

Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature Meeting
Robinson Nature Center, Columbia MD
April 19, 2012

Minutes submitted by Catherine Shanks, MD DNR (with input from Mary Bradford, Montgomery Parks)

Assistant State Superintendent of Schools Mary Cary opened the meeting; Stacey Yankee, Director of the Robinson Nature Center welcomed everyone to the Nature Center which opened in September 2011 and is certified LEED Platinum.

Mary noted that April is a significant month for environmental literacy. This is Maryland Environmental Education Month and this week is National Environmental Education Week. In addition, The White House Education Summit held this week announced the formation of the Federal Environmental Education Task Force. Mary also highlighted several upcoming events including 14 summer gifted & talented sessions, 5 of which are environmentally focused (info in handouts); the Environmental Literacy Summit in August; and the submission of 4 Green Ribbon Schools applications from Maryland for the National award competition.

Action Plan Overview:

Britt Slattery reviewed the Action Plan. Handouts provided on the highlights and the full plan for review (both will be posted online at www.dnr.state.md.us/cin). Action Plan spells out steps to get to the outcomes through Dec 2012. **All are encouraged to look over the plan and find tasks or initiatives in which they can volunteer to become involved.**

Questions and comments:

Participants commended the Steering Committee for the structure provided for the direction of the program. There was a question regarding the best approach for spreading the word and getting others more involved. Britt recommended using the handouts to show others how and where they can stay connected and be involved. It was also noted that there are other organizations that are supporting the effort that the Partnership should know about. More information is better.

Mary Cary indicated they will continue to connect the dots at MSDE and recommended that approach for everyone.

Jamie Baxter acknowledged how impressive the work plan is but we need to focus on identifying and removing the institutional barriers that will allow us to do more and better. Jamie spoke in terms of making policy that will allow us to do more.

Karen Mullin agreed and recommended that workgroups do more to invite the sources of the barriers to participate in the process. Karen mentioned cultural barriers as well.

Mary Cary asked each workgroup to identify what issues or policies could be tackled this year. Some have done that (see the plan), and others are setting up meetings where this can be explored (e.g., the health forum and the higher education coordination).

Joe Gill summarized that we need to communicate what we are doing and invite people in to determine how to improve what we do.

Mary Rivkin recommended inviting MDOT to participate, especially concerning trails and parks connections. There was also discussion regarding the need to address recess at schools. Some of this may fall under the health workgroup to explore or address. Mary responded that there were a number of bills introduced in the 2012 Legislative Session related to recess that failed. Mary will send out the bills to allow for support for future legislation. → added, here: [the two bills related to physical activity and physical education are as follows:](#)

[HB196 Student Health and Fitness Act – Physical Activity](#)

[SB564 Student Health and Fitness Act – Physical Education](#)

MAEOE is seeing good examples of outdoor learning experiences through the Green Schools applications, so there are good models available to share with other schools.

Jackie Carrera noted they are in discussions with Playworks who would be good to bring into the CIN. Playworks

started in California and is now working in Baltimore City. [Jackie did follow up and forwarded contact info to Britt].

We also need to educate the non-traditional partners such as the maintenance employees to remove some of the barriers and fears for taking kids outside.

Mary noted that we will have a new State Superintendent and several new local Superintendents. The fall meeting of the Superintendents would be a good venue for discussing the goals of the Partnership and policies the workgroups have identified that need to be addressed. **She will make a point of asking the new State Superintendent if she will allow for this to happen.**

Workgroup updates: (see April 2012 progress report, www.dnr.state.md.us/cin)

Environmental Literacy - Support for EL in Schools and in the Community

Julie Dieguez provided the update on the outcomes of the 7 regional meetings held across the state. Challenges were identified and a summary will be prepared from the meetings. Some of the common challenges noted: Numerous current pressures on educators; Awareness of available provider services; Facilitating communication; Transportation; Alignment of programs; Teacher education; Problems and challenges with focus on high schools & general interdisciplinary issues; General coordination. Provider outreach important. Written recommendations for every student every year - to be finalized in May. Regional env literacy liaisons to be identified, to help with followup.

Gary Hedges discussed the upcoming EL Summit in August and praised the success of the regional workshops. The summit will be held Aug 5-9 at Rocky Gap Resort and State Park and surrounding parks, and will build on the workshops. Invitees are teams of educators from each LEA with up to 5 people to include teachers and one or 2 curriculum supervisors. The event will be held at Rocky Gap. Continuing Ed credits will be available for participants who participate in the summit. Rocky Gap Park staff are also providing half day outdoor sessions to participants. Evergreen Heritage Center and National Parks have also been contacted to participate.

Questions/comments re Summit:

Mary Rivkin recommended having higher ed faculty attending the EL Summit. **Mary and Gary acknowledged the need and will invite representation from their Higher Education team.**

Steve Carr also recommended letting participants know about all park programs as a resource.

There was a recommendation to connect with Frostburg State University and to include teachers in juvenile justice system.

Joanne Schmader reported on the status of the MD Green Schools Youth Summit scheduled for June 1st at Sandy Point State Park. The Summit will include awards for certification of new and recertified schools. There are 50 stations confirmed but volunteers and resources to support funding busses for students are needed. They are expecting 5,000 students. 180 green school applications were received this year. **Joanne requested that partners help to advertise the summit.**

Promoting Outdoor Play and Learning (Outreach and Communication)

Karen Mullen presented the Celebrate Maryland Outdoors Days joint statewide event. The event will be held from June 9th through June 23rd. The intent is to get more people outside for the sake of being outside and celebrate our great outdoors as a shared cultural value. The goal is to have events occurring in all jurisdictions across the state and should include non-traditional participants such as libraries and churches. Events will be publicized on the website which will include an opportunity for families to share their experiences and submit their stories.

Karen asked for participants to register events and participate in a conference call next Thursday 4/26 at 10:00 a.m. For more information, email mdoutdoorsdays@gmail.com.

Questions/Comments:

Jackie Carrera asked what happens after the event? Could the website be continued after the event? **DNR will look into keeping it going as an extension of the links to sites and activities that are currently available at the CIN website.**

Health and Food Connections

Tom Donlin discussed the forum that is being planned with health providers. The purpose is to identify the best approaches for improving health and develop healthy lifestyles through outdoor activities. They are aiming for this forum to take place by the end of May. Tom asked for recommendations on the time, location and participants for to participate in the discussion. The outcome of the forum will be to identify action items and ideas to move forward. **Names of participants and ideas for the discussion should be sent to Tom at director@mrp.org.**

Questions/Comments:

The forum discussion could include the recess policies.

Mental health providers should be included.

Anne Arundel Medical Center Earth committee representative will be attending the forum. The Medical Center has developed “serenity gardens” based on medical research showing the reduction in pain medication needed through exposure to gardens and outdoors.

There was also a recommendation to include Healthcare Without Harm, an organization focused on working to implement ecologically sound and healthy alternatives to health care practices that pollute the environment and contribute to disease.

Communities and Community Planning

Sandy Olek presented the status of the park equity analysis which looks at a number of population factors in relation to park land. The schedule is to have an interactive map available for use by summer. Future use of the data will be to identify trail connections, school greening projects, local park development and other health connections such as the hospital serenity gardens.

Steve Carr is working with MDOT, Maryland Forest Service and Maryland Parks Service to update the trails map and include the development of an app for trails.

DNR is also looking at opportunities through the Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) to incorporate Children In Nature concepts. We are currently in the process of reviewing local LPPRP plans. Plans will be formalized in July of 2012. It is too late to include a CIN component in the local plans at this round, but some counties have addressed it. The State must develop a statewide plan that can include the CIN goals and develop the guidelines for local plans developed in the next round – the CIN Action Plan contains a task to provide input, with draft developed by Dec 2012 (state plans are due Dec 2013).

Recognition Presentation

Joe Gill presented Governor Citations for Dr. Sydney Cousin, Howard County Public Schools Superintendent (award received on his behalf by Mary Weller), and Allen Hance, Executive Director of Chesapeake Bay Trust. Dr. Cousin is retiring and was an original member of the Partnership. Allen Hance has been instrumental in moving the Partnership Plan forward. He is moving on to another position in Providence, RI at Brown University.

Announcements and Other Updates

1. **Don Baugh, NCLI** reported on the formation of the Federal interagency **Environmental Literacy Task Force** announced at the White House Summit on 4/16. Will create with 13 agencies a program that mirror’s Maryland’s. The goal is to create a national plan for Environmental Literacy.
2. **Jamie Baxter, CBT** discussed the need for and the process for developing **metrics for tracking and evaluating student outdoor experiences**. Jamie emphasized that we would not be developing new tests. The objective is to change the way we track E-Lit. Will be working through the Bay program effort to develop the metrics with a workshop this summer. Following will be a working session to translate the metrics into a tool that educators can use to provide the data to infer the impact of our efforts on developing environmentally literate

students.

3. **Shannon Sprague, NOAA** provided an overview of the **Federal FY2012 and 2013 budget status**. She announced the grant program awards for capacity building (see below) and environmental education programs. FY12 budget, EPA got grant programs for environmental education with schools. NOAA also got some grant programs this year. NSF, NASA and NOAA tri-agency workgroup on climate education - also have grants. National Geographic will get \$1m for Fieldscope through NOAA.

Federal EE programs were well funded in 2012, \$30-40m total; however that has all been cut in the 2013 proposed budget, except NSF \$500K for climate education; EPA committed to finding \$5m. NOAA BWET has always been a Congressional add-on. US Dept of Education may retain \$90m for teaching and learning; other programs may be consolidated or eliminated.

EPA also awarded a capacity building grant focused on under served populations and includes MD as an initial focus state. Focus on urban areas, underserved community groups grants, diversity and inclusivity – Akiima Price's group, working with Cornell. MAEOE, Alice Ferguson Foundation, UMCES Appalachian Lab are involved.

4. **Steve Carr, MD DNR Trails Office – Status of County LPRRP**: draft plans began to be submitted in January, and are required in order to get Program Open Space funds. The plans go to MD Dept of Planning and DNR, then back for public comment, then are approved in July and published. No Children in Nature component because no one asked. For the next 5 year plan, let's make sure this is coordinated. We will be providing input into the state plans [as noted earlier].

5. **Mary Cary, MDSE** reported that MD is one of the lead states developing the **national Next Generation Science standards**. This will involve changes to all disciplines. Once the standards are accepted by the Board of Education, the standards are deconstructed to develop content framework for acceptance by the board to move forward for review by stakeholders. Draft curriculum is then developed for stakeholder review. In addition, 6000 educators are brought together to develop curriculum. The new standards should be available by December. MSDE wants to make E-Lit part of the National standards.

6. **Karen Fedor, MD Dept of Agriculture**, announced that this week at Southern High School, USDA announced a \$5m grant for the **Farm to School Program** (see the MDA website and the White Hours blog for more info).

7. **Gary Hedges, MSDE** stated that the **National Green Ribbon Schools** announcement will be made on Monday. 15 schools submitted applications and 4 schools were submitted to the National contest. Dunloggin Middle School in Ellicott City (Howard County), Francis Scott Key Middle School in Silver Spring (Montgomery County), the Lucy School in Middletown (Frederick County) and Folger McKinsey Elementary in Severna Park (Anne Arundel County). → followup news – on 4/23, the National GRS program announced the winners, and all four of the MD schools were among the 78 winners of the award! Congratulations to the schools, to MSDE for their leadership and organizing the application process, to MAEOE for their input from Green Schools Program, and to the others involved in this somewhat daunting first year! USDE announced that the next round will begin June 15, when state agencies are encouraged to send their intents to submit nominees via email to green.ribbon.schools@ed.gov.