

2009-11 Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Biennial Budget Request

1. What are the requests?

- A. Create a \$200,000 GPR appropriation to be used to award *general* environmental education grants as outlined in state statute 36.54(2)(b). Biennial Budget Form B-6 accompanies this request to reestablish 20.285 (1)(ee) which was eliminated in 2001 Wisconsin Act 16.
- B. A \$1,500 (10%) increase to WEEB general operating funds which is administered through the board of regents University of Wisconsin system under section 20.285 (1)(a) of the statutes as outlined in 1997 Wisconsin Act 27 which transferred the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board from the Department of Public Instruction to UW-System.
- C. An additional .5 FTE on appropriation 20.285 (1)(a) for the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board allowable by state statute 230.08(2)(rm) to **oversee the forestry and school forest portions** of the environmental education grant program as outlined in state statute 36.54(2)(b) and 20.285(1)(rc).
- D. 1.0 FTE position for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to serve as the **environmental education consultant*****

2. Background and Justification for requests

A. Create a \$200,000 GPR Appropriation to be awarded as General EE grants

The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board's general environmental education grant program is critical to developing an informed environmentally literate citizenry in Wisconsin.

Historically, WEEB general environmental education grant programming has financed a well-managed portfolio of educational resources that:

- Respond to emerging needs of Wisconsin's citizens, businesses and communities, thus building stronger communities
 - Examples include: Invasive Species Awareness programs, Citizen based monitoring programs, and educating town officials and road crews about the effects of correct and incorrect installation of road culverts.
- Strengthen the capacity of K-12 students to meet environmental education model academic achievement standards
 - Examples include: Establishment of Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Environmental Education; creation and implementation of Wisconsin Public Service Corporation's Solar Wise for Schools program in which photovoltaic equipment is installed on high schools and the curriculum is infused with energy concepts; and significant investment in curriculum development and professional development of instructional staff.

*** Justification, implementation, outcomes and budget detail for the FTE position to be housed at the Department of Public Instruction is included within the DPI budget request. The WEEB fully supports the re-establishment of this EE consultant position. The duties will not overlap those of the WEEB staff.

- Help prepare post-secondary students by connecting higher education, technical education, and continuing professional development with innovation in environmental education and management
 - Examples include development and initial offering of the Master Woodland Stewards course; integration of infrared digital technology into courses at UW-Milwaukee to incorporate a better understanding of thermal behavior of buildings concepts within the architectural education program; and An Intensive Multinational Inquiry-based Training Course for K-12 Teachers provided by the Global Environmental Teaching program at UW-Stevens Point.
- Provide private and public leaders and the general public with reliable resources for self-directed environmental learning when at work or play
 - Examples include mammal trunks, whooping crane curricula, the Parks Pack program, and the Wisconsin Conservation briefing book.
- Greatly enlarge the reach of outdoor studies to urban residents, the disabled, and others whose daily lives do not include regular exposure to nature's systems, flora and fauna
 - Examples include creation of the Department of Natural Resources' EEK! website which in 2007 had 1,326,373 user sessions; 5,994,540 page views; and 10,158,803 hits; environmental education outreach to Southeast Asian students provided by UW-Stevens Point; and development of a substantial number of urban rain gardens and the corresponding curricula through UW-Extension and UW-Madison Arboretum programming).

Demand for these competitive grant dollars continuously outstrips the available resource.

With the 2001-2003 biennial budget the legislature eliminated a \$200,000 GPR annual appropriation (20.285 (1) (ee)) to the WEEB and replaced it with an equivalent appropriation (20.285(1) (rc)) in segregated fees from the forestry account of the conservation fund.

At the time, the appropriations for the WEEB grant program were \$200,000 GPR used for general grant program (20.285(1)(ee)); approximately \$30,000 in SEG fees surcharge on environmental assessments used to fund the general grant program (20.285 (1)(r)) and \$200,000 annual SEG appropriation from the forestry account of the conservation fund (20.285(1)(rc)) to award forestry education grants. With the 2001-2003 budget change, the total annual appropriation remained the same approximately \$430,000 but the GPR dollars were eliminated and the SEG forestry account appropriation became \$400,000 per year.

Based on conversations with legislators it is the WEEB's belief the legislature did not intend to cut or alter the WEEB general grant programming; but rather were just looking for an alternative appropriation source.

The forestry account segregated fee money can *only* be used to support *forestry* education grant proposals.

Thus, the impact of the alteration:

1. Since the WEEB already was administering a forestry education grant program, the WEEB initiated a school forest education grant program to utilize these "new"

forestry dollars. Since the school forest program's inception the Board has received \$1,429,650 in school forest grant requests. To date \$818,780 has been awarded, with the majority of the funds being used to facilitate creation of school forest education plans. Forty-four districts have already received funding for school forest education plans and there have been 36 implementation projects. As more districts complete their education plans, and thus become eligible for school forest implementation grants, the demand for these competitive grant dollars is going to increase significantly. During this grant cycle the Board intends to award 12 more districts funds for education plans and there will be 4 implementation projects. There are 205 districts with school forests. Thus it would not be prudent to simply reallocate these school forest grant dollars to the general EE grant program.

2. Beginning with the 2002-2003 grant program cycle the WEEB only had an estimated \$30,000 per year (20.285(1)(r)) to award statewide for general environmental education grants. In reality the amount of the assessment (20.285(1)(r)) has been more than the estimated \$30,000 (see chart below). However, this year the amount available dropped from approximately \$135,000 to approximately \$45,000.

- The Board reduced the maximum award per proposal for general environmental education grant requests from the historic \$20,000 per proposal to \$5,000 per proposal.
 - The scope of general environmental education grant proposals was altered significantly. Project directors can not complete the same type of project when the maximum award is \$5,000 that they were able to undertake when the maximum award was \$20,000.
- Initially the request level (number of proposals submitted) for the general environmental education grant category dropped, but for the past four years, the number of proposals submitted within the general category has approximated or exceeded the pre-budget alteration levels. This despite the Board advertising a significant reduction in the amount of funds available. Obviously the need for these funds remains.

Year	Amount Requested	# Requests	Amount Funded*	# Funded	Amount Advertised as Available	Amount of Funds Available through GPR 20.285(1)(ee)	Amount of Funds Available through 5% surcharge on environmental fines (also referred to as EE assessment account) 20.285(1)(r)
2008-2009	\$213,084	55	\$68,030	23	\$45,000	0	Not yet known
2007-2008	\$272,804	72	\$158,972	39	\$150,000	0	\$45,106.80
2006-2007	\$173,339	49	\$104,661	26	\$50,000	0	\$134,999.35
2005-2006	\$200,062	55	\$98,357	30	\$50,000	0	\$96,392.59
2004-2003	\$189,064	54	\$113,655	31	\$50,000	0	\$70,385.83
2003-2004	\$103,827	28	\$57,498	17	\$50,000	0	\$56,779
2002-2003	\$286,634	29	\$110,631	12	Initially \$200,00 then altered to \$30,000	0	\$75,031.31
2001-2002	\$747,518	58	\$274,376	21	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$51,514.98
2000-2001	\$659,281	47	\$228,273	16	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$63,534.81
1999-2000	\$757,456	56	\$271,805	22	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$42,127.56
1998-1999	\$696,944	75	\$204,767	28	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$67,242.71
1997-1998	Info not available	Info not available	\$214,630	23	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$33,739.90
1996-1997	Info not available	Info not available	\$179,427	18	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$17,802.73

* Amount awarded beyond the value of the 5% surcharge on environmental fines (also known as the assessment funds) and in the early years of the table the GPR funds available indicates the value of private donations and/or the re-awarding of grant dollars that were not fully utilized by a prior grant recipient.

The WEEB works diligently to promote environmental education in all segments of society. Yet, it is nearly impossible to achieve the mission the legislature has identified with a general environmental education grant award budget estimated to be \$30,000-\$50,000 annually. When the assessment dollars were added to the WEEB's budget they were intended to supplement the dollars available for the WEEB general environmental education grant program not supplant it. Not having a regular, predictable base budget for the general environmental education grant program causes the award amount from year to year to fluctuate widely which in turn impacts the number and quality of the proposals received in future grant solicitations. It is imperative that a reliable, *predictable* and sufficient funding base for the general EE grant program be re-established if the goal of environmental literacy for all Wisconsin citizens is to be achieved.

B. A \$1,500 (10%) increase to WEEB general operating budget

The WEEB has not had a general operating budget increase since it was created in 1990. Obviously costs have risen significantly since then. The WEEB has instituted various cost reduction measures including

- Significant reduction in the number of RFP's printed annually. Now encouraging applicants to download application materials from the WEEB website. (WEEB is now printing only 100 application booklets per year which are predominantly used by grant reviewers and board members).
- Mailing postcards announcing board vacancies with a request to download nomination materials from the WEEB website, rather than a complete nomination packet
- Holding meetings in Stevens Point and Madison more often rather than throughout the state in order to reduce mileage reimbursement costs to Board members
- Reduce grant review from an overnight format to a one day review session

While costs have risen by more than 10% since 1990, in light of the State's current budget situation, the WEEB is being fiscally conservative with its request to enhance the Board's operating budget.

C. An additional 0.5 FTE

When the Board was created in 1990, a 0.5 FTE position was assigned to facilitate the work of the Board (refer to 20.255 (1) (cm) and 115.375 (1)). In addition to the original functions, the Board is now also responsible for administering a forestry education and school forest education grant program. When these programs were initiated the legislature did not provide for a corresponding increase in staff time. As each of these programs has grown, the demands on staff time have also increased. One significant change to program administration in order to deal with the limited staff time is that the WEEB is no longer requiring interim reports from project directors; only final reports.

While State statute 36.54 (2)(f) indicates, "The environmental education board may use up to 5% of the amount appropriated under s. 20.285 (1)(rc) to administer the grants under this subsection that are related to forestry." These segregated revenue dollars are budgeted on supplies and expenses and may not be used toward salary and fringe benefit expenditures.

Highlights of how the position responsibilities have changed

	1997	Today (all grant categories)
Number of grant recipients current cycle	26	72
Number grant recipients previous cycle	20	72
Total number of active grant recipient files	46	144
Number of WEEB financial accounts	1 (GPR (salary and supplies))	3 state accounts: (GPR (salary and supplies), SEG assessment SEG forestry, 3 private fund raising accounts: (Endowment, Immediate dispersal, and WEEF Administration)
Budget staff is responsible for	\$236,000	\$530,000
# of board members	15	17

3. Implementation Plan

- Announcement of the amount of dollars available for funding is included within the general grant application materials. The total amount identified will be increased by \$200,000 as soon as the appropriation is made by the legislature. The WEEB anticipates the increase will begin with the 2010-2011 cohort using funds appropriated in the 2009-2010 budget year.
- The current WEEB employee will be offered the opportunity to move from part time to full-time as soon as the increase in FTE is assured. The WEEB anticipates this will occur with the passage of the 2009-2011 budget.

4. What are the outcomes?

When we imagine Wisconsin's future, we picture a rich culture of environmental stewardship that sustains diverse natural resources, healthy communities and a thriving economy. The Wisconsin legislature has recognized that getting there requires financial investment. With a renewed investment commitment to the WEEB in 2009-2011 so much more can be accomplished.

The WEEB's *EE2010: A Plan for Advancing Environmental Education in Wisconsin* identifies seven goals.

- Focus content of EE on holistic outcomes
- Support and enhance cooperation and communication within the environmental education (EE) community
- Support and enhance environmental education (EE) in PreK-12 schools
- Support and enhance implementation of environmental literacy in institutions of higher education
- Support and enhance the expansion of non-formal and non-traditional environmental education (EE)

- Develop a research and evaluation agenda for environmental education (EE)
- Secure long term funding for environmental education (EE) in Wisconsin

Each goal has several identified outcomes associated with it. For more information see <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/weeb/Publications/StratPlan/EE2010FinalPlan.pdf>

General environmental education grant funds would be awarded to projects that support one or more of these goals. Ultimately the objective is to promote environmental literacy across all age groups because environmental stewardship is not just one person or group's responsibility—everyone must play a part.

There are a variety of issues before the legislature for which WEEB general EE grant funds can be used to help educate Wisconsin citizens, including:

- the Great Lakes Compact,
- global warming (Governor's Task Force on global warming)
- groundwater, ballast water, and use of other water resources
- air quality issues including open burning,
- invasive species
- wetland mitigation
- land use
- energy use/renewable energy use
- feeding of wildlife
- recycling and sanitation programs
- use of plastic bags in retail establishments

Indeed each of these issues has a myriad of sub-issues which need to be considered in order to move forward. An educated citizenry that is both knowledgeable and willing to take action can be a tremendous asset in resolving issues. Failing to educate the general population about these issues, their consequences, and alternate viewpoints regarding how to resolve the issue could in itself lead to unfortunate short and long term consequences for all the sectors (economic, political, social, and ecological) of society.

The additional staff time and administrative budget will allow for an expanded staff role in the oversight of work completed by volunteers serving on committees (education, leadership, and research) in order to keep the groups on task and moving forward. Staff time will also be devoted to improving grant project reporting requirements, investigating the possibility of moving to a completely electronic application process, and providing more timely response to citizen inquires.

5. Budget detail

	FY 09-10	FY 10-11
GPR EE grant program	\$200,000	\$200,000
0.5 FTE	Salary: \$22,000 Fringe: \$9,800	Salary: \$22,000 Fringe: \$9,800
10% general operating increase	\$1,500	\$1,500

- *Anticipated Matches and Leveraging Opportunities*
 - State statute requires a minimum of a 25% match for all grant funds awarded. Thus the \$200,000 investment of state funds will result in at least a \$50,000 match.
 - Historically the match provided by grant recipients has been well beyond the minimum 25% required. For example the \$68,030 investment that will be made this year in general EE grants has a corresponding match commitment of \$173,188.
 - The WEEB has created a private 501(c)(3) organization, the Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation, to raise private funds to supplement WEEB programming.
 - During the 2007 State Employee Combined campaign the WEEF had \$24,000 committed. These funds will be deposited into an endowment account. The interest from the account will be used to supplement the WEEB general grant program.