



Advocate's Guide to FY '27 Environmental Education Appropriations Campaign

Senate Letters Now Circulating

Deadlines for Legislators: EPA - April 8; NOAA - April 13

Email Your Requests This Week to Give Them Time to Approve

UPDATED March 30, 2026

Background

Federal environmental education (EE) programs through the EPA and NOAA provide critical funding for state and local education initiatives that help students and the general public participate in community-based solutions to environmental issues, and provide professional development nationwide. *For fiscal year 2027, we are seeking level funding for these essential programs equal to the current year's amount, though the Senate NOAA letter circulating is asking for an increase.*

Appropriations subcommittees in the Senate and House will begin to hold meetings in the coming weeks to determine funding allocations for the FY '27 budget. These appropriations will be influenced, in part, by requests that come from other members of Congress in the form of electronic "Dear Colleague" letters in support of individual programs. **It is important that we generate as many Congressional signatures for the letters regarding EE programs at NOAA and EPA as possible over the next couple of weeks!** The letters may have different deadlines, but all timelines are all very short, so we urge you to make your initial contacts ASAP!

House letters for EPA and NOAA have closed - we did really well!

Thanks!

Have any questions, contact:

Brock Adler, brockadler@gmail.com (best contact)

Sarah Bodor, sarah@naaee.org

The Programs We Are Supporting

EPA Office of Environmental Education / National Environmental Education Act

This 35-year-old federal program directs essential grants to environmental education (EE) across the country. It funds innovative programming, facilitates key professional development, enables scholars and practitioners to conduct basic research, and provides vital basic services for the field. The program is central to the work of EE, including a local grant program key for communities all around the US. [Environmental Education Grant Descriptions | US EPA](#) (Link is external.)

- **NAAEE Position:** This very effective program should be funded at \$9.5 million for fiscal year 2027, the same that was appropriated for FY '26.
- **Our Ask: We urge Senators to sign a letter circulated by our champion Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (NY) to appropriators in support of this funding.**
- **[Here's the letter](#) that is currently being circulated in support of EPA/NEEA funding. You can reference these letters in your emails and should include the link in your emails to Congressional offices.**

Download or link to our [fact sheet on funding the National Environmental Education Act](#) and the EPA Office of Environmental Education to share with Congressional offices.

NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (B-WET)

The NOAA B-WET program promotes locally relevant, experiential learning for K-12 students. The competitive, peer-reviewed funding promotes “meaningful watershed educational experiences” in six regions: California, Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, Hawai'i, New England, and the Pacific Northwest. Since 2002, NOAA has invested over \$100 million to support more than 800 B-WET projects. Funding has been stagnant over the past few years, while the need for this type of education has grown dramatically. www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/awards (Link is external.)

- **NAAEE Position:** We endorse funding of \$8.5 million for fiscal year 2027, level with the current FY 2026 budget.
- **Our Ask: We urge Members of Congress to sign a combined letter to appropriators in support of this funding for the B-WET Program and the education office as a whole, included the Environmental Literacy Program described below). This is circulated by our good friend Sen. Ed Markey (MA).**
- **[Here is the letter circulating in the Senate](#) in support of NOAA funding for both B-WET and the Education office & ELP (described below). You can reference these letters in your outreach and forward to Congressional offices. [This is the internal Congress “Quill” link you can share with your Senate offices.](#) (You might not be able to access this link, but your Senators will! Please still include in your correspondence.)**
- Download or link to our [fact sheet on NOAA B-WET and ELP funding](#) to share with Congressional offices.

NOAA Education Office, Including the Environmental Literacy Program (ELP) and Other Environmental Education Programming

The Offices and the programs provide the public with science-based environmental education related to increasing community resilience and efficacy in solving local environmental problems. Funding for the Office has been level for a number of years, while demand for the funding has grown.

- **NAAEE Position:** We endorse funding of \$5.5 million for fiscal year 2027, level with the current FY 2026 budget.
- **Our Ask:** We urge Members of Congress to sign a combined letter to Appropriators in support of this funding and the ELP program (and B-WET described above).

What You Can Do and How To Do It

The main task is to email specific staff in the D.C. offices of your Senators to ask that their boss sign on to internal electronic “Dear Colleague” letters in support of EE programs at NOAA and EPA, as detailed above. If you already have a relationship with a staff member in your Congressional offices, you should email them directly with the request. If you don’t have a current contact, check this [spreadsheet](#) to see if we have a contact for you to email. If not, call the D.C. office to find out who the right person is to email or email NAAEE committee chair Brock Adler for more assistance. **Note: On the spreadsheet, there’s a tab at the bottom to toggle between House and Senate.**

You’ll be contacting both of your US Senators; House members have already finished this process.

In preparation for writing the email (see template below), you should note the following items:

- Check your Senators’ or Representatives’ [record of support for EE](#). If they have signed on to these letters in the past **or supported EE in any fashion**, be sure to mention this in your email—it can make the decision to sign on again a no-brainer!
- If they’ve not been a past supporter, but other local Representatives or Senators have supported these programs, mention that, especially if the legislator you are contacting is a freshman or their immediate predecessor was a big supporter of the cause.
- Attach fact sheets on programs you are asking about, such as [EPA](#) and/or [NOAA](#), to the email so the staff have the information they need to follow through.
- If your organization, NGO or school you work or volunteer for, or if there’s a great group in your community or you’ve visited, got a grant, include that information and something special about that group/program. If you haven’t gotten a grant, tell them in a couple of sentences what environmental education looks like in your community.
- Here are [lists with grants in almost all states and territories](#). You should attach a link to your state list in your email. This is all public information.
- We are especially interested in asking legislators who are freshmen, on appropriations committees, and anybody who has EVER supported our cause.
- Let us know how it went so that we can track outreach and monitor any needed follow-up.
- NOTE: Members of the appropriations committees often will not sign on to these letters, but they are in a position to champion and endorse the programs internally in the committee, so please contact them in particular! More about this is at the bottom of this guide.
- ***This is a very routine process for Congressional offices at this time of year.***

As an individual, you will email or be communicating for yourself as a constituent. If you can speak for your organization, that's great and perfectly legal and proper because this is not considered lobbying. It's not lobbying because you are not asking a legislator to vote for specific legislation, nor would you be spending your organization's money on making this request... things that ARE lobbying. So everything we are asking you to do is perfectly legal and actually encouraged to do as an NGO. So go ahead and speak for your organization if you can.

If you can't speak for your group, it is fine to say that you are an educator at the local school, organization, or member of your local environmental education association, but you do not speak for them... and you do want the Rep. or Senator to support these appropriations. Giving your credentials legitimately establishes you as an authentic authority on how these programs help the community.

Special Cases

Your Senator Might Have a Web Form to Fill Out

Many legislators have a programmatic appropriations support web form to fill out for a request. An initial email to the Congressional office might prompt staff to instruct you to use a link to their website to make your request. If this happens, see special instructions on the bottom of this guide.

Your Senator Might Have a Deadline that has Already Passed

All you can do is write back and plead that the program(s) is/are important to your state and note if the Senator has supported it/them in the past. They often allow for exceptions.

One of your Senators is on an Appropriations Committee

If you do have a Senator on the committee, as noted on the spreadsheet—this is fantastic! You really want to make sure that their staff understands what environmental education looks like in the district or state. Senators on appropriations will sometimes sign on if this is for a program that is NOT coming before their subcommittee - this is because the letter is addressed to the members of the relevant subcommittee - which would be themselves! But again, write back and pursue these cases because they can support the programs from within the committee.

If your Member of Congress has one of these special appropriation program request systems, it might be the case that their deadline has already passed. Please try to negotiate with them to accept your request. In that case, ask if you can just send them a short description of the programs, and they often relent and say they'll look at it, but they are making no promises. That's fine.

If your Member of Congress has a track record of being unsupportive of environmental education

We understand, and you can take a pass this year. Unfortunately, Republicans have rarely signed onto these kinds of letters for any appropriations... but ask anyway if you think your legislator might be a supporter of YOUR organization's mission. Asking those lawmakers softens them up, so at least they won't vote against it!

Importance of ongoing engagement & how these efforts are seen in the offices

This focused campaign is part of ongoing engagements you should have with your legislators—national and local. Put the offices on your mailing list. Invite the government officials

and their staff to visit your school or nature center. Elected officials LOVE to have photos with local organizations, and especially kids, if that's who you serve. Tell government staff if you've gotten a great grant. All this helps, even if they don't end up signing the letters we are helping to circulate.

If you've not worked on this campaign before, we want to encourage you because with our very modest requests, it surprisingly only takes one or two enthusiastic constituents, who get to the right person, to get support from a legislator. And if you look at the spreadsheet of Congressional support, wherever you see a legislator supporting our work one year but not the next, that's where they might not have been asked again—*because if we don't ask them, they won't know to do it.*

Thank you for helping to secure the future of environmental education!

Sample email to make a request

Email is the preferred way (and these days, the only way) to contact your legislators

(Note: bold/italic text in () is to be replaced by information you provide)

Subject: Appropriations programmatic sign-on letter request for EPA and NOAA Offices of Environmental Education

Hi _____,

Environmental education funding is essential for addressing our environmental challenges. These programs have very modest budgets, but the schools, nature centers, water conservation districts, and other organizations in our state who benefit from the grant and other programs do a lot with a little!

Our state and community have benefited greatly from these programs; here are the fantastic grants received in the state and locally in the past ten years. ***(Add link to the specific list from your state found in [this folder](#))***

Please help secure this crucial funding by having Senator ***(Your member of Congress)*** join many other Members of Congress and sign on to these letters:

[EPA support letter](#) circulated by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (NY)

[NOAA endorsement request](#) circulated by Sen. Ed Markey (MA)

Thank you for supporting environmental education!

(Your name)

(Your affiliation, if applicable; "member, your state EE association" is good)

Special instructions if you are asked to fill in an appropriations web form

All of these forms are an informal internal gathering of your request for Members of Congress to prioritize your/our appropriation item. It is looked at briefly by staff, added to a tally, and then filed away, probably never to be seen again.

The link you are given will send you to one of two types of forms: one is a Senate form that asks you to create an account with a password, etc. Please go through that brief process to get to the form itself. The other type is a straight Google Form with no login, etc.

Each Senate office has their own deadlines, so get it in before the date!

You should decide which of the programs, or all of them you want to ask for support. For instance if you look at the list of federal grants and see that your state has never gotten a B-WET grant because it is not in one of the B-WET regions, it doesn't make sense to include it.

You'll need to fill in separate forms for each environmental ed. Program. Each should take about 10 minutes.

Below is the typical information requested for each of the three budget lines that relate to environmental education.

Any questions? Contact: Brock Adler, brockadler@gmail.com

Thanks again for helping to secure the future of environmental education!

Environmental Protection Agency - Office of Environmental Education

Senate Appropriations - Programmatic Request - FY 2027

Typical Questions

Applicant Information

Applicant's Contact Information

Please add in your contact information. They will either do nothing with this information, or there's a slim chance that you'll get put on the Senator's email list.

Name of Requesting Organization

Local chapter or members in your state? Yes/No

If yes, where in the state and approximately how many members?

Appropriations Details

Appropriations Bill

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Federal Agency and Account

EPA

Program Title

Office of Environmental Education

Amount Appropriated in FY26: **\$9,500,00.00**

Amount you are requesting for FY27: **\$9,500,00.00**

Amount in the President's Budget Request: **No information**

Proposed Report Language (if any): **N/A**

Proposed Bill Language (if any): **N/A**

Report/Bill Language included in FY 26 on this issue: **N/A**

Request Justification and Benefit to the Taxpayer and the State

- **The Program supports environmental education projects that increase the public's awareness about environmental**

issues, and provide them with the knowledge and skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment.

- The benefits of the program are aimed at local and regional communities, and there's a robust peer sharing of best practices during and after the grant activities.
- The program completely integrates with, and gives context to STEM education in schools.
- The EPA grants are locally peer reviewed and thoroughly evaluated, with only the top few percent of the many quality applications being funded.

Here are the most recent excellent EPA grants to state organizations:

(Insert grants from your state (if any), up to any word limits, or most significant grants if there's only a small number of words allowed) Directory of state grants:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1mxAJz1IEQhkjhXJKmxDLRaJk7P6slhyQ>

Priority of Request

If your organization is submitting more than one application, please indicate the rank of this request.

(Not all Senate offices ask this.)

1st

Have you met with a member of the Senator's staff?

Name of Staff Member

(Yes or no)

Letters of Support - not all Senate offices request or have a spot for this.

If you can organize letters of support from your organization and one other, please do so! It is worth sending the request in later - though don't miss the deadline!

NOAA Office of Environmental Education, including Environmental Literacy Program

Senate Appropriations - Programmatic Request - FY 2027

Typical Questions

Applicant Information

Applicant's Contact Information

Please add in your contact information. They will either do nothing with this information, or there's a slim chance that you'll get put on the Senator's email list.

Name of Requesting Organization

Local chapter or members in your state? Yes/No

If yes, where in the state and approximately how many members?

Appropriations Details

Appropriations Bill

Commerce, Justice, Science

Federal Agency and Account

NOAA

Program Title

Office of Environmental Education, Including the Environmental Literacy Program

Amount Appropriated in FY26: **\$5,500,00.00**

Amount you are requesting for FY27: **\$5,500,00.00**

Amount in the President's Budget Request: **No information**

Proposed Report Language (if any): **N/A**

Proposed Bill Language (if any): **N/A**

Report/Bill Language included in FY 26 on this issue: **N/A**

Request Justification and Benefit to the Taxpayer and the State

“The Office of Education works to advance education both within NOAA and with the public the Agency serves. We provide scholarships and collaborate with universities to prepare students for careers in NOAA-related fields. We offer competitive grants and establish partnerships to integrate NOAA science into schools and organizations. Lastly, we help coordinate educational activities across NOAA and with external partners to ensure that these efforts are effective and continually improved.”

The Environmental Literacy Program promotes use of environmental information to increase the ability of students, teachers, & communities to improve resilience to extreme weather & other natural hazards. The grants are awarded in a competitive challenge - they are locally peer-reviewed and evaluated, and the program funds a broad range of education projects, including informal & formal ed. The grants have included professional development for K-12 & informal educators, field-based education, service learning, & exhibits at aquariums, museums, & science centers.

Here are the most recent wonderful ELP grants to state organizations:

(Insert grants from your state (if any), up to any word limits, or most significant grants if there's only a small number of words allowed) Directory of state grants:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1mxAJz1IEQhkjhXJKmxDLRaJk7P6slhyQ>

Priority of Request

If your organization is submitting more than one application, please indicate the rank of this request.

(Not all Senate offices ask this.)

3rd

Have you met with a member of the Senator's staff?

Name of Staff Member

(Yes or no)

Letters of Support - not all Senate offices request or have a spot for this.

If you can organize letters of support from your organization and one other, please do so! It is worth sending the request in later - though don't miss the deadline!

NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (B-WET)
Senate Appropriations - Programmatic Request - FY 2027

Typical Questions

Applicant Information

Applicant's Contact Information

Please add in your contact information. They will either do nothing with this information, or there's a slim chance that you'll get put on the Senator's email list.

Name of Requesting Organization

Local chapter or members in your state? Yes/No

If yes, where in the state and approximately how many members?

Appropriations Details

Appropriations Bill

Commerce, Justice, Science

Federal Agency and Account
NOAA

Program Title
NOAA Bay-Watershed Education and Training Program (B-WET)

Amount Appropriated in FY26: **\$8,700,00.00**

Amount you are requesting for FY27: **\$8,700,00.00**

Amount in the President's Budget Request: **No information**

Proposed Report Language (if any): **N/A**

Proposed Bill Language (if any): **N/A**

Report/Bill Language included in FY 26 on this issue: **N/A**

Request Justification and Benefit to the Taxpayer and the State

B-WET funds K-12 experiential, locally relevant, environmental learning, offering meaningful watershed educational experiences. This competitive peer-reviewed program promotes eco-literacy, helping people understand, protect, & restore watersheds, ocean, coastal, & Great Lakes ecosystems. B-WET recognizes that knowledge & commitment built from firsthand experience, in community, is essential for environmental stewardship. There are 7 regional programs.

Here are the most recent fantastic B-WET grants to state organizations:

(Insert grants from your state, up to any word limits, or most significant grants if there's only a small number of words allowed) Directory of state grants:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1mxAJz1IEQhkjhXJKmxDLRaJk7P6slhyQ>

Priority of Request

If your organization is submitting more than one application, please indicate the rank of this request.

(Not all Senate offices ask this.)

2nd

Have you met with a member of the Senator's staff?

Name of Staff Member

(Yes or no)

Letters of Support - not all Senate offices request or have a spot for this.

If you can organize letters of support from your organization and one other, please do so! It is worth sending the request in later - though don't miss the deadline!