

## Report

Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future TOPICAL LUNCH

Title: EPA's National Environmental Education Program

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Submitted by Marianne Krasny

### Organizers:

Last Name	First Name	NetID or email	Dept (if known)	College (If known)
Krasny	Marianne	<a href="mailto:mek2@cornell.edu">mek2@cornell.edu</a>		
Braus	Judy			

### Participants: 19

Last Name	First Name	NetID or email	Dept (if known)	College (if known)
Allred	Shorna	<a href="mailto:srb237@cornell.edu">srb237@cornell.edu</a>		
Briggs	Lilly	<a href="mailto:ljb29@cornell.edu">ljb29@cornell.edu</a>		
DiSalvo	Frank	<a href="mailto:fjd3@cornell.edu">fjd3@cornell.edu</a>		
Getchonis	JoAnne	<a href="mailto:jgg4@cornell.edu">jgg4@cornell.edu</a>		
Grantham	Deb	<a href="mailto:dgg3@cornell.edu">dgg3@cornell.edu</a>		
Guthrie	Mary	<a href="mailto:msg21@cornell.edu">msg21@cornell.edu</a>		
Kiely	Richard	<a href="mailto:rck6@cornell.edu">rck6@cornell.edu</a>		
Lassoie	Jim	<a href="mailto:lassoie@cornell.edu">lassoie@cornell.edu</a>		
Lewenstein	Bruce	<a href="mailto:b.lewenstein@cornell.edu">b.lewenstein@cornell.edu</a>		
Li	Yue	<a href="mailto:y1983@cornell.edu">y1983@cornell.edu</a>		
Ochshorn	Jonathan	<a href="mailto:jo24@cornell.edu">jo24@cornell.edu</a>		
Petrovic	Marty	<a href="mailto:amp4@cornell.edu">amp4@cornell.edu</a>		
Rahaman	Ashik	<a href="mailto:ar265@cornell.edu">ar265@cornell.edu</a>		
Rudstam	Lars	<a href="mailto:lgr1@cornell.edu">lgr1@cornell.edu</a>		
Skelly	Sonja	<a href="mailto:sms92@cornell.edu">sms92@cornell.edu</a>		
Trautmann	Nancy	<a href="mailto:nancy.trautmann@cornell.edu">nancy.trautmann@cornell.edu</a>		

## **Overview of Topical Lunch**

EPA's National Environmental Education Program

Marianne Krasny, Professor, Civic Ecology Lab, Natural Resources, Cornell University  
Judy Braus, Executive Director, North American Association for Environmental Education

EECapacity, EPA's national environmental education training program, applies social innovation theory to address the question: How is environmental education changing in a world where the majority of people experience the environment in cities? The project creates online and face-to-face "platforms" designed to foster exchange of ideas and practice among professional environmental educators and an emerging group of youth and community development professionals implementing environmentally-related stewardship and learning activities in cities. We are testing the hypothesis that through exchanging ideas, diverse groups of professionals with largely separate social networks and practice, will create environmental education innovations that address the concerns of an urban population.

EECapacity is a 5-yr, \$11 million cooperative agreement between Cornell University and EPA. In addition to the Civic Ecology Lab home of the project, partners include the North American Association for Environmental Education, Association of Zoos and Aquaria, USFWS, NOAA, American Community Gardening Association, New Knowledge Organization, Cornell Lab of Ornithology Celebrate Urban Birds program, and numerous community organizations across the US, Canada, and Mexico.

## **Outcome of Topical Lunch**

Cornell professor Marianne Krasny and North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) Executive Director Judy Braus presented an overview of EECapacity. The group engaged in discussion about why and how one goes about linking youth and community development professionals with environmental education professionals. Questions were raised about capacity building in environmental education; a set of Guidelines for Excellence, state certification standards for professionals, and national accreditation standards for university programs that prepare pre-service teachers in environmental education were discussed. Frank DiSalvo brought up the question of funding beyond EPA. NAAEE recently organized a forum of 90 environmental giving foundations and their partners in Oakland CA. This is the start of a major effort on the part of NAAEE to increase giving to environmental education, which has tended to fall in the cracks between environmental and education focused foundations.

The lunch was not specifically organized to launch a new initiative. However, several new contacts were made. Krasny was approached by Richard Kiely of the new Cornell Public Engagement Center, and they have since scheduled a meeting to talk about common interests and the potential for funding from the Center. A potential PhD student at the lunch also approached Dr. Krasny in regard to future graduate studies.

Krasny and Braus express their sincere appreciation to ACSF for their support of the grant to EPA and for hosting the lunch. In future lunches, we will give more thought to how we can use the lunch to foster new collaborations.