

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2023

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We greatly appreciate the increased support you provided in Fiscal Year 2023 for the National Environmental Education Act (NEEA). These funds are being wisely invested in addressing and understanding climate impacts. We ask that you continue funding this successful program pursuant to the formula prescribed in the act at the authorized level of \$14 million in the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bill.

- NEEA programs are essential to educating millions of Americans, including students, with the science-based information they require to understand and take actions to address climate impacts, including drought, wildfires, sea level rise and extreme weather events that are affecting communities across the nation.
- In addition to traditional regulatory authorities, EPA's toolbox includes non-regulatory approaches built around engaging and educating the public and private sector. The value of this education to establish durable policy and to enhance public understanding of how to address climate change impacts and other pressing environmental issues cannot be overstated. This is particularly true for communities of color that are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change.
- Fact-based environmental education and engagement for all communities—especially when complementing, aligning with, reinforcing, or anticipating regulatory authority—can accelerate progress.
- Environmental education spurs action to create healthy, livable communities that are more resilient to climate impacts, and that attract jobs for all Americans, including underserved and underrepresented communities.
- Since 1990 NEEA has been a highly effective, non-regulatory tool for improving student performance in science and math and protecting public health.
- Congress has consistently funded this program, which has been strongly supported by local communities, public health officials, educators, and industry.

- NEEA helps build 21st century skills and promote job training, innovation, and leadership skills.
- The Act utilizes public-private partnerships to highly leverage scarce federal resources.

Programs funded through this act have far-reaching and well-documented positive impacts. They enable citizens from all walks to make informed, scientifically sound decisions regarding energy consumption, water quality and conservation, and energy efficiency at homes, schools, and the workplace. They extend environmental education and engagement opportunities by reducing barriers and welcoming people of all identities and differences to experience and learn about the environment in ways that improve their lives and the health of the planet. These programs provide practical applications for math, science, technology, and engineering. Research indicates that this type of education increases critical thinking and the problem-solving skills necessary to foster innovation and keep America competitive in a fiercely global economy.

With support from the NEEA, the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) has partnered with more than 20 companies, including Toyota, International Paper, 3M, and Samsung to create nationwide conservation events that generate millions of dollars in volunteer work, develop public and employee engagement campaigns that inform and motivate sustainable actions. NEEF partners with sports leagues such as the NBA and NHL, museums, zoos and aquaria to prompt fans and diverse audiences to take environmental actions at home.

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) helps ensure that by the time students graduate high school they are equipped with the knowledge to address pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, including those posed by climate change. Project Learning Tree (PLT), a program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, engages students in learning about trees, forests, and sustainable forest management.

NEEA Grants have been awarded in all 50 states totaling more than 4,000 grants that support high quality, high impact educational programs that address local priorities and needs. They are effective because they allow students to apply science in a real-world context and perform better on standardized tests in reading, math, writing, social studies, and science. This helps America close the education gap with other countries.

Thank you again for the increased support in Fiscal Year 2023 and for your consideration of our request to fund NEEA programs at \$14 million for Fiscal Year 2024.

Sincerely,

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