

Environmental Literacy and Education

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office and Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup have begun an effort to survey and inventory environmental literacy efforts across the Mid-Atlantic, including all of West Virginia. In support of this effort Cacapon Institute, working with WV Department of Education's Sustainable Schools and The Mountain Institute, is collecting information about ongoing environmental education. We've begun by focusing on river and watershed education in the Potomac Basin of West Virginia (Berkeley, Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Jefferson, Mineral, Morgan, and Pendleton counties).

Our preliminary investigation has turned up some impressive efforts to reach K-12 youth with hands-on watershed education. We were pleasantly surprised to learn how many groups are reaching students, and with the sheer number of students being reached. If you are providing environmental education to K-12 students, we invite you to contact us with your story. If you don't see yourself listed below, we apologize; please contact us to share your story and tell us what your group is doing. In addition to Cacapon Institute's own work, we know of these environmental education providers in the Potomac Basin include (in no particular order):

- WV Department of Environmental Protection
- WV Division of Forestry
- WV Conservation Agency
- WV Department of Agriculture
- Potomac Valley Audubon Society
- The Mountain Institute
- CraftWorks
- Morgan County Arts Council

There are a number of great programs including [Project WET](#), [Project Wild](#), [Project Learning Tree](#), [Envirothon](#), [PHLOW \(Potomac Headwaters Leaders of Watersheds\)](#), [WV Project CommuniTree](#), and more! We're learning about more projects, providers, and programs every month and we want to hear from you. For example, we know (because Cacapon Institute is involved) that Jefferson and Mineral counties have systemic environmental education programs that reach the entire 6th grade class in both counties. Jefferson County's Science Olympiad one-day outdoor education, and Mineral County's week-long Outdoor Camp, are exemplary programs supported by many of the groups listed above.

In surveying the environmental education providers we know of, we found that, aside from 100% of the 6th graders in Jefferson and Mineral, it is the intermediate school students who are receiving the most watershed and environmental education. Fully 46% of the intermediate students in the eight counties, 4,200 of the 9,300 students in the 3rd through 5th grade, received face-to-face environmental education during the 2014-15 schoolyear. Our challenge is to reach the middle and high school students. As of last school year, we only reached 10% and 2% of those populations respectively.

Educators know that hands-on, real-world, environmental education can bring science and social studies to life for students. To improve student retention, or to pursue WV Sustainable School status, there are many way to incorporate watershed conservation and education. We invite interested schools, public or private, to contact Cacapon Institute. We'll be happy to help you find an environmental education provider in your area and match teachers up with a program that meets their needs. Contact Frank Rodgers, Executive Director, at 304-258-8013 or FRodgers@CacaponInstitute.Org.