



EEAC

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1994

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



The movement for environmental and social justice may be the most important development in many years in the realm of environmental and social change. The movement has its roots in the civil rights struggles of the 50's and 60's, in the environmental and neighborhood efforts of the 70's, 80's and 90's, and in the growing involvement of religious institutions of every denomination in social and ecological issues.

The most immediate gain of the environmental/social justice movement (ESJM) has been the extraordinary increase in the involvement of African-American, Asian-American, Latino and Native American individuals and organizations in environmental affairs. This involvement led recently to the signing of an Executive Order by President

Clinton affirming the U. S. commitment to environmental and social justice and requiring all federal agencies linked to environmental policy to come up with a plan to address environmental/social justice concerns in each agency's policy and operational initiatives.

The immediate wellspring of this movement has been the concern, supported by a significant number of research studies, that race is the single most important factor in the siting of hazardous waste sites, incinerators, landfills, bus depots, and sewage treatment plants.

These studies have apparently demonstrated a clear pattern of environmental discrimination that a disproportionate number of hazardous waste and other polluting sites and facilities have been placed in communities inhabited primarily by people of color. Race, even more than social class, appears to have been the primary factor in those siting patterns. While more research may need to be done on this latter point, these overall findings and their own experience have motivated thousands of citizens in hundreds of groups across this country to organize to defend and improve their health. They have issued a powerful call to end environmental degradation and for equitable siting policies.

The environmental/social justice movement holds great hope and presents significant challenges for environmental education. At a recent conference on urban environmental education organized by the North American Association For Environmental Education (NAAEE) in Washington, D.C., educators from around the country discussed the present and future of environmental education in urban areas. Several representatives of environmental justice organizations and individual activists from the movement were present. They played a forceful role in bringing the environmental/social justice discussion to the fore. Their vision of environmental education is comprehensive and powerful. In their scheme, the environment covers both the physical and social environments; the breakdown in urban systems - physical, cultural, and social, leading to problems such as drug abuse, crime, teen pregnancy, and housing displacement, is an appropriate area for environmental education and action. They see environmental education as having an important role to play in reversing the crisis in our cities.

There were those present at the NAAEE Conference who objected to this comprehensive view of the environment and environmental education. Some still prefer to define environment in purely physical and natural terms and see a narrowly defined version of "nature in the city" as the main focus of environmental

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EEAC is a voluntary organization in support of Environmental Education for New York

UPCOMING EEAC EVENTS.....

Steering Committee Meetings

EEAC Steering Committee meetings are held from 4-6pm on the third Wednesday of every month. Please arrive promptly at 4pm!

All EEAC members are invited to attend and participate in the discussion. For information on the location of the meetings, contact Millard Clements at (212) 998-5495.

Upcoming dates are:

June 15 and July 20.

Membership Meetings

To be scheduled. Details will be mailed directly to members when available.

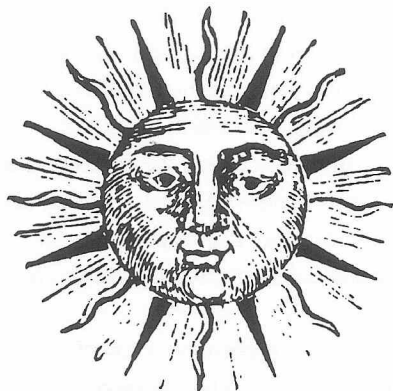
Newsletter Deadlines

Material should be submitted to the Editor on the first Monday of May, August, November and February.

Newsletter Committee

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This newsletter is a publication of the Environmental Education Advisory Council (EEAC), a voluntary organization of educators, classroom teachers, administrators and other professionals in active support of environmental education. It is available free upon request.

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*Affiliations for identification purposes only.

Notes from EEAC Membership Meeting 4/27/94

By Frieda Feldman

Like Babylon-on-the-Hudson, the nearly one-year-old Riverbank State Park was toured by 22 EEAC members on April 27, 1994.

Riverbank Park is a landscaped 28-acre recreational refuge that sits atop the North River Treatment Plant—a sometime source of odors, as well as plaudits from about an average daily attendance of 10,000.

Park access is across two bridges at 138th and 145th Streets right off Riverside Drive and over the busy, humming Henry Hudson Parkway on Manhattan's upper West Side.

This literally rooftop park has a host of facilities including a swimming pool, cultural and athletic centers, skating rink, restaurant, playing fields, a 400-meter Olympic-size track and Olympic-size swimming pool, pedestrian promenades and picnic area, a 900-seat amphitheater, play area and fountains—all of which were toured for an hour by an enthusiastic EEAC group.

Providentially, the sun shone during the tour, followed by a springtime downpour during which tour members had a light dinner indoors, catered by Park facilities concessionaires.

The Park extends over the west bank of the Hudson River, from five to 69-feet above the water. All landscaped areas are covered with plants, flowers and trees rooted in only 4-feet deep soil sitting over sewage plant facilities below.

Riverbank is part of the New York City Regional Office of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The tour was led by genial, bearded Gaspar Santiago, abetted by athletic coordinator Bill Rahle.



Central Park Conservancy offers "City Naturalists" Summer Institute for Teachers

This July the Central Park Conservancy is holding a Summer Institute for teachers called "City Naturalists" at the new Dana Discovery Center in Central Park. City Naturalists is an environmental education program geared to people who teach and work with young children, nursery through 3rd grade. City Naturalists uses the urban park's woodlands and wetlands as sites for the study of indigenous flora and fauna. The program was developed by Leslie Day, a naturalist and early childhood educator at The Calhoun School in Manhattan, who has been learning about and studying nature right here in New York City parks for the last 20 years. She, along with Central Park Conservancy staff, will be leading groups of teachers in 3 day-long workshops. The mornings of the first 2 days will be spent in the field, learning to observe and study trees, birds, wildflowers, weeds/grasses, insects and aquatic plants and animals. Participants will develop writing and drawing skills, and learn how to use field guides in order to gain knowledge about the plants and animals that live in urban parks. The afternoons of the first 2 days following the nature walks will be spent doing activities participants can conduct with their students in the classroom, involving the content areas of science, language, arts, music, movement, cooking and art. These follow-up activities utilize the knowledge, skills, values, and experiences gained from the nature walks and involve the planning, development and implementation of curricula for early childhood. Course materials such as bibliographies, activity lesson plans, teacher resources, and set-up procedures for the activities are included in the program.

The final day of the workshop will introduce a national environmental education program developed for teachers. The cost of this 3 day workshop is \$50. For information on the dates and registration, call the Central Park Conservancy, (212) 860-1311.

Environmental Resources

by Kenneth Kowald

Personal Notes

On April 21, Rose Blaustein received a 1994 Environmental Quality Award from Region 2 of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, at ceremonies in the U.S. Customs House, Foley Square. Rose, an Honorary Member of EEAC, has been associated with the organization since its founding in 1974. The next day, at ceremonies in the Delegates Dining Room of the United Nations, Sam Holmes and Michael Zamm were recognized for their work in environmental education, when they received Environmental Awards from the City Club. Sam, also an Honorary Member, is a past Chairman of EEAC.

I was privileged to join the hundreds who saluted Rose in the Customs House and Sam and Mike at the UN, and honored to be asked to make the awards for the City Club. It has been a learning experience to work with all three of these acknowledged "stars" of environmental education and with so many other EEAC members, whose dedication and work have been inspirational. Thank you, Rose, Sam and Mike!

Timely Notes

Arbor Day is going to be different in New York City next year. The observance will still be on the last Friday of April, but the New York City Arbor Day Committee is planning a different kind of schedule for the workshops and plantings, which have been held in the early spring and on Arbor Day itself, respectively. Plans call for workshops and plantings in the fall, shortly after school programs begin, with dedications of the planted trees to take place on Arbor Day. To learn more and to get on the mailing list for information, write to John Graham, Forester, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 47-20 21st Street, Long Island City 11101.

Earth Day in New York City will look different in 1995, too. The City has been named Earth Day International City of the Year, to mark the 25th anniversary of the first Earth Day in 1970. Earth Fair '95 will be a 10-week-long celebration of the environment, from the spring equinox to World Environment Day. To learn more, write or call Earth Day New York, Suite 601, 10 East 39th Street, New York 10016, (212) 686-4905.

Miscellaneous Notes

It probably contains everything you'll ever need to know about how to use a garden for educational purposes and vice versa. It's called **"Education in the Gardens: Resource Manual"** and it comes in two volumes, full of information. It's yours free by writing or calling Operation GreenThumb, New York City Department of General Services, Room 1020, 49 Chambers Street, New York 10007, (212) 788-8059...And, speaking of Operation GreenThumb, the highly successful and exciting **Harvest Festival** it conducts each year with the New York City unit of Cornell Cooperative Extension will be held this year in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, on Saturday, August 13. It's not to be missed!

"Forests of New York City" has been published by the Natural Resources Group of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. Its 21 pages tell how forest ecosystems evolve and where you can visit the different types of forests and what sorts of wildlife you will see in them. For a free copy of the brochure, call Forestry Administrative Assistant Dianne Caraballo at (212) 360-1400...And speaking of Parks, let me take the personal prerogative of a "columnist" to welcome back Henry J. Stern as Commissioner of the Department. He has been a steadfast supporter of greening and of environmental education.

The National Wildlife Federation, which is the sponsor of **National Wildlife Week** in April of each year, has all kinds of information which you may find useful. To learn more, you can call 1-800-432-6564, 9am to 11pm, Monday through Saturday.

It's new! There is now a **Soil and Water Conservation Program representative** of the United States Department of Agriculture in New York City. She spoke recently at a meeting of the Steering Committee of EEAC. As we go to press, she may have moved, but her telephone number is (or was), (718) 595-3410. She has some very good information and material to share. Ask for Ginger Murphy.

Among the activities of the National Science Foundation is the sponsorship of **National Science and Technology Week**, which is a year-round program of NSF. To learn more, write to NSF at 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22230.

The **American Water Works Association** is an international non-profit organization of more than 55,000 members associated with the public drinking water industry, including utilities, manufacturers, consultants, educators and students. AWWA provides material for use in grades K-12 to teach about water treatment, distribution, conservation, cycle and careers. To learn more, write or call Julia Batten, Student Programs Manager, AWWA 6666 West Quincy Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80235, (303) 347-6206.

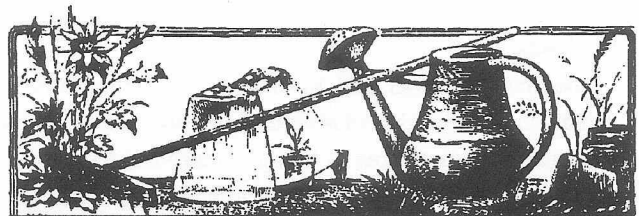
The United States Department of Energy has an **Environmental Technology Information Service** which provides information about DOE's Environmental Restoration and Waste Management Technology Programs. To learn about it, call 1-800-845-2096.

Thanks to Parks & Recreation Commissioner Henry J. Stern, high school students may now be approved as **Young Citizen Pruners**, when they have completed the study program with Trees New York. To find out about this, call the organization at (212) 227-1887, or write to Suite 432, 280 Broadway, New York, NY 10007.

At the other end of the age scale (not quite!), the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement is holding a Leadership Conference, "**Seniors for the Environment**," from September 22 through 24 in the National 4-H Conference Center, 7100 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase, Maryland. To learn about it and other activities of EASI, write or telephone the group at 51 Main Street, P.O. Box 368, The Plains, Virginia 22171, (703) 253-5821.

In 1990, the United States Department of Energy approved a cooperative agreement for the Waste Management and Research Consortium (WERC). A major component is education. Find out more by writing to New Mexico State University, Box 30001/Department WERC,

Las Cruces 88003-8001...DOE also has a program called "**The Historically Black Colleges and Universities/Minority Institutions Technology and Waste Management Consortium**." To find out more, write or call HBCU/MI Environmental Technology and Waste Management Consortium, c/o Clark Atlanta University, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 223 James P.J. Brawley Street, Atlanta 30314, (404) 880-8595.



Important Date

On June 15, 1994, EEAC will hold a general membership meeting at New York University, Press Building, 32 Washington Place, 2nd floor, Anderson Room. All EEAC members are invited to attend and participate in an important decision to amend our by-laws. It has been recommended that we change page 2, Article 2 by eliminating the line reading "No steering committee member may serve for more than two consecutive three-year terms."

Earth Literacy Education: What, why and how?

by Frans C. Verhagen, M.Div., M.I.A., Ph.D.

Environmental education has gone through many phases and shows a great diversity even in specific cultures such as the North American one. Learning and instruction on a community's physical and ecological environment, both formal and informal, on both elementary, secondary and adult levels is a mosaic of learning situations that reflects the cultural diversity of a society at a particular time in history.

In North America we can distinguish at least half a dozen phases in environmental education which, in my opinion, is culminating in an Earth literacy phase that includes most of the foregoing phases with different emphases.

The first phase was, and, to some extent, is the Native American transmission of attitudes, customs and practices that can be characterized as living in unity and harmony with nature. It is this earliest of phases that has to be reincorporated into the Earth literacy phase, replacing the attitude of domination of the early settlers and the can do technical outlook of present day society.

The second phase often intermingled with the foregoing and the following one was one of nature study with spokespersons such as Thoreau, Muir, Emerson, etc.

With the advent of greater industrialization, the need for conservation became clear to individuals such as President Theodore Roosevelt and New York State Governor Hill who around the turn of the century, respectively, established the Presidential Commission on Conservation and preserved regions in the Adirondacks and the Catskills.

Phases three—the emergence of camping education with the founding of the Scouting movement by Lord Baden Powell in 1910—and four—outdoor education and school gardening—became part of the NYC school curriculum. As a matter of fact, in the opinion of leading NYC environmentalist and educator, John Kominski, “school gardening may have been as important then as computer centers are to us now.”

Rachel Carson's work in the sixties brought environmental education to another level of sophistication by emphasizing the degradation and disintegration of Earth systems.

It is my contention that present day environmental education that includes strands of those earlier phases has

to be pulled up to a higher level of sophistication that corresponds to the needs and understanding of these times. Because of this new context and contents, the new term of Earth literacy education has been emerging.

Phase six of Earth literacy education is incorporating a functional cosmology that is able to answer the perennial cosmological questions on the origin and development of the universe and planet Earth with an ever greater precision after the scientific breakthroughs in the beginning of this century. A new universe story is emerging that, based as it is on recent scientific achievements, can form the core of new myths by which humanity can energize itself and find the core unity that is needed in its ever increasing diversity. Outstanding presentations of this new story are given by cosmologist Brian Swimme and cultural historian Thomas Berry in the USA, Rupert Shelldrake in Europe and others.

Earth literacy education, therefore, not only includes learning and instruction in attitudes, skills and knowledge in respect to mother Earth, but also the development of a perspective or world view that includes the story of the universe, of Earth and human life. It is a story in which life and the Earth is central, not the human species. Thus, one of the major challenges of this phase of environmental education is to change the purpose of education from human centered or anthropocentric to life-centered or biocentric learning and instruction.

Given this Earth literacy view of environmental education, it also becomes clear that such vision can be the organizing principle of a school-wide, i.e. interdisciplinary curriculum. It would correspond to the emerging theory of environmentalism as elaborated by Canadian political scientist Robert Paehlke and Vice President Al Gore.

How can this radical revision of education take place? It is already taking place by the networking of those persons, organizations and institutions that are implementing this necessary approach. For more information about Earth literacy education, you may contact the Sociological Energy Services International, 97-37 63rd Road, suite 15E, Forest Hills, NY 11374 or call (718) 275-3932. Shortly, an electronic bulletin board on Earth literacy will be available in NYCENET.

education. Others expand their definitions to the built environment, the city's infrastructure and design and the gamut of urban environmental issues and related action, but stop short of embracing the "social environmental" view. There was vigorous debate at the NAAEE forum on this issue. There was, and probably will be, no resolution of this debate for some time to come but it is healthy for environmental education to engage in such discussions. It is also plausible that some synthesis of these diverse views will ultimately take hold, e.g. that a decline in urban infrastructure systems, discriminatory neighborhood investment patterns, and inequitable siting and service decisions create the backdrop for human social problems like crime and drug abuse, while the study of the immediate content of these problems is not part of a regimen of environmental education.

Ultimately a committee of forum participants drafted a letter to be sent to members of Congress and others in powerful positions asking for proof that the President's environmental justice Executive Order is being implemented. It was expected, although this still had to be confirmed by the NAAEE Executive Board, that NAAEE would be a signatory to this letter.

There were some disturbing aspects to the Washington forum however, and these have been echoed by others who have attended the spate of environmental/social justice colloquiums that have occurred recently. There is a stridency, a dogmatism associated with the public comments of some of the representatives of the ESJM. At the NAAEE forum much interpersonal in-fighting went on before a collegial discussion occurred on the aforementioned views of the environment and environmental education. A great deal of this struggle occurred because of the insistent, "our view is the only view" attitude of some of the movement folks. There were inaccurate statements made to support certain claims. There were statements to the effect that while environmental justice concerns are part of environmental education, the latter is properly a component of the former, especially in terms of political action. Some participants told others that they basically had to do things in a certain way or no relationship could be formed.

While the NAAEE conference was ultimately a successful one, this sort of behavior is inappropriate. We need to build coalitions and this can only be done if all points of view are respected and if places of political

importance are left for all participants in the environmental education spectrum. The history of social change efforts shows us that adamant, authoritarian process, while sometimes producing short term gains, ultimately does not work. Cooperative coalition-building does. EEAC stands ready to participate in the environmental justice movement and to support the incorporation of these concerns into environmental education. Many EEAC'ers have for years been addressing the urban agenda as part of their environmental education programs. We welcome representatives of ESJM as general members and as members of the steering committee and hope to be involved in a collaborative approach to solving our urban environmental crisis.

Mike Zamm

Urban Environmental Education: How the City Works

From July 11-21 (Monday through Thursday), 1994, this New York University institute will focus on the systems and structures that make life possible in New York City. The Institute is sponsored by a number of environmental organizations including EEAC.

Combining lecture and discussion with field trips in full day sessions, the experience is designed to provide teachers with content materials about infrastructure - water supply, sewage treatment, and waste management - as well as instructional techniques for bringing urban environmental knowledge into the elementary and secondary classroom.

Tuition and Institute Fees are: \$425 noncredit; \$350 Alumni College Members; \$515 graduate tuition per point.

For more information, contact professor Tom Colwell, Department of Culture and Community, 737 East Building, 239 Greene Street, New York 10003, (212) 998-5637.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Select either a \$15 dues payment to cover the cost of membership in EEAC for a calendar year, OR, a \$150 Life Membership. A membership entitles you to receive EEAC newsletters, program information mailings, and conference announcements.

Membership dues are tax deductible. Make all checks payable to EEAC.

Please complete the application and mail it, with your payment, to:

Ruth Eilenberg
Treasurer
196-32 53rd Avenue
Flushing, New York 11365

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