

Wisconsin Environmental Science Teacher Network Newsletter December 2008

Greetings! The holidays are a great time to model positive environmental actions and to share green messages with family and friends. Did you know that using LED holiday lights instead of incandescent lights can reduce energy consumption by up to 93%? For a list of eco-friendly holiday tips visit:

<http://eeinwisconsin.org/net/content/go.aspx?s=78716.0.16.2209>.

~ Sunshine Buchholz, Network Coordinator (www.uwsp.edu/wcee/envsci; sbuchhol@uwsp.edu)

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News

1) **Scientists Tap into Tree Power**

Scientists have solved a long-standing mystery behind the source of a faint electrical current in trees—and it wasn't as hard as they thought. A team of MIT scientists, using platinum electrodes and everyday ficus house plants, have found that the faint current actually comes from an imbalance in pH between the soil and a living tree. That discovery is already sparking discussions about novel ways to use that electricity—including as a power source for a tree's own fire alarm. For full story visit:

www.boston.com/news/science/articles/2008/10/13/scientists_tap_into_tree_power/

2) **Wind Turbine Imports Keeping Port of Duluth Busy**

The port of Duluth has historically been a port for mining-related exports from the Iron Range in northern Minnesota. 2007 was the busiest year for the port in recent memory, and it wasn't due to mining. New wind farms are popping up all throughout the Midwest, and many of the turbines used in these farms are imported from Europe and are shipped to the port of Duluth. There are also exports of wind turbine parts that are manufactured in the Midwest to other parts of the world. Read more:

<http://www.startribune.com/local/34968914.html>. The comments posted by readers of varying opinions can make for great class discussion.

3) **Falling Prices Cripple Municipal Recycling Programs**

"This summer, Portage County's solid waste department was selling a ton of mixed paper to processors for \$90. Now the department can't find anyone to take the same ton of paper for free, let alone buy it. Along the same lines, the price for a ton of plastic went from \$320 in August to just \$10 now. China was buying huge quantities of waste paper and generating a lot of finished goods. And then they overproduced..." This is a great topic for discussion with students. Read more: [Stevens Point Journal Article](#) and [NPR Article](#).

Events

4) 2009 Wisconsin Envirothon – Biodiversity in a Changing World

The 2009 Envirothon will be held Friday, April 24, 2009 at the Wisconsin Lions Camp in Rosholt, WI. Registration is due **March 25, 2009**. The Envirothon provides a unique opportunity for students to learn about and compete on their knowledge of natural resources. Learning objectives, which cover over 50% of the state's science and environmental education academic standards, are available to team leaders as a guide to facilitate the learning process and assist the team in their preparation for the event. Full information: <http://www.wlwca.org/> under WLWCA Programs – Youth & Education – Wisconsin Envirothon.

Opportunities

5) 2009 South Africa Travel Experience for Teachers

Do you dream of Africa? In June 2009, US educators will join South African educators on a 3-week study tour filled with whales, cheetahs, and fynbos. This program is designed specifically for educators. This African journey takes you along the coast of South Africa between Port Elizabeth and Cape Town to experience the unique Cape Floral plant kingdom, host to over 5,800 endemic plant species. During the journey you will learn how educators teach about the environment as it relates to health and poverty. Be inspired by historical leaders that helped South Africa rise after apartheid. Your trip leader will be Pat Arndt, Environmental Science Teacher from Berlin Area School District. Only 3 spots remain! Deadline for registration is **January 30, 2009**. For more information, visit <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/get/southafrica.asp> or contact Susan Ermer, sermer@uwsp.edu or 715-346-4150.

6) Seeking Nominations: Energy Educator of the Year Award

In recognition of exemplary educators who take the extra step to improve energy literacy in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP) has created an Energy Educator of the Year Awards Program. KEEP is seeking nominations for qualified formal and non-formal energy educators. Nominating someone or yourself involves completing an entry form and submitting a one page narrative that details the nominee's energy education initiatives and outcomes. For the nomination form and details, visit www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/keep/Networking/Energy_Educator_Year_Awards.htm. The due date for nominations is **February 20, 2009**.

7) Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) Grants

The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board awards grants for the development, dissemination, and implementation of environmental education programs. There are five different types of grant funds available for the 2009-10 grant cycle: General Environmental Education Grants, Forestry Education Grants, School Forest Education Plan Grants, School Forest Grants, and Energy Education Grants. For information on eligibility, funds available, and other general information visit www.uwsp.edu/cnr/weeb/grant-program/index.htm. Application deadline is **February 14, 2009**.

8) Why is Science Important? – A request for contributions

The request: "I am a part-time science teacher at an inner city school in London in the UK. I am also producing a web and film project called "Why is Science Important?" which seeks to gather answers to this question from scientists, science writers, and members of the public. If you look at the website www.whyscience.co.uk, you'll see that I have a number of responses from many prominent contributors. Sadly, I don't have many teachers participating. It would be fantastic to have at more pieces from teachers, as the project is aimed mainly at them." Visit the web site to read others posts and add your own comment.

Resources

9) Wisconsin Environmental Science Course Framework and Digital Resource Library

Check it out! The new Wisconsin Environmental Science Course Framework outlines an ideal year-long high school environmental science course. Topics in the framework are prioritized to help in planning courses of varied length and include ecological principles, human systems, energy, air, land, water, and

living resources. A digital resource library created by Wisconsin educators will assist you in locating new activities, videos, labs, web sites and more!

<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/envsci/Framework/Overview/index.htm>

10) Trees and Shrubs of Minnesota Book Just Released

Welby Smith's "Trees and Shrubs of Minnesota" is now in out. It comes highly recommended by UW-Stevens Point Associate Professor of Biology and Forestry, Emmet Judziewicz. According to Professor Judziewicz, "The author covers difficult groups like willows, brambles, and hawthorns very thoroughly – I'd say heroically! It will be the standard reference for Midwestern woody plants for many years to come."

Preview the book and find ordering information: http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/books/trees_shrubs_slides.html.

11) Consumer Consequences Game

This interactive game is designed to illustrate the impact of our lifestyles on Earth. You will be asked a series of questions about your lifestyle, and as you play, it will show you how many Earths of natural resources it would take to sustain all 6.6 billion humans...if everyone lived like you.

<http://sustainability.publicradio.org/consumerconsequences/>

12) Climate Time Machine

This series of visualizations show how some of the key indicators of climate change, such as temperature, sea ice extent, and carbon dioxide concentrations, have changed in Earth's recent history.

<http://climate.jpl.nasa.gov/ClimateTimeMachine/climateTimeMachine.cfm>

13) Flash Flood: Hurricane Katrina's Inundation of New Orleans

A great interactive graphic illustrating how Hurricane Katrina's flooding progressed on August 29, 2005. Click through the graphic to see hour by hour water movement, levee breaches, and water levels.

Explanations of what happened in different areas of the city as the storm progressed give an idea of how extensive the damage was. Access: <http://www.nola.com/katrina/graphics/flashflood.swf>

This email was generated by the Wisconsin Environmental Science Teacher Network at UW-Stevens Point.

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