

A Fundamental Enhancement in Environmental Education

Workshops Teach the Teachers

The Challenge

The sustainability of natural resources competes with equally valued public concerns like economic development, affordable housing, property rights, and domestic security. Are adult decisionmakers equipped with the knowledge to make informed choices on these issues? With respect to natural resources, one *should* be able to expect so.

Over the past 30 years of the environmental movement, its fundamental education philosophy has been to reach young learners in school so that they could carry a foundation of knowledge into adulthood. The effectiveness of this philosophy has been debated. However the argument is resolved, a complementary strategy to reach adults has emerged.

The Solution

Educational outreach to decisionmakers builds on conservation knowledge received in the formative years while allowing greater awareness for the complexity of adult priorities and values. This outreach takes many forms, from media and public information campaigns, to community workshops, visitor center programs, and one-on-one assistance to landowners.

Federal, State, and nonprofit natural resource professionals form the front line for outreach. These recognized experts must convey their scientific knowledge in ways the public can understand, appreciate, and act upon. The introduction of basic teaching skills often goes furthest to aid their effectiveness with this outreach.

Environmental educators Susan Cox of the USDA Forest Service and Kevin Doran of the Maine Forest Service know the benefit of training the trainer. Each is a master's candidate in adult education and has performed individual workshops that train adults to teach environmental lessons. Susan and Kevin combined their expertise to meld two "train the trainer" curricula into one. They then took their show on the road, bringing their peers:

"We often focus too much on how to teach kids, when in reality the majority of us teach adults who then teach kids."

—Workshop participant



Professionals like this urban forester form the front line for conservation education outreach to adults and communities.

- Methods for developing educational programs,
- Techniques to reach adult learners, and
- A view of differences in learning styles, intelligence, and development.

Resulting Benefits

More than 100 natural resource professionals and environmental educators from public and private organizations attended the debut workshops in Minnesota. The workshops provided tools they'll use to reach the public with conservation education messages.

Where will the tools be validated? They'll be validated in casual conversations with friends, family, and neighbors. They'll be used at the town hall and during public meetings. Most importantly, they'll have impact on the job, where natural resources professionals work with thousands of individuals, small groups, and large audiences on a yearly basis. The significance is in the multiplication.

Sharing Success

Successful delivery of the workshops in Minnesota has spurred demand for repeat performances in additional States. The vision is to continue work with agencies and organizations in building skills for the most effective conservation education delivery to the adult audience.



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