

Environmental Literacy Forum

What is the EL Forum?

- The biennial [Environmental Literacy Forum](#) has historically been focused on training to build the skills of educators to plan and implement MWEs and sustainable school programming at the classroom or school district level. In response to our community's interest for forums to not focus purely on MWEs, their scopes have grown in recent years.

Who is invited?

- Environmental education practitioners and representatives of the formal education community working at the district-level.

What is the format?

- Typically an in person gathering that has often been hosted at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in West Virginia. The last EL Forum was held at NCTC in late February 2025, after it was delayed by a winter storm.

The Virtual EL Forum was going to be new this year. (It has been postponed).

Why a virtual forum?

- Since space at NCTC is limited, we have frequently heard from our EL community and partners that they wish they could invite more people to the in-person Forum. This virtual EL Forum would allow us to extend invites more broadly to bring together a larger audience of practitioners.

When is it?

- The Virtual EL Forum has been postponed until further notice.

Who is planning it?

- The Network Advisory Team (NAT) is working with Local Concepts and NOAA to plan this virtual event.

What was the topic?

- This virtual forum was going to be about hearing from our teachers and environmental education practitioners about how they perceive the impacts of state policies and actions on their work and, sharing their stories that illustrate this impact.

Environmental Literacy Summit

What is the EL Summit?

- Since 1999, at the direction of the Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council, a biennial [Environmental Literacy Summit](#) has been convened to advance environmental literacy in the region. Since 2005, NOAA has co-hosted these biennial convenings in partnership with states on a rotating basis. A 2018 Principals Staff Committee directive reiterated the Bay Program's commitment to host summits. These summits provide an important opportunity to share innovative practices, collaborate, and coordinate between federal, state and non-governmental leaders about the future of environmental education in our region.

When is the EL Summit?

- The EL Summit will occur in 2026. We will work with you all to determine timing and format when the NOAA team returns.

What is the format?

- Typically the Summit is convened every two years, in person, in one state. The 2023 Summit was co-hosted by Maryland and held at Bowie State University. At the 2023 Summit we heard feedback that the non-hosting states found it challenging to get their leadership to attend an out-of-state meeting. In response to that feedback, the NOAA team is proposing separate, in-person state meetings followed by a regional virtual meeting for the 2026 Summit, however, that proposal is by no means set in stone.
- We will work with you all to determine what the best format and timing are for 2026.

Who is invited?

- Leaders from federal, state, and non-governmental entities that work to advance environmental education in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Historically, invitees have included the Secretary-level representatives from the education, environment, agriculture and natural resource agencies of each state and other state leaders. For example, when the Summit was co-hosted by Virginia in 2019, First Lady Pamela Northam attended and gave remarks about the importance of environmental literacy. Often district representatives also attend.

Who sends out the invites?

- Typically, members of the Education Workgroup develop a list of invitees for their state and the invitations are sent out by executive leadership from the host state. For example, in 2023 invitations were sent by Secretary Josh Kurtz of Maryland Department of Natural Resources and included a special video from Maryland [Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller](#). When Pennsylvania hosted in 2021, First Lady Frances Wolf prepared a video encouraging state leaders to attend.

What is the planning process? Will there be support?

- The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office team co-hosts the Summit and will support members of the Education Workgroup to determine the location(s), date(s), and invitees, as well as to help develop agendas, find guest speakers, etc.
- Chesapeake Bay Trust has money to support in-person meetings.

What is the history?

- [Read the Bay Education Initiative](#), signed by the Chesapeake Executive Council in 1998. It required a Summit to be held in 1999, and every two years thereafter. Details start on the bottom of page 2. If you're interested in browsing the meeting materials from recent Environmental Literacy Summit's check out the links below:
 - [Maryland- 2023 Environmental Literacy Summit](#)
 - [Pennsylvania- 2021 Environmental Literacy Summit](#)
 - [Virginia- 2019 Environmental Literacy Summit](#)