



MINRC

MINORITIES IN NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Welcome to the 65th annual Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting. We are proud to welcome members back to Tennessee and to Nashville, Music City USA. We hope you enjoy your stay and are able to take some new found inspiration home after the close of the conference.

Our Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency staff has worked closely with Cindy Delaney and her team to put together a conference that will hopefully be beneficial in addressing the challenges we all face in the coming years. Of course, we've planned for some fun during your stay as well.

Cooperative Conservation In An Era of Disruptive Change is the theme of the conference. As we move forward with budgets that tend to shrink, all of us are still expected to do more with less. Efficiency within our agencies has become so important. As we survey the road ahead, challenges abound. The importance of partnerships with like-minded organizations can be key in realizing great accomplishment.

Traditionally, one of the hallmarks of SEAFWA has been its focus on students, the next generation of natural

resource professionals. I'd like to extend a special welcome to all students, including those associated with the Minorities in Natural Resources Committee (MINRC). MINRC is a standing committee of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) with a focus on assisting women and minorities find career paths with state and federal natural resources agencies. Just as the musicians and songwriters you hear during your stay "collaborate" to create a cohesive sound or song, our goal with this conference is to help you consider new and creative ways to approach the important work you do.

We're making our staff as visible as possible with the idea that you won't hesitate to let us know how we can assist you, and realize our goal of making this the most productive and entertaining conference we've ever had the privilege of hosting.

Take it all in. Enjoy your stay and don't be afraid to sing along. I'll see you at the sessions.

Ed Carter
Executive Director
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency



The mission of MINRC is assist state and federal natural resources agencies in efforts to eliminate the under-representation of minorities and women in professional natural resources occupations.

Opening *the* Outdoors to Everyone

By Brandon Pope

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVATION EDUCATION FOR URBAN YOUTH OUTDOORS

The sandy trail through pine trees and over sand dunes was only 30 minutes from my home in the city, but the strange beauty of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore seemed like the other side of the world. I was 8 years old, and I'd never traveled beyond my neighborhood. Growing up in Chicago, I was accustomed to sights and sounds associated with city life. For me, entering a place devoid of concrete and streetlights was new and fascinating.

We were walking along the trail and I saw what I believed to be a large dog. But unlike the dogs at home, this one didn't bark. The tan animal was large, with a head shaped like nothing I'd seen before. I stopped one of the leaders of our group and asked him, "What sort of dog is that?" He smiled down at me and said, "That's a doe, Brandon, a female deer."

For me, the deer sighting was the highlight of the trip and upon returning home I wanted to learn more about deer and other wild animals. I believe that everyone involved in conservation work can trace back to one profound moment when their deep fascination with nature began. This was my aha! moment in May 1990, on a sand dune in northwestern Indiana.

Today, I lead others to nature's mysteries — from Current River float trips to viewing wildlife in Kansas City's heart—as an MDC education specialist. I hope to ignite that same wonder and curiosity in young people, especially those from city environments. My fascination with wildlife was ignited but was difficult to build upon because, where I grew up, wildlife was rare and my family did not have a tradition of outdoor exploration. I know the same is true for many students who pass through our nature and outdoor skills classes at the Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center, in Kansas City's urban core.

The wetland, prairie and woodland landscaping in the outdoor gardens there display wildflowers and wildlife that some have never seen or thought of before. It's important for us to find a way to nurture that growing interest.



Aha! is Only the Beginning

I was blessed because my annual camping trips to Indiana Dunes with a church group became my opportunity to learn about the outdoor world. Later, I became a counselor at a summer camp that specialized in exposing inner-city youth to the outdoors. For many of them, like me at their age, it was their first time in an entirely new environment. Some were instantly captivated while others questioned the logic of leaving the comforts of home to live for a week in a cabin with bunk beds and daddy-longlegs. As a counselor, I learned how to ease their fears and capitalize on their curiosity. I found that one interesting fact or story about a critter or plant could make a child view the subject in a positive light. I also discovered that if I found a way for the child to place the object someplace in the context of their lives, they would always remember the lesson.





MINRC member Steve James, right, with New Refuge Manager and former student Jimmy Laurant

Jimmy Laurant was a MINRC student attendee to the SEAFWA Conference in 2004, while in the STEP program. After attending the conference he became a SCEPT student at Grambling State University. Since graduation, he has worked as a Biological Technician at Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District in Detroit Lakes, MN and Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge. He has also served as a Refuge Operational Specialist at the Ace Basin National Wildlife Refuge in Hollywood, SC and the National Wildlife Refuge in Titusville, FL. He is currently the Refuge Manager at the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in Anahuac TX which has 34,000 acres and a staff of 12.

Jimmy credits his affiliation with MINRC as a student and as a professional member for his success.

Inspire the Youth, and Promote Wildlife Preservation and Land Conservation

By Kanoko Maeda

Since the economic recession began in 2007, land conservation and wildlife preservation programs have become victims of shrinking tax revenues and targets of political abuse. All over the U.S., budget cuts are forcing state parks to shorten their operating hours, replace professional staff with unpaid volunteers, forego essential maintenance and repairs, and close historic sites. It seems that when money is tight, conservation programs are the first to go. Faced with an immediate crisis, political leaders ignore long-term consequences of environmental degradation and divert precious resources to short-lived projects that create temporary jobs. It is unlikely that the global economic situation will become stable anytime in the near future. The areas where the most economic growth is taking place, like China, India, and Brazil, are the areas where the natural environment is being destroyed most rapidly by population growth and industrial development. Whether political leaders want to face the truth or not, the current state of affairs cannot be sustained much longer. Unless large numbers of individuals begin to take responsibility for their impact on the natural environment, the world may become uninhabitable within a few decades.

I believe that in today's world, the most effective way to influence large populations is by educating the youth about concepts such as the importance of preserving wildlife, environmental ethics, sustainable living, and land conservation. Children who grow up with these concepts will have a responsible attitude as adults and will develop and support policies that promote conservation. Society as a whole will recognize that our own future well-being depends on the conservation of our natural resources, and that we cannot afford to squander them. Children who learn in detail about wildlife will become observant and use that knowledge to make further discoveries.

Manufacturers recognize that children are very impressionable and target them with marketing campaigns to create life-long customers for their products and services. Similarly, parents and teachers should be encouraging children to explore the out-

doors and learn about topics like recycling and energy conservation while they are young and impressionable. Speaking from personal experience, their first encounters with wildlife and the outdoors will stay with them for life and help them develop a positive environmental ethic.

Children also have a strong influence on their family members and friends. An example of the effectiveness of early education is the D.A.R.E. program which educates school children about drug abuse. In a 2007 study, 96 percent of parents surveyed reported that their child had spoken at home as a result of the D.A.R.E. program's influence. This program is not only influential, but inexpensive in comparison to other drug prevention programs. An environmental program similar to D.A.R.E. could likely prevent future environmental degradation by impressing children, while also influencing parents' perspectives on the environment. When children are passionate about something, their parents and siblings listen. Children can be catalysts for change when they are equipped with truth and knowledge.

Education is not a total solution, but it is one that can be implemented relatively inexpensively when compared to other types of conservation initiatives. Education empowers people to come up with their own programs and initiatives. In Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, he states, "a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it." In a volatile world where we are likely to experience economic fluctuations every three years, and are constantly subject to unpredictable political upheavals, a strong, positive, environmental ethic is our best chance at promoting land conservation and wildlife preservation, and educating our youth will play a key role in this accomplishing this feat.

Works Cited

http://onlineathens.com/stories/030809/new_406543363.shtml
<http://www.dare.com/home/Resources/documents/D.pdf>

Saturday, October 22

12-5:00pm: Preconference meetings and workshops

4:00-7:00pm: MINRC Student Welcome

Sunday, October 23

8:30am -11:30am: Student Workshops (Interpersonal Skills)

11:30am-1:00pm: Student/MINRC Professional Lunch

1:30pm-4:30pm: MINRC Business Meeting / Students introduction to Professional Members
Teddy Roosevelt Award Presentation

5:00-8:00pm: Welcome to Tennessee Reception

Monday, October 24

7:30am-5:00pm: Conference Registration

8:00-11:30am: Plenary Session (Students Attendance Mandatory)

12:00-1:30pm: Lunch (on own)

1:00 – 5:00pm: Breakout

1:30pm-3:00pm: Getting hired at a State or Federal Agency (Pat Masik)

3:00pm-4:30pm: Cover Letters and Resumes (Pat Masik)

6:00pm-9:00pm: Student Professional Mixer

Tuesday, October 25

7:00am-3:00pm: Exhibits open

8:00-1:00pm: Student Field Trip to Cumberland River Aquatic Center

1:00pm – 3:00pm: Networking and Marketing – Challenges and successes in Maximizing Recruitment

2:00-4:00pm: Student Ethics and Etiquette Workshop / Students after Action Meeting :

6:00-7:00pm: Poster and Pre-Banquet Social

7:00-9:30pm: Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Annual Awards Banquet

Wednesday, October 27

7:00-8:30am: Continental Breakfast

8:00am-12:00pm: After Action Session/ Business Meeting

Yes, I want to join MINRC!

Name _____

Organization _____ Affiliation _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

permanent Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ e-mail _____

- Membership \$25.00 Student Membership \$10.00
 Retirement Membership \$10.00 Lifetime Membership \$250.00

Please make your check(s) payable to MINRC, and return to:
Minorities in Natural Resources Committee - c/o MINRC TREASURER
South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 814
Ravenel, SC 29470