

West Eugene Wetlands Environmental Education Program 2005 Annual Report

Education Program

The West Eugene Wetlands Environmental Education Program was initiated in 1999 as the result of collaboration among various west Eugene wetlands partners and organizations interested in environmental education. This group perceived a need for a locally focused effort to build environmental literacy in the community.

Over the last year many steps have been taken toward construction of an education center as well as further establishment of the environmental education program. Collaboratively, the environmental education program and West Eugene Wetlands partners accomplished the following:

- 607 people attended 37 community education programs. Program examples include wetland month special events, many nature walks, a wetland geology tour, as well as a summer-long collaboration with the City of Eugene Adventure Seekers Summer Camp.
- 103 school groups visited and/or received classroom presentations with the formal education programs
- The total number of contacts included 2,932 students and teachers/chaperones.
- WREN was nominated for a “Take Pride in America” award from the Department of Interior for their educational contributions in the West Eugene Wetlands.
- WREN hired Liz Myers as an Education/Volunteer Coordinator to take on volunteer recruitment and formal program coordination.
- WREN hired Elvira Muniz as an Environmental Education Intern in the fall to lead field trips and outreach programs.
- Work continued at the University of Oregon’s Center for Advanced Technology and Education program to refine and submit grant proposals, as well as post the Educator’s and Volunteer’s Guide online. These documents can be viewed at <http://cateweb.uoregon.edu/wren/>
- WREN board and education volunteers dedicated more than 2,500 hours to help further the education program.
- WREN hosted a week-long teacher training in July that included instruction on journal-making, field work and curriculum development. Fifteen teachers attended.
- WREN received grants from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the Collins Foundation and Eugene REI to help support the education program.
- WREN coordinated with the BLM in recruiting and participating in Public Lands Day, Sept. 24th. Fifteen volunteers attended and participated in removing blackberries and other noxious weeds from along trails, as well as helping do yurt repairs.



WREN staff member Liz Myers led a geology program in the wetlands in February. Photo: WREN

American Wetlands Month 2005

West Eugene Wetland Partners have joined with Americans everywhere to raise public awareness about the uniqueness, beauty and importance of the nation's wetlands during May, American Wetlands Month. The theme for the month-long celebration was "It Pays to Save Wetlands." Approximately 270 people participated in Wetlands Month activities! In addition, 262 students either visited the wetlands or participated in classroom presentations. Due to the generous support of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Bureau of Land Management, Environmental Protection Agency, local businesses and individuals, all events were free to the public. Below is list of the special events:

West Eugene Wetland Photography Exhibit Opening

In honor of National Wetlands Month, WREN and West Eugene Wetland Partners sponsored a community exhibit of photographs taken in the West Eugene Wetlands. The exhibit was held at Café Paradiso throughout the month of June.

Dragonflies in Our Wetlands

Of Oregon's 87 species of dragonflies and damselflies, 36 species (about 41%) have been found in the West Eugene Wetlands. Participants learned about these fascinating insects and their amazing life cycles from local experts Steve Gordon and Cary Kerst.

Wild Wetland Walk

Bruce Newhouse of the Native Plant Society of Oregon led participants on a wild wetland walk during the 1st annual "Native Plant Appreciation Week" in search of blooming wildflowers and trees, butterflies, and other ecological wonders of the Willow Creek Natural Area.

Raptors of the Wetlands Presentation

Louise Shimmel of the Cascades Raptor Center provided participants a

first-hand experience to discover some of the raptors that can be found in the West Eugene Wetlands when she brought five of the Center's rescue birds for this educational program.

Bird Walk

Charlie Quinn of The Nature Conservancy led a bird walk at the Nature Conservancy's Willow Creek Preserve. Participants learned how to identify birds by ear, surveying protocols and characteristics of the habitats on the preserve.

Western Pond Turtle Presentation

The current western pond turtle population in Oregon is thought to number less than 10% of the historical population. Wildlife biologist, Christopher Yee of the ODFW gave a presentation about the natural history and management actions for this wetland inhabitant.

Spring Butterflies of the West Eugene Wetlands

Eric Wold of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) led a walk to look for butterflies and wildflowers in the West Eugene Wetlands.



Community members attended a wild wetland walk during American Wetlands Month. Photo: WREN



Hynix Tour

Doug Brooke, the Environmental Department Team Leader at Hynix led an evening walking tour of the Hynix mitigation site. Participants learned about the stormwater treatment practices used at Hynix Semiconductor. The tour demonstrated one facet of how industry can coexist in and near natural areas to enhance the habitat on site and to minimize and eliminate water quality impacts to the surrounding areas.

(Left) Wetlands Month participants took a hike over the Hynix property.
Photo: WREN

Discover Dragonflies!

Nearby Nature sponsored this family program about dragonflies. Participants learned all about these amazing flying machines, enjoyed fun facts, observed specimens, and created their own dragonfly to take home.

Wetlands Nature Photography Workshop

The West Eugene Wetlands offer many opportunities to photograph the natural world right here in Eugene - wildflowers, birds and miniature landscapes abound. Local photographer, David Stone, taught participants the principles of nature photography and practiced techniques in the field.

West Eugene Wetland Education Center

An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) committee was formed in March, 2004 to begin dialog between the partners in the Education Center Project. This group currently includes 4J and Bethel School Districts, Northwest Youth Corp, Bureau Land Management, City of Eugene, and Willamette Resources and Educational Network (WREN).

The City of Eugene contracted with WBS Architects to finalize the Education Center Program Document in anticipation of site development work in the summer of 2005. The city is utilizing previously budgeted funds of approximately \$339,000 for both phases of the work and site development. School District 4J will continue to reserve the 2002 School Bond funds for the resident education portion of the project through 2005. Geotechnical and survey work is complete, including a new wetland delineation for the education center site, to assure that wetlands are avoided and protected throughout the construction process.

