



BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
ACTION PLAN

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Recommended by Environmental Education Committee:

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VISION/GOALS

o provide environmental education opportunities to local Schools, groups and individuals, for an understanding of natural processes and management of National Forest lands based on Ecosystem Management.

The goals of this program fit in well with goals established by the Bitterroot National Forest Leadership team in 1995. These goals are;

1. Provide Products and services that are responsive to the public needs in concert with the restoration and sustainability of Forest ecosystems.
2. Sustain ecosystems and meet legal mandates.
3. Contribute in a positive manner to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of local communities.
4. Build and maintain relationships with all Forest shareholders.
5. Cooperate with local, state, and other federal governments/agencies and Indian tribes to achieve common goals.
6. Continually enhance the skills and effectiveness of all Bitterroot National Forest employees.
7. Foster an organizational environment based on effective communication, accountability, safety, adaptability and team work.

OBJECTIVES

1. Assist local teachers and other groups, in providing educational opportunities related to National Forest Lands.
2. Provide the general public current information on Ecosystem Management, and current planning information.
3. Provide a double sided forum to exchange information on National Forest land management and social needs.
4. Coordinate with other agencies and private groups in educational activities.
5. Share with the public information on a multi-disciplinary ecosystem based approach to National Forest land management.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Bitterroot National Forest has been providing Environmental Education opportunities since the first days of the establishment of the forest. The evolution of the program to what exist today is based on a parallel understanding of the ecosystems and current management strategies, and the efforts of employees to convey this information to the public.

This is a small but very important program on the Forest that has grown, based on requests from the public and willingness of employees to share or seek knowledge in a wide variety of sessions. The Bitterroot Forest's contribution to local Environmental Education is unique in that it is a self managing program that is incorporated into other programs. No dollars are earmarked for E.E., No one function manages E.E. and there is no lead person for the program that handles requests, or manages the program overall.

A recent survey (1996) showed that Environmental Education efforts in one year, 1995, involved employees from all programs and reached 9323 individuals. Thirty four employees responded to the request for information. These employees invested 289 days or the equivalent of 110% of one PFT person. A copy of the summary of activities from the recent E.E survey is attached.

Existing E.E. core activities:

Formal classroom or field trip presentations from preschools to university classes. Wilderness Education Program, Conservation Days, Fire Prevention program. Other presentations on a variety of subjects.

Distribution of educational materials/information by brochures, education boxes, public notices, magazine newspaper articles, fact sheets, and direct customer mailings.

Professional workshops/meetings/conferences.

Public meetings.

Interpretive activities, E.E. facilities. (Historical Center, Woods Cabin, Willoughby EE area and The Watchable Wildlife Triangle, Nature trails and interpretive trails.

Telephone conversations.

Information related to public safety such as avalanche awareness-brown bags and hotline and notices.

FUTURE PROGRAM

Recent trends in service downsizing and demands on employees pose real and perceived threats to the current Environmental Education program. It is becoming more and more difficult to manage all duties and tasks necessary to fulfill our goals and responsibilities in managing National Forest Lands. A major challenge for the Forest will be to maintain the energy and commitment we

ow have for the program.

n the past, EE priorities have been established by employees and supervisors
s needs have become obvious or requests have been received. This subjective
approach has worked well, and will continue with lead team support.

. successful EE program is in place on the forest now. What is needed to
maintain it, is the support of efforts made on an individual basis and some
ordination for the program as a whole. This group would like to recommend
he following:

Expand the EE coordinator's (Nan) responsibilities to include establishing
and maintaining internal and external networks for the purpose of
information transfer and at times, program requests for FS and outside
group requests. Unit coordinators would also be established for networking
needs and to assist the program coordinator. Coordinators would help
evaluate annual accomplishments and track activities. (The need for some
coordination was identified in a majority of comments in the recent survey)

Continuing, and non wavering support for EE as a part of all employees
duties. Support for facilities and long term established programs.
IE-Woods cabin, Lick Cr, Willoughby, Historical visitor center, Wilderness
Ed. program, Conservation days.

Support in searching for, and managing non-traditional funding sources for
EE activities.

Continue to coordinate and work with BEAR, this will help to communicate
opportunities to the public. Work with The Learning Center Network (Rick
Flock).

Establish program monitoring. This aspect of environmental education is
important in that it allows us to review what we have accomplished and look
for trends in what message we send to our customers, constituents and
co-workers. Environmental education will be reported at the end of each
year as an item of Forest Plan Monitoring. It can be compiled from the
quarterly informational reports by the various unit coordinators.

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an --- networks internal/external

Unit coord.

Broader group of all potential presenters

Bear, Montana Learning Center Network, (I'll send you a copy Nan)

Direct contacts/partners/customers.

udith-- Requests/resources, preparation. I think we were talking of library
f materials or source list.

Internal Networks

The EE Practitioners on the Forest should network with each other to share resources, opportunities, and help best meet requests generated by the public. All Forest employees who are involved in EE activities are part of this group. While the Forest Leadership Team has recognized the importance of having a strong and visible EE program, each Practitioner will need to coordinate with their immediate supervisor to determine how much time is appropriate to be devoted to this.

Unit Coordinators provide the main framework for the EE program. Each unit could be asked to designate one employee who has a personal interest in EE, and who can squeeze in the time to:

- Identify employees and resources available for EE work on each unit.
 - Employees who are interested in doing some form of EE;
 - What form they're most comfortable with (field trips, interpretive programs, class room presentations, etc...); and
 - What resources they have available to contribute (teaching aides, lesson plans, forms of expertise, field supplies, etc...)
- Help coordinate responses to requests for EE received on the district, and to respond to opportunities we want to initiate.
- Serve as resource person to other unit employees involved in EE (source of information, central library for EE materials, etc...)
- Prepare informal year-end summary of amount and types of EE work done on the unit.
- Deliver EE presentations as time and expertise permits.

Forest Coordinator, who would most logically also be one of the Unit coordinators, could provide these additional services:

- Maintain a contact list of external folks interested in EE.
- Serve as the contact point for general EE requests, and for other FS units (RO, WO and other Forests)
- Maintain central library of tools.
- Help coordinate communication within our internal and external networks.

External Networks

Here are a number of local and regional organizations and individuals who have strong interest in EE. It will be to our advantage to work with these groups as much as possible to ensure the greatest number of people are reached with appropriate EE messages. Existing and potential partners include (but certainly are not limited to):

B.E.A.R.	Area Schools	Bitter Root RC&D	Boy Scouts
Interface Fire Group	GMU	Girl Scouts	RMEF
Backcountry Horsemen	Trout Unlimited	Audubon	Outfitters
UM/USFS Research			

In working with these folks, we can share EE information and tools; ask for assistance - or respond to a request - to deliver EE presentations; and develop interpretive/EE materials for public distribution.

