The Wilderness Education Cone of Experience

“How do I investigate wilderness and wild places with students?”

- The Wilderness Cone of Experience concept:

  - Less than abstract: NO wilderness connection at all.

  - Abstract wilderness learning: Reading books, viewing videos, looking at photos, listening to stories, etc.

  - Outside but not wild: Getting outside for play, exploration, and/or study in slightly to highly manipulated landscapes and settings.

  - Places with wild elements: Time is spent in places where wild elements and processes are the norm and not the exception. Educational topics are highly influenced by wild elements.

  - Wilderness as classroom: Nature in all its naturalness dominates every moment and successful learners become part of the wilderness as they are mentored and influenced by it.

- The goal of wilderness education is to operate intellectually and/or physically as close to the widest, most experiential, truly wilderness point on the cone as possible.
  - Take home lesson: Set realistic goals but work hard to provide real, sensual, meaningful interactions with the widest point on the wilderness cone-of-experience.

- Educators who choose to teach in and about wilderness must be personally aware of how to be, how to lead, and how to communicate about wilderness through their own personal experiences.