



## 2012 End of the Year Report

### A Message from Executive Director Don Baugh



As we begin a new year, we want to share recent progress in advancing environmental literacy and bring you up to date on coming new opportunities for the NCLI coalition moving forward.

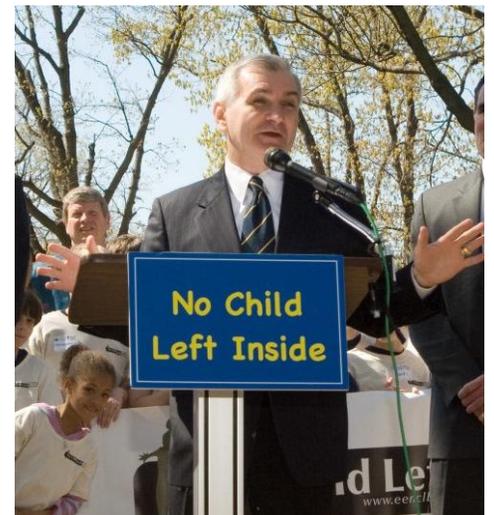
We have enormous depth and strength in the 2,200 organizations that have joined the Coalition and have achieved great success in a short period of time. As we seek to build upon that success in 2013, we are examining strategies to re-energize our membership and strengthen partnerships throughout the conservation and education communities. Your support in making that happen will make the difference in the year ahead. We are counting on your help!

As you read this newsletter you will see articles by our leading Congressional supporter Cong. John Sarbanes (D), an update on the Dept. of Education's Green Ribbon School program and follow up news on last April's White House Conference on Environmental Literacy. We seek your advice and suggestions for best leveraging the opportunities before us.

As a new year begins, we wish you peace and joy in the great outdoors!

### Senator Jack Reed: NCLI Champion

As we look forward to the reintroduction of the NCLI Act into a new Congress this year, we once again commend our Senate Sponsor, Jack Reed of Rhode Island. His leadership has ensured strong bipartisan support for the NCLI Act in the Senate and among Members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. The NCLI Coalition is fortunate to have the well-respected Senator Reed as a champion for environmental education for all of our nation's children.



## **Sarbanes and NCLI push for new support for EL from U.S. Dept. of Education**

Cong. John Sarbanes and leadership representatives of the NCLI coalition met on December 3<sup>rd</sup> with key officials at the U.S. Department of Education to discuss funding opportunities for environmental literacy through existing Department programs. At the Congressman's invitation, we joined Maryland's new school superintendent, Dr. Lillian Lowery, and Anne Arundel County Superintendent Dr. Kevin Maxwell, to provide a state and local school system perspective on how they are incorporating environmental literacy in various subjects to raise student achievement.

The meeting yielded rich discussion with key staff at the Department around opportunities for funding within existing programs in light of uncertainty regarding Congressional movement to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Congressman Sarbanes did an excellent job of eloquently and passionately making the case that there are important things that the Department can do on its own and as co-chair of the White House Taskforce on Environmental Education. Specifically, the Congressman asked the Department to designate some portion of an existing competitive grants program (such as I3) for states to use to develop and implement environmental literacy plans.

In addition, we proposed that the Department use state environmental literacy plans (which for most states are broad and comprehensive, containing formal and non-formal strategies) as the organizing construct for coordinating and prioritizing future funding strategies. While Administration officials could not provide any detailed information on when ESEA might move forward they did indicate that the Department would once again include environmental literacy programs as eligible for funding in the proposed "Well Rounded" program that will be included in the FY2014 budget.



## **Creating new opportunities for Environmental Literacy**

By: Rep. John Sarbanes

Since first introducing the No Child Left Inside Act more than 5 years ago, I have become even more confident that robust environmental education is a down payment for success in education, energy and environmental policy, health care, and our economic competitiveness. Investing in environmental education will help nurture the next generation of scientists, promote environmental stewardship, and encourage Americans to live healthier lives.

Even in tough economic times, we cannot overlook the importance of teaching our children about the world around them. Environmental literacy and success in other academic disciplines are not mutually exclusive; indeed, they are fundamentally linked. A plethora of research has indicated that hands-on environmental education has a measurably positive impact not only on student achievement in science, but also in reading, social studies, and mathematics. In partnership with the No Child Left Inside Coalition, and through the tremendous advocacy of its membership, we have effected tangible changes in federal policy in remarkably short order. We've made great strides and I am encouraged by our momentum, but there remains more work to be done.

The positive response that the No Child Left Inside Act has generated in the House of Representatives over the past few years indicates that we are not alone in our convictions that environmental education is indispensable and yet remains highly underrepresented in our nation's schools. In 2008, the bill passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 293 to 109. And in 2009, the No Child Left Inside Act attracted 123 cosponsors in the House.

But NCLI was by no means the only success we've seen on the federal level in recent years. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education emphasized the importance of investing in innovative content areas like environmental education in its "Blueprint for Reform," the administration's plan to renovate the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). And in the same year, my home state of Maryland became the first to require environmental literacy for all students, thereby ensuring that students in Maryland's public school system have the opportunity to learn about our environment in a hands-on, multidisciplinary fashion from preschool through high school. I am glad to see other states following our lead.

Last April, the White House Summit on Environmental Education brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to discuss their vision and priorities for environmental education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I was fortunate to participate in the Summit, and was greatly encouraged to witness participants from various agencies of the federal government, business and non-profit groups, and education organizations coalesce behind the idea that even in difficult budgetary times, preserving and expanding environmental education is critical. Federal efforts will continue through the re-establishment of the Interagency Task Force on Environmental Education, which will be co-led by the Department of Education, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Interior.

Your letters, your phone calls, and your continued activism have kept environmental education in the forefront of the minds of your elected officials. We've seen that with the Coalition's help, Congress and the Administration will act. We must build on the momentum we've generated over the past five years, and keep fighting to make sure that environmental education remains a priority. Our children, our economy, and our world will be better for it.

## **NCLI Progress Report: Five Years of Success**

In just five years, the NCLI Coalition has achieved historic advances for environmental education:

- Introduction in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives of the first piece of legislation to make environmental and outdoor education systemic in the nation's K-12 schools. Passage in the House of Representatives of an amended version of the No Child Left Inside Act with overwhelming bi-partisan support during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- Efforts in more than 40 States to develop and implement similar statewide environmental literacy plans.
- Inclusion of environmental education in the Obama Administration's *Blueprint for Reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* – the first time environmental education has been identified as a priority by the U.S. Department of Education.
- A White House Summit on Environmental Education, convened in April 2012, which adopted the principal recommendations of the NCLI Coalition: the establishment of a high level interagency Federal task force on environmental education; creation of an advisory panel of stakeholders; and development of a new federal vision and plan for the future of environmental education.

### **Follow-up to White House Conference on Environmental Literacy**

By Bob Perciasepe, Deputy Administrator, EPA

Last April, at the White House Summit on Environmental Education, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson announced that EPA would reconvene the Federal Task Force on



Environmental Education. The Task Force will allow us to collaborate on environmental education efforts and improve coordination across the federal government. We are also seeking to expand that collaboration beyond the federal government.

Through the Task Force, we will not only identify opportunities to leverage individual agency programs but will also work to increase public/private partnerships and to broaden and diversify the partners and stakeholders in environmental education. Leaders from EPA, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Education, acting as co-chairs for the Task Force, are currently expanding the partnership to thirteen other agencies in the federal family. The Task Force will include input from a wide variety of sectors – health, transportation, labor, the

Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ) and small business agencies.

To engage our external EE stakeholders, we will work through our Federal Advisory Committee, the National Environmental Education Advisory Council (NEEAC). The NEEAC was seated in December 2012 and the EPA Administrator charged them with the creation of an external EE stakeholder workgroup. Through the NEEAC and their external workgroup(s), we are confident that we can create and sustain a transparent and constructive conversation.

Our first Task Force meeting has already taken place and our second meeting will take place this spring. We believe that this Task Force is an important step in ensuring that the federal government is an active participant in the future of environmental education. We hope to build a lasting framework for collaboration and coordination that will continue to strengthen innovative environmental education partnerships between agencies and the environmental education stakeholder community.



## **New National Green Ribbon Program Spotlights Environmental Education**

By: Andrea Suarez Falken, Director of U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools and Facilities, Health and Environment Liaison

Launched in 2011, the [U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools](#) (ED-GRS) recognition award honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools for excellence in health, facilities and environment achievements. In the pilot year over 30 state education agencies indicated that they intended to nominate schools by the following March 22, 2012 deadline. Only one year later, some 40 states intend to nominate schools in 2013.

It was an exciting year of unprecedented collaboration at the federal and state levels, as agencies, non-profits and other stakeholders worked together to provide technical expertise, public outreach, and other critical support.

ED provided some guidance as to how state education agencies might evaluate schools on the three pillars and their nine underlying elements, but ultimately, states had flexibility in their selection processes, provided that they documented schools' comprehensive progress in the three areas.

On Earth Day 2012, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, along with White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, announced the [78 inaugural U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools](#). The schools include 66 public institutions, including 8 charter schools, and 12 private schools. Among them are 43 elementary, 31 middle, and 26 high schools, with several of the 78 schools enrolling various

configurations of primary and secondary grades. Perhaps most of all, we were struck by the number of schools attended by underserved students.

Schools serving disadvantaged students – including schools that were 100 percent American Indian, two-thirds Hispanic, or 98 percent African American, as well as schools with populations with high numbers of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch -- used efforts to reduce their environmental impact, improve students' health, and provide effective environmental literacy. In addition, these schools used their "greening" efforts as a springboard for school innovation and academic improvement.

When we saw schools providing better education to traditionally underserved students, we realized that our nation's green schools are a great tool to advance equal access to quality education for all students. They used sheer ingenuity, a wide array of free federal programs and strong community partnerships to finance their projects. The list of entities with which they partner is long and varied, including corporations, local restaurants, caterers, farms and parks; and community colleges and universities.

As it turned out, green schools are engaging in some of the most innovative [school improvement practices](#) that we at the Department have run across in some time. Their students get outside every day - climbing ropes, walking, running, kayaking, orienteering, camping, hiking, singing, dancing and learning in their outdoor classroom amphitheaters and playing in their straw bale and cob houses. They're reading 'on the green,' conducting GPS mapping studies of creeks, performing water quality testing, creating and maintaining trails, tapping maple trees, sampling populations of various organisms, restoring streams, reconstructing wetlands and going on outdoor adventure outings where they Leave No Trace.

As excited as we are about the gains of ED-GRS, we are not stopping at a few schools. In reality, these



annual awardees have an impact much greater than their local school community; they provide us with important examples of best practices to highlight and communicate to all other schools through our [blog](#), [newsletter](#), and [Facebook](#). In another unprecedented inter-agency collaboration, ED-GRS has more than five agencies presenting on the [Green Strides Webinar Series](#) with sessions scheduled through spring 2013 and ongoing.

In the coming years, with 40 states now intending to participate, we'll be looking at how we can scale up the strides of ED-GRS without becoming top heavy. Rather than recognizing hundreds of schools each year, we might look at ways of shining a spotlight on the good work being done in the areas of facilities, health and environment at the district level. ED-GRS will also continue to leverage the networks developed in creating the award to share information and disseminate best practices among state officials, federal officials, stakeholders, and, of course, our nation's schools.

## **WHO WE ARE:**

### **Newest members of the NCLI Coalition include:**

Outside the Box Adventures  
Watershed Action Initiative  
University of Tennessee Gardens  
Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission  
Chesapeake Outdoor Group  
Alliance for Childhood  
West Magnet Elementary  
OMNI HEALTHCARE  
Green Schools NY  
Iowa Young Birders  
The Early Years Institute  
Thousand Islands Land Trust  
Appalachian Women's Alliance  
The Simba Mentoring Project  
St. Luke's School  
Sustainability Education and Research Project,  
(Millersville University of PA)  
The Evergreen Group  
J. F. Delaney Elementary  
Goodman Community Center  
Ute Pass Family Chiropractic  
James River Association  
Surfrider Foundation  
Rockwood Nature Center  
Missouri United Methodist Conference  
Columbus Youth Camp  
Rocklands Farm  
Kalamazoo River Cleanup Coalition  
Susan G. Sheridan Memorial Garden Foundation

## **NCLI Coalition Continues to Grow: 2,200 Strong!**

Initially comprised of just a handful of organizations, something happened in the process of sharing the No Child Left Inside vision and goal that far exceeded our wildest expectations—the emergence of a national movement. Amidst growing concerns about cutbacks in environmental education in our schools and the impacts of “nature deficit disorder” on the health, well-being, and success of our nation’s youth, organizations flocked to the NCLI cause in droves. To date, 2,200 conservation, education, business, health care, faith-based and recreational organizations throughout the country have joined the Coalition – and the numbers continue to increase.

Our members include the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, the National Wildlife Federation and National Parks Conservation Association, Project Learning Tree, the Johns Hopkins and Brown Universities, Outdoor Industry Association, YMCA, Norfolk Southern Corporation and many other national, regional, state or local groups in each of the 50 states. The combined membership of these diverse organizations exceeds 50 million people.

### **A great “Green Thank You” to Staff and Volunteers**

As a grassroots coalition NCLI has grown in large part because of our dedicated staff and the work of our many partners and volunteers around the country who have given us untold hours of their time and expertise to keep the Coalition moving forward. Sarah Bodor, our National Field Director, is owed a great deal of thanks for keeping us connected and organized and our D.C. Dream team of Charlie Stek, Monica Healy, Jeri Thompson, and Kevin Sullivan have made countless visits to the Hill and worked closely with EPA and the U.S. Dept. of Education in an effort to create new policy options and funding opportunities. Many thanks to each of them—and to each of YOU—for continued support.

### **No Child Left Inside: Sustaining the Coalition Going Forward**

Since it was founded by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) in 2006, the NCLI Coalition has remained focused on a 3-fold policy strategy:

- Enactment of a federal No Child Left Inside Act, which amends the principal federal statute governing all pre-K through 12 education, to encourage states to develop comprehensive environmental

literacy plans, train teachers, and graduate environmentally literate students.

- Promoting the development and implementation of State-wide environmental literacy plans in every state.
- Encouraging the Obama Administration to develop a systemic and coordinated environmental literacy strategy across the federal government that involves the U.S. Department of Education, supports state-developed environmental literacy plans, and makes environmental education a national priority.

Thanks to the NCLI Act and the work of the Coalition, today nearly every state has or is in the process of developing state-wide environmental literacy plans. Environmental Education has been identified—for the first time—as a priority by the U.S. Department of Education and the Federal Task Force on Environmental Education is moving forward in developing a new national vision and plan for the future of environmental education.

Much work remains to be done to advance NCLI's environmental literacy goal and build upon the successes to date. The NCLI Act must be reintroduced in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress; Congressional Committees and Members must be encouraged to support it and include its key provisions in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; the Obama Administration, U.S. Department of Education, and Federal Taskforce on Environmental Education must be pressed to continue to make environmental education a national priority and adopt policies and provide funding to support State-developed environmental literacy plans. With your support, we believe that the Coalition has the opportunity to create systemic change, fueled by unprecedented partnerships between schools, federal and state agencies, and community stakeholders, working together towards a common goal of giving students much needed environmental and outdoor education.

### **Transition of NCLI Leadership**

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to CBF for launching and sustaining the Coalition these last five years, but a transition is now necessary, as CBF's Board has determined it must put renewed focus on its first priority of protecting and saving the Chesapeake Bay. The leadership team of NCLI, its Congressional supporters, and outside advisors have considered several options for the future of NCLI, ranging from dissolving the coalition altogether to establishing the Coalition as an independent non-profit organization. They determined the most viable option is to transfer leadership to another non-profit organization within or outside of the Coalition and to rely more heavily on the support of our coalition members. As with any organization, potential funders first look to see if there is support within the coalition and we will be asking the membership to contribute going forward. With your help, a continued NCLI Coalition has the potential to harness the energy and diversity of our membership to further a popular movement that engages not only school systems, but families and communities in providing today's youth with opportunities to become connected to the world around them, offering experiences and inspiration that foster life-long environmental stewardship.