



An Advocate's Guide to the FY 2024 EE Appropriations Campaign March 2023

Background

Federal environmental education (EE) programs through the EPA and NOAA provide critical funding for state and local education initiatives that help students and the general public participate in community decisions about environmental issues. *For fiscal year 2024, we are seeking a needed funding increase for these essential programs.*

Appropriations subcommittees in the Senate and House will begin to hold meetings in the coming weeks to determine funding allocations for the FY '24 budget. These allocations will be influenced, in part, by requests that come from other members of Congress in the form of "Dear Colleague" letters in support of individual programs. **It is important that we generate as many Congressional signatures for the letters regarding EE programs at NOAA and EPA as possible over the next several weeks! Each letter has different deadlines, so we urge you to make your initial calls/emails ASAP!**

The Programs

National Environmental Education Act/EPA Office of Environmental Education

This 30-year-old federal program directs essential grants to EE across the country. It funds innovative programming, facilitates key professional development, enables scholars and practitioners to conduct basic research, and provides vital basic services for the field. The program is central to the work of EE, including a local grant program key for communities all around the United States.

<https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-grant-descriptions> *(link is external)*

- **NAAEE Position:** This very effective program should be funded at \$14 million for fiscal year 2024.
- **Our Ask:** We urge Members of Congress to sign a letter circulated by Rep. Neguse (CO-2) and Rep. Golden (ME-2) to Appropriators in support of this funding.
- Here is the [letter that was circulated in the House last year](#) in support of NEEA funding, and here's the [Senate draft letter from last year](#) that you can also refer to and/or forward to Congressional offices.

Download our fact sheet on funding the [National Environmental Education Act](#) to share with Congressional offices.

The deadline for us to request support for the House letters is before Thursday, March 16, 2023—but sooner is better—so the Reps can sign the letters by the end of the day on Tuesday, March 21st.

For the Senate, we need to make our support requests before Thursday, March 30th, and the legislative offices then have until April 4th to make their decisions and act.

NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (B-WET)

The NOAA B-WET program promotes locally relevant, experiential learning for K–12 students. The competitive, peer-reviewed funding promotes “meaningful watershed educational experiences” in six regions: California, Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, Hawai‘i, New England, and the Pacific Northwest. Since 2002, NOAA has invested over \$100 million to support more than 800 B-WET projects. Funding has been stagnant over the past few years, while the need for this type of education has grown dramatically. www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/awards (link is external)

- **NAAEE Position:** We endorse increased funding to the FY 2010 level of \$12 million.
- **Our Ask:** We urge Members of Congress to sign a combined letter to Appropriators in support of this funding, and for the Environmental literacy Program (below).

NOAA Environmental Literacy Program (ELP)

This important program provides the public with science-based environmental education related to increasing community resilience and efficacy in solving local environmental problems. Funding for the ELP program has been level for a number of years, while demand for the funding has grown. www.elp-awards.education.noaa.gov/index.php (link is external)

- **NAAEE Position:** We endorse increased funding back to the FY 2010 level of \$8 million.
- **Our Ask:** We urge Members of Congress to sign a combined letter to Appropriators in support of this funding, and the B-WET program.

Download or link our [fact sheet on NOAA B-WET and ELP](#) funding to share with Congressional offices.

NOAA Education has a new [story map](#) that offers vivid examples of funding impacts across the agency’s suite of programs.

The House deadline for offices to sign on is Monday, March 20th, and the Senate deadline is April 4th.

What You Can Do and How To Do It

If this is the first time you have participated in this effort, here is a [complete guide](#) to the advocacy process. It does overlap some with the material in this document, but if you think you need the basics, then read that guide first.

Contact the D.C. offices of your Senators and Representatives to ask that they sign on to “Dear Colleague” letters in support of EE programs at NOAA (specifically, the Bay Watershed Education and Training program and Environmental Literacy Grants) and EPA (specifically the Office of Environmental Education). If you already have a relationship with a staff member in your Congressional offices, you should email them directly with the request. If you don’t have a current contact, check this [spreadsheet](#) to see if we have a contact (or sometimes two) for you to email. If not, call the D.C. offices using the script below to find out who the right person is to email.

- Check your Senators’ or Representatives’ [record of support for EE](#). If they have signed on to these letters in the past, or supported EE in any fashion, be sure to mention this during your call or in an email—it can make the decision to sign on again a no-brainer!
- Email follow up materials (including the fact sheets on grant programs at [NOAA](#) and [EPA](#)) so that the staff have the information they need to follow through. *This is a very routine process for them at this time of year.*
- We are especially interested in asking legislators who are: freshmen, on appropriations committees, and anybody who has EVER supported our cause.
- Let us know how it went so that we can track outreach and monitor any needed follow up.
- NOTE: Members of the Senate and House appropriations committees often will not sign on to these letters of support, but they are in a position to be champions for the programs, so please especially contact them!

Sample scripts for phone outreach

Sample telephone script for Senate outreach

(Ask if it is possible to speak to the person who handles appropriations issues related to the environment. It may not be; that is fine.)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is [name] from [city or town]. I am calling on behalf of [organization and/or state environmental ed association], to urge Senator [Name] to sign on to two Dear Colleague Letters in support of important appropriations for environmental education grants at EPA and NOAA.

The first asks the appropriations committee to provide a boost in funding for the National Environmental Education Act for fiscal year 2024. This letter is being circulated by Senator Gillibrand, who is asking that the program be funded at \$14 million. EPA’s environmental education grants are small but critical investments that provide significant returns for our communities and the local environment. Funding for this office has been stagnant for a decade and \$14M is the original amount authorized in 1990.

[If applicable, provide a description of the funding provided to your organization or within your state through an EPA grant. Find details on awarded grants by state here: <https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>]

A second letter urges Congress to support funding for the vital NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training and Environmental Literacy grant programs. Please sign on to this letter in support of these important programs—it is being circulated by Senator Baldwin’s office.

Environmental education is critical for [state]. It provides non-regulatory solutions to complex problems, engages students in real-world learning, and supports a healthy quality of life.

I will follow up with you by email with copies of the letters and contact information. Should I send these materials to you or is there another person I should contact?

Thank you for your time.

Sample script for House outreach

(Ask if it is possible to speak to the person who handles appropriations issues related to the environment. It may not be; that is fine)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is [name] from [city or town]. I am calling [on behalf of x organization, if appropriate] to urge Representative XXXXX to sign on to two Dear Colleague Letters in support of important appropriations for environmental education grants at EPA and NOAA.

The first asks the appropriations committee to provide a boost in funding for the National Environmental Education Act for fiscal year 2024. This letter is being circulated by Representatives Neguse and Langevin, who are asking for \$14 million for the program. EPA’s environmental education grants are small but critical investments that yield significant returns for our communities and the local environment. Funding for this office has been stagnant for a decade and \$14M is the original amount authorized in 1990.

[If applicable, provide a description of the funding provided to your organization or within the Congressional district through an EPA grant. Find details on awarded grants by state here: <https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>]

A second letter urges Congress to appropriate \$12 million for the vital NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training program, and \$8 million for the Environmental Literacy Program. This represents a modest increase in funding over previous years. It also includes a request for funding to support climate change education. Please sign on to this letter in support of these important programs—it is being circulated by Rep. Kathy Castor.

Environmental education is critical for [state and district]. It provides non-regulatory solutions to complex problems, engages students and the general public in real-world learning, and supports a healthy quality of life.

I will follow up with you by email with copies of the letters and contact information. Should I send these materials to you or is there another person I should contact?

Thank you for your time.