

New England Environmental Education Alliance (NEEEA)

<http://www.neeea.org/2013>

Outstanding Affiliate Organization

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The New England Environmental Education Alliance (NEEEA) has a 46-year record of leadership and accomplishment in—providing professional development opportunities and nurturing EE networks throughout the New England region. In 2012-2013, NEEEA has markedly raised its impact: funding capacity-building subgrants, coordinating implementation and cross-fertilization of state ELPs, and forming an EECapacity Regional Consortium to broaden and redefine the environmental education community in New England.

Nominator: Laura Downey

Beginning 46 years ago with informal annual gatherings, the New England Environmental Education Alliance has established a strong record of leadership in EE, strengthening networks, building capacity, providing professional development, facilitating collaborations and the exchange of provocative new ideas, and raising the profile of environmental education in New England. Unlike other NAAEE affiliates, NEEEA has very few members. In fact, it has only six: the professional EE associations in each of the New England states: Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association (COEEA), Massachusetts Environmental Education Society (MEES), Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA), New Hampshire Environmental Educators (NHEE), Rhode Island Environmental Education Association (RIEEA), and Vermont State-Wide Environmental Education Programs (SWEEP). Four of those associations (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island) are themselves NAAEE Affiliates. But in a very real sense, the thousand or so members of those state associations think of themselves as NEEEA members since NEEEA's programs are always done visibly in collaboration with the state organizations.

In the past eighteen months NEEEA has significantly ramped up its activities and services:

- NEEEA funded nineteen EE capacity building projects through a \$150,000 grant from the U.S. EPA. Managed by a leadership team with representatives from all New England states, the sub-grant program is making possible a wide range of capacity-building projects, all focused on professional development opportunities

and resources that implement state Environmental Literacy Plans. Many of those projects will be featured at this year's annual conference.

- NEEEA has played a key role in coordinating and facilitating the development and implementation of Environmental Literacy Plans in the region. In 2012, NEEEA convened the first New England Environmental Literacy Summit, attended by more than 140 leaders and educators from New England and surrounding states, and featured a stirring keynote by KACEE Exec. Dir. Laura Downey.
- In partnership with the Boston Youth Environmental Network, NEEEA received a \$38,000 grant from the National EECapacity Project to create the New England EECapacity Consortium. NEEEA sees the consortium as an opportunity to expand and make more robust the environmental education community in New England—eventually making it inclusive of all practitioners and organizations that aspire to a world of healthy, vigorous, and sustainable communities.
- To lead these initiatives, NEEEA, in partnership with the Maine Environmental Education Association, hired its first-ever staff person. As NEEEA's Special Projects Manager, Adrian Ayson, an accomplished EE leader in New England, brought to bear his thirty years of experience in leading complex projects for organizations such as Massachusetts Audubon, Vermont Institute for Natural Science, Center for Whole Communities, NAAEE, as well as long service on the NEEEA and MEES boards.

With these projects, NEEEA has raised the bar for professional EE associations and practitioners in New England. By providing direct capacity-building support for the state EE associations, facilitating increased cooperation and coordination among the states, and raising the visibility of EE successes in the region, NEEEA is upgrading the definition of “best practices” in New England's professional EE associations.

NEEEA is seizing the opportunity to go beyond the expected and is focused on a push to deepen EE's effectiveness and even re-imagine the definition of environmental education. From emphasizing innovative concepts such as collaborative evaluation, to promoting projects that feature cross-sector partnerships, and collective impact, NEEEA is finding success in playing the role of catalyst and instigator for EE's continued growth and evolution.