

RECOMMENDATION ON STRATEGIC
PLANNING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION

In November 2005, the Land Between The Lakes Advisory Board began work to develop recommendations for the future of environmental education at LBL. The resulting strategic plan incorporates suggestions from the board on the definition, core values, desired future conditions, strategies, and actions the board has determined should guide the Forest Service staff when planning environmental education programs. Strategies and actions have been prioritized to indicate where the board thinks primary efforts should be placed.

Recognizing limitations of budgets and staff, the board expects the information in this document, along with future input from this board, will assist the FS staff in ensuring environmental education programs at LBL meet the definition outlined by the board, and are of the content and quality to promote the core values and desired future conditions the board has recommended.

This Recommendation on Strategic Planning for Environmental Education
is approved by the LBL Advisory Board.

September 6, 2007

/s/ Thomas A. Peterson

THOMAS A. PETERSON
Chairperson, LBL Advisory Board
Deputy Regional Forester, Southern Region

/s/ Vernon Anderson

Vernon Anderson

/s/ Steve Morgan

Steve Morgan

/s/ Patrick Brandon

Patrick Brandon

/s/ Della Oliver

Della Oliver

/s/ Ben Helen Burkeen

Ben Helen Burkeen

/s/ Paul Ryan

Paul Ryan

/s/ Bobby Cassity

Bobby Cassity

/s/ David Smith

David Smith

/s/ Edward Clebsch

Edward Clebsch

/s/ Robert Smith

Robert Smith

/s/ Gary Cook

Gary Cook

/s/ Ben Stone

Ben Stone

/s/ Mark Cramer

Mark Cramer

/s/ Jim Wallace

Jim Wallace

Environmental Education Strategic Plan Recommendation

Land Between The Lakes National Recreation Area Advisory Board
(Definition, Core Values, Desired Future Conditions, Program Strategies, Actions)

Definition of Environmental Education at Land Between The Lakes

- Is experienced based: it includes learning in and about the environment.
- Addresses multiple fields of study while connecting individuals with the natural and cultural resources of the area in a variety of ways.
- Teaches the connection between humanity and the environment.
- Provides people with the life-long learning and inspiration they need to make informed decisions and take responsible actions to promote a healthy, sustainable environment.
- Fosters an appreciation of the multiple values of public lands.

Definition of Environmental Education from the Environmental Education Act of 1970 (PL9156)

“Environmental education is the education process dealing with humankind’s* relationship with the natural and human-made* surroundings, and includes the relation of population, pollution, resource allocation and depletion, conservation, transportation, technology, economic impact and urban and rural planning to the total human environment.”

(*Original language was edited to be gender non-specific)

Definition of Environmental Education of the North American Association for Environmental Education

“Environmental education is the process which promotes the analysis and understanding of environmental issues and questions as the basis for effective education, problem-solving, policy-making, and management. The purpose of environmental education is to foster the education of skilled individuals, able to understand environmental problems, and possessing the expertise to devise effective solution to them. In the broader context, environmental education’s purpose is to assist in the development of a citizenry conscious of the scope and complexity of current and emerging environmental problems and supportive of solutions and policies which are ecologically sound.”

Core Values

The essential set of guiding principles that define the LBL EE programs sense of character or integrity.

- Respect for people, nature, and LBL's heritage.
- Connectedness to the land.
- Science-based Environmental Stewardship of the land.
- Acceptance that people are a natural part of the environment.

Desired Future Conditions

Desired future conditions for EE at LBL include:

- Each and every person leaves LBL with at least one conservation message.
- Demonstrations of sustainable environmental practices, conservation issues and initiatives
- Teachers and classes use LBL as an outdoor classroom regularly and all children in region have a residential experience at LBL.
- Enhance respect for LBL.
- Sustainable program and staffing.
- Public support and adequate funding.
- Promote understanding of healthy diversified ecosystems.
- State of the art educational facilities and equipment.
- Surrounding communities practice good environmental stewardship.
- State of the art nature study experiences featuring various environments available in LBL.
- More interaction between recreation and conservation of resources.
- Improved quality of life for visitors and local communities.
- Place for individual enjoyment of nature year-round.
- Opportunity to see, touch and feel, and experience a "Sense of Wonder".
- Active "research" program that includes exploratory natural history.
- Enjoyable recreational and education opportunities that enhance the quality of life – health-wise, socially, and economically.
- Spiritual enhancement and tranquility.
- Healthier environment in our communities.
- Provide a focus (service) for our communities to participate in activities that promote an awareness of nature.
- Source of factual information.
- Sharing the assets of LBL with present and future generations.
- Diverse and expanded educational opportunities and participation.
- Engaged user groups submitting public input on LBL projects.
- Establish EE program to be nationally recognized and promoted as a national demonstration.

Program Strategies/Actions

What methods can we use to meet our desired future condition? This is the big picture – will need specific action items to accomplish.

1. Establish LBL as an EE Laboratory and a demonstration site through a diversity of learning styles.
 - Create auto tour opportunities.
 - Create a key message for each program.
 - Provide both guided and self-guided participative opportunities.
 - Develop programs that foster lifelong learning through inquiry
 - Develop “mentored inquiry” opportunities, teaming up students or groups of students, with staff, researcher and/or retirees.
 - Ensure time is invested in inquiry or discovery
 - Consider options to have individuals or group make observations as part of a required study plan, share them through a presentation etc.
2. Build relationships with school systems and community groups within useable distance from LBL.
 - Continue at higher level to identify and remove barriers to schools to come to LBL.
 - Provide EE outreach programs that relate to CORE content for kids and teachers.
 - Show EE is interdisciplinary.
 - Focus on organizational leaders such as superintendents and judge executives.
 - Programs for community organizations such as Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Tourism, Senior Citizen groups, etc.
 - Partnerships with State & Federal Fish and Wildlife, 4-H, County Extensions, University of Kentucky & University of Tennessee Extension Offices, NRCS, FSA, Conservation and Sportsmen Groups (i.e. NWTF; RMEF League of Ky. Sportsmen)
 - Programs/relationship with Parent Teacher Organizations/Associations.
 - Interactive television in classrooms, possibly daily/weekly updates.
 - Show how to maximize pre and post trip activities.
 - Meet with site-based councils for helping schools meet testing goals.
 - Show how LBL can build health and wellness.
 - Work with NAAEE to require that all teachers take and teach EE.
 - Host teacher in-service days at LBL.
 - Survey teachers on EE needs and outdoor education trip concerns.
 - Use demonstration mission to export and model EE to other public lands (e.g., BLM, Interior)
 - Work with local universities to offer college credit/professional development.
 - Provide a focus for our communities to get involved in activities that promote an awareness of nature.
 - Engage schools, churches, and community groups in developing objectives for LBL programmatic funding and execution.
 - Increase communication between LBL staff and external communities.
 - Promote activities, such as family reunions.
3. Promote public awareness of and involvement in the environment
 - Public outreach
 - Development of communication tools.
 - Educational environmental feature articles in local media outlets

- Demonstration of best management practices
 - Educate farmers/contractors.
 - Vegetation management.
 - Involve outside agencies w/demonstration
 - Oak Grassland Demonstration Area
 - Sportsmen Orgs, such as League of KY. Sportsmen, NWTF; RMEF; Trappers etc.
 - Field trips—conservation groups (TN Trails Assoc., Sierra Club, etc.)
 - Outreach and promote LBL to public officials
 - Promote and utilize volunteer programs (shadowing) PTOs, Kiwanis, etc.
 - Participate in local leadership and civic programs
 - Hwy 68/80 environmental education signage
 - Review TVA environmental education documents
 - Initiate renewable energy demonstrations.
 - Set aside areas to demonstrate sustainable environmental practices.
 - “Elevate the environment” to produce a stewardship and love for the land.
4. Teach the importance of maintaining diverse environments consistent with LRMP.
- Create opportunities for audience to discover their natural heritage (packaged videos, photos...computer/Internet)
 - Continued development of age appropriate activities (delivery methods)
 - Create video resources (computer/Internet) – a “hook” to gain interest
 - Utilize diverse means including publications
 - Create opportunities for audience to have personal experiences within the target environment (hands-on)
 - Manage the environment to imitate natural evolving processes
 - Grow crops for wildlife consumption
 - Identify consequences to not having good management practices in place and not taking care of the natural environment
 - Share education techniques w/other agencies
 - Communities and schools
 - Politicians and voters, including on the ground visits.
5. Promote appreciation and understanding of all user groups.
- Interact with various youth, adult, and senior groups to educate them.
 - Understand age markets; determine and use techniques that target different age groups.
 - Invest in youth for the future; can have more immediate impact on adults
 - Engage educational volunteers to teach workshops.
 - Develop a quality program that will attract attention, participation, and support.
 - Develop programs that foster respect for nature and LBL’s heritage.
 - Shift resources and focus to EE.
 - Get people together to understand where the common ground is between user groups.
 - Arrange user group workshops focused on LBL problem areas
 - Develop EE information tools and messages for all user groups.
 - Focus on similarities and “working together for the resources”, not highlighting differences.

- Inform legislators about issues affecting EE at LBL.
 - Educate legislators – tour and meet user groups.
 - Invite them to discuss potential conflicting interests
 - Ensure they understand where support is needed.
 - Consider family dynamics, special situations, barriers, including single family households, grandparents raising children, etc.
 - Make parents/kids feel safe; find ways to get families to let their children experience nature.
 - Utilize new media technology to reach parents.
 - Do they have time to engage in outdoor experiences?
 - Do they have a fear of the outdoors they transfer to the kids?
 - Do they know where and how to access “green space”?
 - Consider ADD and problem kids – able to focus better in “green space”.
6. Increase focus on funds development
- Determine where we want to go, establish needs, prepare a good proposal, let people know the needs and go after support (financial and involvement).
 - Enlist help of the LBL Association.
 - Have specific goals for donations.
 - Show how LBL uses the money and why it’s important to us.
 - Determine where the gaps are (for example, special needs children).
 - Show the benefits; connect home and surrounding area for the kids.
 - Make kids aware of their natural surroundings.
 - Speak to legislators and groups who can influence more funding.
 - Ensure they know that what we’re doing is important.
 - Not really about supporting the FS; it’s about the future.
 - Grass roots movement to raise EE to a higher level.
 - Have them visit LBL regularly; show them the reality and the difficulty.
 - Communicate messages using a group of people other than FS.
 - Study and share the economic impact of LBL on its counties, businesses, etc.
 - Develop an annual meeting among contiguous county executives
 - Feature LBL program activities
 - Encourage community funding, support, and partnerships.
 - Obtain additional funding sources.
 - Seek a corporate sponsor for EE.
 - Consider naming rights in appropriate situations
 - Increase sustainability through interagency agreements and partnerships
 - Consider the National Wildlife Foundation, SAF, Wildlife society (TWS), NFF, national celebrities, etc.
 - Partner with school systems.
 - LBL Trust Fund can be a source of funding for promotions, internships and some educational aspects
 - Look for foundation support as well as local support.
 - Connect to ongoing efforts, such as No Child Left Inside, Bill Gates Foundation, etc.
 - Write grant proposals to philanthropic foundations to support experiments in EE.

7. Create new interactive and integrated EE programs.
 - Before creating new and innovative programs, identify the target audience; understand their needs, and any barriers to participation.
 - Align strategies with age appropriate concepts.
 - Keep it fun; more free time; design for free time activities..
 - Use a variety of educational techniques
 - Create virtual programs that prepare individuals and groups for nature study interactions involving youth and senior citizens; use adults as facilitators.
 - Local universities could promote through science classes, but don't limit to science courses – incorporate in math, social studies, language arts, etc.
 - Utilize general and specific approaches. Examples include:
 - Focus on ecological cycles—energy, hydrologic, carbon, nutrient.
 - Focus on phenological events in plants, insects, other animals.
 - Impact to the participant's psyche of recreation of various kinds at LBL (including the emotional state the day after)
 - Focus on habitats and relationships: neotropical migrants, mammals and amphibians.
 - Go microscopic.
 - Utilize the land/water interface, not just the land or the water
 - Let participants view good and bad examples of environmental stewardship in EE to observe and learn.
 - Create electronic education techniques to “hook” youth.
 - Determine how we encourage visits to LBL and tie that in with electronic options.
 - Develop a technological “hook” to get kids excited about an outdoor experience but should not be a substitute for contact/experience in the outdoors. (Reach kids first with electronics, then shift focus to outdoors.)
 - Outreach the programs
 - Go to them to get them to come here.
 - Offer teacher workshops.
 - Invite them to visit and gain their ideas on programs.
 - Ask them about kids today and how to connect with them.
 - Technology is available to get into classrooms and living rooms
 - Create excitement before the visit; make them want to come.
 - Utilize educators to build and support program.
 - Use teachers/professors to develop programs; align with classroom efforts.
 - Ask what they need before they come; get to know groups before the visit.
8. Involve all age groups in research through structured inquiry.
 - Provide an opportunity for interested people, young or old, to gain “structured learning” by being attached as volunteers to researchers and staff working at LBL.
 - Pilot the idea of “energized” researchers that have worked at LBL leading students to satisfy their curiosity about some—ANY—environmental question.
 - Find a small pilot “research” project relevant to kids.
 - Encourage university research.
 - Investigate ways to share body of knowledge/research done at LBL.