



Congress Holds Hearing on New Environmental Education Bill

Legislation Will Bolster NOAA's Key Environmental Education Programs

WASHINGTON (October 15)—The U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife today holds a hearing to consider expansion of key environmental education and training programs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Congresswoman Lois Capps (CA-23) introduced the bipartisan legislation last month to improve ocean, coastal, and watershed education and literacy. H.R. 3644, which currently has 11 co-sponsors, is called the Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Regional Program and National Environmental Literacy Grant Program Act.

H.R. 3644 would authorize a national Environmental Literacy Grant program as well as a regional B-WET program focused on local watershed education. The legislation gradually increases funding over 5 years for both grant programs and authorizes new regional B-WET programs in major watersheds nationwide.

Kevin Coyle, NWF's Vice President for Education and Training, testified today before the House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife:

“The National Wildlife Federation applauds Congresswoman Capps for developing this important legislation and the Subcommittee for holding this hearing. H.R. 3644 will bolster critical NOAA environmental education programs that will give young people a better understanding of their local watersheds and help ensure our next generation of conservation stewards.

“Hands-on environmental education helps children learn about the world around them. It is a world they will inherit and must learn to take care of. Environmental education is also good for student academic performance and hands-on environmental education connects children with nature. This legislation will provide opportunities for young people to ‘Be Out There’ and spend time outdoors learning about their local watersheds, bays, estuaries and coastal areas.”

“In addition to the many academic and conservation benefits of environmental education, business leaders increasingly believe that an environmentally literate workforce is critical to America's competitiveness in the 21st Century.”

Also happening today, NWF launches the new [Be Out There](http://www.beoutthere.org)TM campaign to get families across the United States to open the door and get outside. A daily dose of the outdoors improves children's physical, mental and emotional well being. The benefits of outdoor play are real: healthier kids with a life-long appreciation of wildlife and nature. Visit www.beoutthere.org.

"B-WET brings local watersheds into every classroom and every child out into the watershed in an exciting and meaningful way," said sponsor **Representative Lois Capps**. "I've witnessed firsthand how this program has provided opportunities for hundreds of children and teachers on the Central and South Coast to learn about the importance of our coastal and marine environment. Under my legislation, more watershed communities across the country will be able to replicate the success we've experienced on California's coast."

Said **James Elder**, Director of the Campaign for Environmental Literacy:

"Bolstering literacy programs is critical to furthering environmental stewardship in the United States, and helps prepare our students for the coming clean energy economy. As America's leaders, such as Congresswoman Capps, work to advance policies to address environmental and educational challenges, our schools and training platforms must keep pace. Support for the bill addressed at today's hearing, as well as existing programs, will help ensure our students' preparedness for both the classroom and for a bright future."

Co-sponsors for the Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Regional Program and National Environmental Literacy Grant Program Act include:

Rep. Lois Capps (D - CA)
Rep. Vernon J. Ehlers (R - MI)
Rep. Sam Farr (D - CA)
Rep. Madeleine Bordallo (D - GU)
Rep. Carolyn Kilpatrick (D - MI)
Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D - OR)
Rep. Raul M. Grijalva (D - AZ)
Rep. Donna M. Christian-Christensen (D - VI)
Rep. Laura Richardson (D - CA)
Rep. Mike Thompson (D - CA)
Rep. Gregorio Sablan (I - MP)
Rep. Barbara Lee (D - CA)

National Wildlife Federation is America's largest conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future. Visit www.nwf.org.

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