (EIC) model schools initiative.” Earlier this year, with support from EEA, the Georgia Department of Education launched *Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning (EIC)*, a K-12th grade school improvement program. The EIC is based on scientific evidence that students learn more effectively within an environment-based context. Ten educational partnerships will be selected as models for the Georgia program. For more information on EIC, visit www.EEInGEORGIA.org.

4. The EE Master Plan Summit. In the spring of 2003, EEA, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, the Georgia Department of Community Af-

fairs, and the Georgia Department of Education, will bring together diverse decision makers in the natural resource and education communities, including representatives from school systems, local state and national parks, environmental organizations, nature centers, museums, zoos, botanical gardens, corporations, universities, government agencies and nonprofit organizations to: 1) identify what Georgians need to know to be environmentally literate; 2) identify how environmental messages are delivered in Georgia; 3) develop strategies for establishing an environmentally literate citizenry; and 4) form committees to develop, publish and promote the components of a statewide master plan for environmental education, including a sustainable mechanism for funding. Environmental learning and teaching are lifelong processes.

“EE Capacity building in Georgia?”
“YES.”

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BULK RATE
PERMIT #217
GAINESVILLE, GA 30501



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. Checks should be made out to EE Alliance

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 _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail address _____

- 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*

Anne Shenk, State Botanical Garden of Georgia, *Contributing Editor*

Paul McClendon, Chattahoochee Nature Center & Eric Lindberg, Rome-Floyd Planning Department, *Contributing Writers*

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	Conference Newsletter
Spring	January 15
Summer	April 15
Fall	July 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.

Attend NAAEE's annual conference:

The Boston TEE (total EE) Party,

August 6-10

More info at www.naaee.org/conferences/index.php



Final deadlines for submissions to Georgia's EE Resource Guide: Region 4: June 14; Statewide EE programs: June 28. For more info, contact Johnna Tuttle at raptorsrun@hotmail.com.