

April 8, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, and Science
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, and Science
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, and Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, and Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Mikulski, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah:

We write in strong support of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Education Program which includes many important educational grant programs. We urge funding in the total amount of \$17.7 million for the B-WET and Environmental Literacy Grants (ELG) programs in the Fiscal Year 2014 appropriations bill. We feel it is particularly important that the ELG funds be left unencumbered by specific allocations from Congress, so that their grants are available to all in the eligible ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, environment, and climate education communities.

NOAA is mandated to support and coordinate educational activities to enhance public awareness and understanding of ocean-related issues. NOAA education activities are authorized under the America COMPETES Act, which obligates NOAA to carry out science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) activities to improve interest and literacy in STEM subjects. The American COMPETES Act committee report specifically cites the Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program and the Environmental Literacy Grants (ELG) program as NOAA's principal education grant programs. It describes B-WET – a competitive, environmental education grant program that increases environmental literacy and stewardship through hands-on, place-based learning experiences – as a “model” program noted for “its rigorous program-wide assessment of performance and impact among students and teachers.”

B-WET was established in 2002 and has received continuous funding since that time. The B-WET program supports locally relevant, experiential learning in the K-12 environment, with the purpose of increasing understanding of how the quality of a watershed affects the lives of the people who live in it. B-WET supports programs for students as well as professional development for teachers, while supporting regional education and conservation priorities. Areas currently served by B-WET include California, Chesapeake Bay, Hawai'i, Gulf of Mexico, New England, Great Lakes, and the Pacific Northwest, impacting 27 states and the District of Columbia.

In 2012, the B-WET program reached over 60,000 students and 5,000 teachers, through 95 new and continuing projects. The vast majority of B-WET funding is redistributed locally for

student activities and has direct economic impacts in the community it serves. Since 2002, NOAA has invested over \$50 million to support more than 500 B-WET projects around the country.

While B-WET addresses specific regional education needs, the Environmental Literacy Grants were established in 2005 to advance STEM education through support for national-scale projects. These competitive grants provide more than 51 million people annually with access to compelling, up-to-date information on the ocean, coasts, Great Lakes, weather, and climate through formal and informal science education programs as well as exhibits such as the Science On a Sphere and the Ocean Today Kiosk. The impacts of this program include:

- A total of 98 competitive grants, totaling \$63 million, awarded to science centers, museums, aquariums, universities, and nonprofit education organizations across the U.S.;
- Over 10,000 K-12 teachers and informal science educators received professional development in STEM concepts related to environmental literacy in FY12 alone;
- Over 250,000 lifelong learners engaged in a NOAA-funded informal science education programs in FY12; and
- 533 jobs at 41 institutions that currently are fully or partially supported by these grants.

Over the lifetime of the program, NOAA has received over 636 applications requesting almost \$412 million. The program is very competitive, as only 13% of applications ultimately receive funding.

These education programs have enabled NOAA, as the nation's leading expert on weather, coastal and ocean information, to partner with the nation's top non-profit organizations and educators to bring this information and hands-on experiences to students. The programs have demonstrated their effectiveness and value to stakeholder communities. And as our nation begins to grapple with the complexities and challenges of diminishing ocean, coastal and watershed resources, they are timely and highly relevant.

Unfortunately, funding in the past few years has fallen fundamentally short of the level necessary for NOAA to carry out its education mandate. Therefore, we respectfully request an increase to \$17.7 million for these two NOAA education programs, so that NOAA can continue to carry out and improve its successful STEM activities. Should you have any questions about this letter, please have your staff contact Jim Elder of the Campaign for Environmental Literacy at (978) 526-7768.

Sincerely,

National and Regional Organizations:

African American Environmentalist Association, Center for Environment, Commerce & Energy
Afterschool Alliance
Alliance for the Great Lakes
American Recreation Coalition
Appalachian Mountain Club
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Arbor Day Foundation

The Association of Nature Center Administrators
Association of Science-Technology Centers
Association of Zoos & Aquariums
Audubon Maryland-DC
Audubon Naturalist Society
Biodiversity Project
BlueGreen Alliance
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Bay Trust
Children & Nature Network
Choose Outdoors
City Parks Alliance
Council for Environmental Education
The Corps Network
Dimensions Educational Research Foundation
Earth Day Network
Earth Force
EarthEcho International
Ecological Society of America
Endangered Species Coalition
Friends of the Earth
Great Lakes Fishery Trust
Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont
Izzak Walton League of America
The Jane Goodall Institute
Keep America Beautiful
Living Classrooms Foundation
National Center for Science Education
National Council for Science and the Environment
National Park Foundation
National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education
National Wildlife Federation
Nature Explore
NatureBridge
North American Association for Environmental Education
The Ocean Project
Odysseus
The Outdoor Foundation
Project WET Foundation
Public Lands Service Coalition
Second Nature
Sierra Club
Society for Public Health Education
Southwest Conservation Corps

Trout Unlimited
U.S. Green Building Council
University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum Earth Partnership Program
US Play Coalition
The Wilderness Society
Will Steger Foundation

State and Local Organizations:

Arkansas Wildlife Federation (AR)
Friends of the Petaluma River (CA)
Green Schools Initiative (CA)
Inverness Associates (CA)
San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research (CA)
Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CO)
Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Educators Association (CT)
Solar Youth (CT)
Clean Air Partners (DC)
DC Environmental Education Consortium (DC)
DC Greenworks (DC)
Saturday Environmental Academy (DC)
Delaware Nature Society (DE)
Common Ground for Conservation - America Verde (FL)
Greening Youth Foundation (GA)
Sustaining Urban Villages Inc. (GA)
Zoo Atlanta (GA)
Conservation Council for Hawai'i (HI)
Iowa Wildlife Federation (IA)
Wagner Conservation Coalition (IA)
Catalyst Group Global (IL)
Chicago Zoological Society (IL)
Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago (IL)
Omicron Technologies, Inc. (IL)
Openlands (IL)
YouthMuse (IL)
Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KS)
Eastern Kentucky University Center for Environmental Education (KY)
Bayou Land Conservancy (LA)
Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LA)
Anacostia Watershed Society (MD)
Environmental Stewardship Strategies (MD)
Maryland State Department of Education (MD)
Montgomery County Department of Recreation (MD)
National Aquarium (MD)
Kalamazoo Nature Center (MI)
Crow River Trail Guards, Inc. (MN)

Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America (MN)
Conservation Federation of Missouri (MO)
Minnesota Association for Environmental Education (MT)
Geographic Educators of Nebraska (NE)
Nebraska Association of Conservation and Environmental Educators (NE)
Otter Brook Farm Environmental Education Program (NH)
Alliance for NJ Environmental Education (NJ)
Jenkinson's Aquarium (NJ)
New Jersey Geographic Alliance (NJ)
The Wetlands Institute (NJ)
Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge (NJ)
Eco Think LLC (NM)
Environmental Education Association of New Mexico (NM)
Green Alliance (OH)
Teaching & Learning Collaborative (OH)
Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR)
CEN/Environmental Education Project (OR)
Environmental Education Association of Oregon (OR)
Friends of Outdoor School (OR)
Oregon Coast Aquarium (OR)
PennFuture (PA)
Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators (PA)
Riverbend Environmental Education Center (PA)
Audubon Society of Rhode Island (RI)
Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History (SC)
South Carolina Wildlife Federation (SC)
South Dakota Wildlife Federation (SD)
Memphis Botanic Garden (TN)
Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute (TN)
Tennessee Geographic Alliance (TN)
Warner Park Nature Center, Nashville Metro Parks (TN)
Artist Boat (TX)
REAL School Gardens (TX)
Texas Conservation Alliance (TX)
Travis Audubon Society (TX)
Virginia Conservation Network (VA)
Virgin Islands Conservation Society (VI)
E3 Washington (WA)
Friends of the Upper Mississippi (WI)
Good for Business (WI)
Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WI)
Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WI)
Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WI)
Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation (WI)
West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WV)
Wyoming Association for Environmental Education (WY)

