

## Maryland Partnership for Children In Nature QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT – October 2012

The full 2012 Action Plan can be found online at [www.dnr.state.md.us/cin/pdfs/2012\\_CIN\\_ActionPlan\\_Final.pdf](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/cin/pdfs/2012_CIN_ActionPlan_Final.pdf).

### **Environmental Literacy – Support for EL in Schools and the Community**

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#### **Training /Professional Development / and more:**

**Clearinghouse:** NOAA was very interested in the strong recommendation for a comprehensive and user-friendly clearinghouse of environmental education (EE) providers & professional development opportunities. They are revamping the Bay Backpack web site, based on specific recommendations from the spring EL workshops and other regional feedback. Currently, NOAA is scheduling a meeting with Virginia constituents to review comments made by Maryland. The revision has been pushed back to spring 2013; several opportunities for feedback during development are anticipated.

**Best Practices & Improved Data Collection for EE Experiences:** NOAA and Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) held a workshop in August with EE researchers to outline recommended best practices for students, educators, and school grounds and operations in support of the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) – related to Common Qualities of Effective EL Programs and recently revised Every Student Every Year recommendations, both developed by members of the EL workgroup along with broader review. The results of the workshop and their implications for metrics and a new survey instrument/MWEE indicator for CBP will be discussed at an EPA-funded CBT Workshop to be held in November. Pilot implementation of a tracking tool for the state/region is anticipated by summer, 2013.

**Professional Development in EE:** Continued support for EL implementation is being provided to schools and providers – examples include: (1) MSDE hosted (in collaboration with Allegany County Public Schools) a statewide EL Summit for 5-person planning teams from each county, in August at Rocky Gap State Park; and (2) MAEOE has applied for and received funding to host EL professional development workshops for EE providers this fall.

**Regional EL Liaisons:** Seven teams consisting of a Local Education Agency (LEA) representative and EE provider were identified and confirmed as regional liaisons for each region in the state, and an orientation/expectation meeting occurred in July. The liaisons are facilitating regional meetings with LEAs and providers this fall (Oct and Nov dates) and spring 2013.

**Higher education:** A forum with higher education representatives was held in September. The highly positive meeting addressed improving collaboration between higher education and preK-12 education with a focus on sharing current and potential future practices/ programs in preparation and continued professional development in EE for pre-service and in-service teachers, respectively.

**Capacity Building Workshops:** Three one-day workshops for non-traditional EE providers are being scheduled for the winter in different regions of the state. MSDE and/or local LEA staff will provide support and connections to the regional plans.

**MAEOE Conference:** The MAEOE 2013 Annual Conference: *Educate, Engage, Energize: Understanding the Natural World* is scheduled for February 7 – 10, 2013. Presentations have been selected from a large pool of applications.

**Policy & Related Actions:** Based on recommendations from researchers at the best practices workshop held in August, NOAA and FWS convened a few select national and state partners to discuss the merits of establishing common or minimum criteria for school certification programs. This summer the Executive Council (governors) of the Chesapeake Bay Program asked the Program through the Education Workgroup to respond to a series of inquiries by the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) related to EL, including state endorsement of the Mid Atlantic EL Strategy, establishing graduation requirements for states throughout the watershed, and establishing better metrics. In a first step to address this, the Workgroup (NOAA and VA DEQ) presented a status update to the Management Board and the CAC convened state reps to hear about ELP development and implementation.

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### **Health and Food (Agriculture) Connections**

**Leads: Health** – Kim Martinez, National Wildlife Federation (NWF), [martinezk@nwf.org](mailto:martinezk@nwf.org)

**Food/ Agriculture** – Karen Fedor, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), [karen.fedor@maryland.gov](mailto:karen.fedor@maryland.gov)

**Healthy Maryland Children:** Stakeholders from around the state participated in a Partnership-sponsored health forum in June. Collectively, the group identified and prioritized the greatest needs for addressing children's health issues and prioritized actions the Partnership could take to demonstrate the connection between getting families outside and the impact on children's health: Improve Communication, Create Opportunities for Networking/ Collaboration (Sharing information, articles, research,

ideas), Participate in Urban Initiatives (e.g., Nature Prescription Initiative, Docs in the Park Program). At the July Leadership Team meeting, a proposal was presented for a comprehensive and collaborative **Community Health Initiative** to address children's health and how to make a real difference in how families/ children interact with nature as a component of healthy lifestyles. The proposal was approved for development. The program is meant to engage as many of the CIN Partners and outside partners as possible, to bring all avenues of the issue and a diversity of resources to one selected urban community (likely in Baltimore). A **workgroup** was assembled involving representatives of the health, education, parks, research, and natural resources fields; and has convened twice to create a vision, identify broad goals, and develop criteria for selecting a community to pilot an initiative to get more families outside to improve the health and well being of their children. The group is working to complete a draft approach to frame out the initiative, to be drafted by November, reviewed internally, and prepared for Leadership Team approval in January. From there, community selection criteria will be used to identify potential neighborhood(s) to contact about participating; and once a community has been selected and confirmed, the Partnership will work with them to develop a full strategy for a program, with a timeline for implementation in 2013.

### Agriculture/Food Connections

- Governor Martin O'Malley officially designated September 17-21, 2012, as **Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week**. "It is critically important that students learn and understand where our food comes from before it gets to the store, and how important our agriculture industry is to Maryland's environment, economy, and quality of life," said Governor O'Malley. "We are extremely encouraged that all 24 of our public school systems and some private schools are participating in this important, educational program."

Educators, farmers, and federal, state and local officials gathered with North Dorchester High School students in Dorchester County to kick off the 5th annual Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week by eating healthy lunches, full of locally-grown fruits, vegetables and bison. More than 500 students at North Dorchester High School in Hurlock, Dorchester County, enjoyed lunches that included bison burgers and sweet potatoes. The bison meat, the first to be served in a school lunch program on the East Coast, and fresh fruits and vegetables were purchased from nearby farms.

Other school systems were also highlighted for their Farm to School efforts during the week. Northern Garrett County High School (Garrett Co.) agricultural students raised swine which were made into sausage. The students also raise chickens that produce 60 dozen shelled egg per week for the school system's meals. Students from Southern Garret County High School grew hydroponic lettuce for the school system.

The Homegrown School Lunch Week, an element of the Jane Lawton Farm to School Program, was created during the 2008 Session of the Maryland General Assembly when SB 158 Farm-to-School Program - Activities and Promotional Events, sponsored by state Senator Jamie Raskin and state Delegate Sheila Hixson of Montgomery County, was signed into law by Governor Martin O'Malley in May, 2008.

- Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) and MDA will be providing an **agricultural tour of a winery and a hydroponic greenhouse** during the 2013 MAEOE conference.
- Plans are underway for two, possibly three **workshops for the farm-based, non-formal educators** on November 17 at Hard Bargain Farm and December 10. There has also been discussion for another workshop at the farmer's market conference in February 2013. Workshops are being organized by MAEF and MDA.

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### Communities and Community Planning

**Lead:** Sandi Olek, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), [solek@dnr.state.md.us](mailto:solek@dnr.state.md.us)

#### Enhance Access to Green spaces and the trails network:

- O Ranger **smart phone Trail App is now available** that will provide trail maps of parks and forests to the public for free. This app is a part of a national product that is being expanded to include MD information, and includes information on all public lands including Federal, state and local lands.
- The web based **Maryland Trails Interactive Map** is now available at [www.dnr.state.md.us/map\\_template/trailmaps/trail\\_atlas.html](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/map_template/trailmaps/trail_atlas.html). This product draws from multiple agencies and provides information on safe on-road connections to state and local trails.
- The **Park Equity Analysis**, a statewide GIS analysis that identifies underserved communities in need of access to park space, has completed a data peer review. A public interface is being piloted for one county and will be available for the whole state and will be available in November. The tool is being piloted with JHU, Center for Livable Future's food desert map, as well as various other partners. . A local partner is still being sought to pilot the data with additional data and layers.
- The **Nature Play Spaces** workgroup has continued to develop resources for local projects including a directory of local resources, FAQs and the NPS pattern book [www.dnr.state.md.us/cin/nps](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/cin/nps).