

Outdoor Education Presentation Abstracts

Strategies for Aligning Outdoor Education Programs to State Learning Standards

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Abstract: Schools across the nation are facing increasing challenges in addressing and meeting requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, standardized testing schedules, and increasingly stringent state curriculum standards. These challenges, coupled with traditionally-restrictive school district budgets and a mind-set that field trips are “vacations from school,” result in outdoor education programs being considered superfluous activities. Aligning outdoor education programs to state curriculum standards can be used to promote these programs as a tool in curriculum adherence as opposed to an unnecessary trip away from school. This session provided a basic introduction to curriculum standards and assessment and evaluation methods. Using Georgia Performance Standards as examples, the session also explored quick methods to align existing outdoor education programs with state learning standards. Curriculum alignment resources for a selection of southeastern states were provided.

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Outdoor Expositions

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Abstract: Outdoor expositions (expos) are high visibility outreach and education events put on by fish and wildlife agencies and others as a way to thank supporters and to engage potential clients in conservation efforts by introducing them to fun, lifelong outdoor pursuits. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo is an annual education and outreach event coordinated and conducted by the agency as an open house to its statewide programs and efforts. Begun as a one-day event in 1992 to thank hunters for their contributions to conservation, Expo grew quickly into an annual two-day affair to recognize hunters, anglers, boaters, park goers, and others involved in conservation of the state's natural and cultural resources. Expo also has attracted a high percentage of non-traditional customers and families to Texas Parks and Wildlife's mission, people, programs, and places. The agency has completed its 15th year of producing the event, reaching over a half million people directly and millions more with Expo-spawned activities provided at local events throughout Texas.

Expo provides hundreds of hands-on activities that include five factors needed to successfully introduce people into the outdoors and conservation: 1) threshold experience, 2) access to equipment, 3) access to mentors, 4) access to opportunities, and 5) social support. Expo also provides unique opportunities to strengthen the community of outdoor enthusiasts, regardless of interest (i.e., hunting, fishing, bird watching) by involving them in its planning and production. Expo markets the agency's mission and message to minority and urban audiences, creating relevancy for those constituents who might not otherwise come to hunting or fishing events.

Many states are currently conducting Expos or Expo-like events. The Weatherby Foundation offers funding support, professional guidance, and planning materials to assist state wildlife agencies producing large, education focused, free Outdoor Expo events that can meet criteria similar to Expo events held in states like Alabama, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming.

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Virginia's Waters, Woods, and Wildlife: A Conservation Education Course for Science Teachers

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Abstract: The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) offer a teacher education course that promotes awareness of Virginia's significant wildlife and fishery resources. Virginia Waters, Woods, and Wildlife focuses on middle- and high-school science teachers. The 40-hour, hands-on program introduces 20 teachers each year from across the Commonwealth to the wealth of Virginia's biodiversity, including birds, mammals, fishes, and invertebrates, and the principles and technologies used to manage and conserve these populations. Professional wildlife biologists and environmental scientists present the ecology and life histories of Virginia wildlife through field experiences as well as effective AV and IT technology. Workshop participants gain hands-on experience in the methods used by biologists, wetlands scientists, and wildlife managers and are introduced to and work with cutting-edge technologies (e.g., global positioning systems [GPS] and geographic information systems [GIS]) that are increasingly used to study and manage wildlife populations and habitats. Course content is designed to meet the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) and related assessment outcomes, and provides participants with resources and other activities targeted for the classroom.

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Technology Meets the Three Styles of Learning

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Abstract: A PowerPoint presentation is provided as an instructional supplement for the Virginia Basic Hunter Education Course. The PowerPoint slides were designed utilizing the public school competency-based and experiential learning models. It allows instructors to adequately cover the required instructional material in the allotted time frame for each topic and allows instructors to be creative in their delivery to students while addressing all styles of learning. The slides were designed to cover the three areas of instruction: 1.) informational slides provide specific information for the students; 2.) demonstration slides provide an opportunity for the students to view proper techniques and demonstrate them; and 3.) cognitive slides are designed to promote active participation through topic discussion between instructors and students.

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Treestand-related Injuries in Virginia

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Abstract: While falls from treestands when hunting may cause serious or fatal injuries, little is known about such accidents because they are not usually reported to natural resource department officials. The limited data that is obtained is helpful, but does not fully represent the exposure factors experienced by hunters involved in treestand accidents. This presentation summarized the findings of a study of treestand-related injuries occurring over the period 1993 to 2005.

Since 1993, there have been 13 fatal injuries involving Virginia hunters. The presentation highlighted data related to these incidents and gives examples of how they could have been prevented. Falls from treestands are a serious and growing concern for Virginia hunters, particularly among older hunters. Because treestand injuries have increased over the past 10 to 15 years, the study was conducted to determine if there was a need to increase awareness in selected categories of training or if public outreach was necessary to reduce the number of serious and fatal incidents.

The presentation provided details of the number of incidents occurring each year beginning in 1993. It reviewed the age of hunters, gender, and whether the hunter was ascending, descending, or in the stand at the time of the incident. Also examined was how high off of the ground was the hunter, if the hunter wore a safety harness, body part injured, type of stand, what equipment the hunter was using, and if there were any geographical findings of note.

The presentation provided several common-sense suggestions for improving the treestand safety module in the outdoor education program. Since complete information regarding treestand incidents is lacking, methods to enhance reporting and investigation of them should be implemented. Revisions to incident reporting requirements are urgently needed. To reduce the number of incidents, natural resource departments should develop awareness and outreach programs.

The author provided an explanation of a metric device that can assist in measuring the treestand safety performance in relation to the number of incidents per 100,000 hunters. It can be used to measure performance and make comparisons between states.

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Expanding Exposure and Interest Through Partnerships

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Abstract: The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries incorporated various training components and opportunities for local agencies to expand adult and youth interest and exposure to their local natural resources. Workshop participants developed skills and obtained knowledge to enhance their programs and services along with expanding their own personal interests. These training sessions supported a statewide training requirement for many agencies and increased interest to a wider market for the development of a connected and committed audience for the preservation of natural resources. Funding support for collaboration equipment purchase assisted local partners in meeting their needs and developing expanded program offerings to serve larger populations.

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Conducting Youth Hunting Workshops

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Abstract: The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Outdoor Education Program offers several species-specific youth educational hunting workshops designed to offer youth continuing skill sets needed to successfully go afield and engage in successful hunting endeavors. In 2004, the Outdoor Education Program designed a template for these youth hunting workshops enabling staff and volunteers a simple plan to follow for planning and managing youth hunting workshops.

DGIF youth educational hunting workshops promote: youth the opportunity to develop and hone skills related to hunting; ethics relating to the principles of fair chase, and stewardship; habitat, ecology, and game biology education; marksmanship and range safety; and game laws review and an opportunity to meet and question a Virginia game warden.

This session gave an overview of conducting youth educational hunting workshops, selecting instructors/volunteers, conducting site evaluations, setting up and planning workshops, and cultivating missional partner organizations. Also included was a discussion of curriculum and the importance of lesson plans for youth educational hunting workshops.

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The American Wilderness Leadership School

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Abstract: Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF) offers a Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Workshop at four sites around the country during the summers. School teachers and other interested adult educators seeking outdoor education skills and techniques can attend one of six eight-day workshops at the American Wilderness Leadership School (AWLS) at the West site near Jackson, Wyoming. Additional sites are also used on an annual basis for five- and eight-day workshops at the Maine Conservation School, Bryant Pond, Maine; Springbrook Conservation Center, Guthrie Center, Iowa; and Laurentian Environmental Center, Britt, Minnesota. Graduate credit is available as an option at all AWLS sites. This presentation focused on the Jackson, Wyoming, location. A course outline, tentative summer 2007 schedule, and program brochure were available to all participants in this session. Sample curriculum resources will also be available for review.

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National Archery in the Schools Program in Virginia

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Abstract: Virginia was the 29th state to offer the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) to students in elementary, middle, and high schools. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries conducted its first training of Level I and Level II trainers in August 2005. Embracing NASP and conducting the educational training of the program provided an opportunity for trainers and school educators to be certified to instruct archery programs to youth in the schools. NASP provides training for educators in Olympic-style archery and promotes safety with standardized curriculum that is congruent with Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs).

NASP promotes: youth the opportunity to develop archery skills; an opportunity to develop archery skills; learning of lifelong leisure skills in a structured setting; an avenue for youth to increase skills individually as opposed to team sports; and an opportunity for after-school programs.

This session provided an overview of the process of how we recruited schools to participate, how we set up and conducted the basic archery instructor training, and an overview of funding sources which can assist schools in obtaining NASP equipment sets. Discussion included feedback from schools conducting the program and information on curriculum correlation to the state's standards of learning. A sample of the standardized equipment was available to participants.

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