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CNR selected to manage national environmental education program

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's (UWSP) College of Natural Resources (CNR) was selected to manage the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Environmental Education Training program for another five year period.

Between 2000 and 2005 UWSP managed EPA's program to increase the nation's environmental literacy. Over \$12.2 million dollars were committed to this national program. According to Richard Wilke, UW System distinguished professor of environmental education, the EPA approved an annual budget of \$2.5 million for the Environmental Education and Training Partnership (EETAP) located at UWSP. Wilke expects that more than \$12 million dollars will be available to EETAP during the period 2005-2010, bringing the total for EETAP to over \$24 million dollars.

The competitive award comes from the EPA's Office of Environmental Education. EETAP is managed by UWSP's CNR but involves eight other training providers across the country including the North American Association for Environmental Education, National Audubon Society, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center, Project Learning Tree, The Ohio State University, Northern Illinois University and National Project WET.

"EETAP is spearheading a national effort to give educators quality environmental education resources and professional development," said Wilke. "The bottom line is professional development for educators across the country so they can base their programs on the most up-to-date science and most effective teaching strategies."

According to Wilke the EETAP project fills a unique and vital role in the development of an environmentally literate public. The continuity of funding from EPA has allowed EETAP to tackle projects and programs that take years to accomplish.

Examples include:

- Providing online environmental education resources through a Web site visited by over 10,000 educators daily
- Influencing the courses and curriculum provided to future teachers by over 600 colleges and universities through joint efforts with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
- Providing resources and training in environmental education to over 30,000 education leaders through joint efforts with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

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- Training hundreds of environmental education leaders on how to work more effectively with culturally diverse audiences
- Developing online courses that have been completed by educators from 48 states and eight foreign countries
- Developing professional certification programs for environmental educators at the state and national level.

The ongoing funding from EPA means that EETAP and its partners may continue current efforts and expand into new areas. One of the new activities will enable conservation and environmental groups as well as state and federal resource management agencies to use environmental education as a tool for achieving conservation goals. This activity will be led by two new EETAP partners, the National Audubon Society and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wisconsin Congressman David Obey has and continues to be a long-term supporter for the Office of Environmental Education at EPA which funds the program. EETAP is the national training program of EPA's Office of Environmental Education, established through the National Environmental Education Act of 1990. UWSP administers EETAP through a cooperative agreement with the EPA. EETAP's Web site provides more information on its activities at www.eetap.org.