

**Education Workgroup Meeting, Quarter 4**

October 6, 2025

10:00-11:30 AM

Visit the [meeting webpage](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/event/education-workgroup-meeting-october-2025) for meeting materials and additional information.

**Purpose:** This is a quarterly meeting of the Education Workgroup. This meeting was held to discuss updates to the environmental literacy outcomes, the Environmental Literacy Forum, the Environmental Literacy Summit, the ELIT survey, and state updates.

# **Minutes**

1. **10:00 Welcome & Connections**

Lead: Olivia Wisner, MDNR

Olivia welcomed the Education Workgroup to the meeting, shared the agenda and goals, and shared the Mid-Atlantic Environmental Literacy Network Ecosystem graphic.

1. **10:10 Environmental Literacy Outcomes**

Lead: Meredith Lemke, Education Workgroup Staffer

Meredith shared that the two Environmental Literacy Outcomes received hundreds of messages of support during the summer public comment period for the revisions to the 2014 Watershed Agreement. Education Workgroup leadership reviewed the feedback and implemented a few small edits for submission to the Management Board (red edits, slides 5 and 8). The Management Board then reviewed the outcomes during the September 30-Oct 2 Management Board retreat, and suggested edits as well (purple edits, slides 6 and 9). The Outcome and Target language as of October 14, 2025 are included below:

**Student Environmental Literacy Experiences Outcome**

Increase the number of students who participate in inquiry-based environmental literacy instruction, with the aim of each student receiving at least one Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience, or MWEE, in elementary, middle and high school.

* By 2040, reach state targets to result in at least 75% of public school students being enrolled in a school district that offers a MWEE for all students. *(Targets would remain the same for 2035)*

**School District Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome**

Increase the number of school districts that have policies and practices in place that support environmental education and sustainable schools.

* By 2040, reach all jurisdictions’ targets for the number of public school districts that are well prepared to deliver a comprehensive and system-wide approach to environmental literacy. *(Targets would remain the same for 2035)*

**Discussion Notes:**

* A decision on a time horizon for the next major revision to the Watershed Agreement has not yet been finalized, but targets would remain the same for both environmental literacy outcomes if the horizon is 2040 or 2035.
* State strategies to reach the targets will not be published in the Agreement but will be included in the Management Strategy.
* Candace – Why was K-12 crossed out?
  + We had recommended adding K-12, but the Management Board recommended removing it. Members of the MB felt it was redundant and overly long.
  + Tammie – Likes that K-12 is removed because it is more inclusive of education being from pK-grey. Even though both outcomes mention public schools, the removal of K-12 allows for more flexibility and the opportunity to expand
* Multiple EWG members – Why was “public” added to the School District target?
  + There were multiple comments during the public feedback process that asked why “public” was initially only included in the Student Outcome. Comments expressed lack of clarity regarding whether the School District target was referring to public school districts. Due to these comments and because the Management Board has expressed that it is important for the language in the revised Agreement to be understandable to lay people, the word “public” was added. “Public” adds clarification and alignment between the two outcomes. “Public” is also specified because the ELIT survey measures public school districts.
    - Tammie – PDE is only allowed to provide mandated guidance to public school programs. I like the language changes.  I think public school districts clarifies the jurisdiction that is able to be monitored. And as for non-public schools, in PA we have a status and needs survey that we do every couple years and that survey provides opportunity for response from nonformal education entities, charter schools, parochial schools, all of those.

1. **10:15 Environmental Literacy Forum & Summit**

Lead: Olivia Wisner, MDNR

Olivia shared a recap of the orientation of the new virtual Environmental Literacy Forum occurring in December 2025 and then discussed the 2026 Summit. Education Workgroup members had concerns about both the Forum and Summit which are summarized below. Olivia, Meredith, Krysta, and Christy and Sonia of Local Concepts are working to resolve concerns related to the Forum with the Network Advisory Team. Those details are forthcoming. Decisions about the Summit will be made once federal employees return to work so that the full NOAA team can be consulted.

**Environmental Literacy Forum Discussion**

* Laura Casdorph – in VA, my leadership expressed concern that this was tipping towards advocacy. Anybody who works in state government would not be able to participate.
  + Laura – The direction we’ve been talking about going, even with the storytelling, is that it’s not going to be much of a narrative. It’s going to be like a list of facts, a timeline, not trying to put anyone’s narrative on it.
  + Lori Schoenwiesner – And changing language around the Forum isn’t enough if the purpose doesn’t change.
* Multiple workgroup members suggested potential ways to rework the purpose of the Forum to be more acceptable for the states, for example: “inform decision-makers”, or “support decision-makers”
* Olivia - Would it be useful to have more of a Watershed Agreement focus for the Forum? A moment to stop and reflect about where we’ve come since 2014.
  + Laura Casdorph thinks that could be more appropriate
  + Cassi - if the current purpose aligns with the majority of the intended audience of the event, don’t change it just for the ability for VA state agency folks to be able to attend. VA could just make our list of facts.
  + Coreen - Purpose makes sense as-is, purpose could stay the same with tweaks to words. “With the aim of creating and sharing inspirational state and regional examples stories and supporting the creation of tangible products to influence support? Inform?  decision-makers and guide future work.
  + Tom - Would "documenting a history of environmental literacy progress" and "identifying case studies of successful implementation" be an acceptable reframing for states?
  + Jemima - Can the language be “meet each state where they are”? so its tailored to the politics, allowances and moving the work forward in states that are ready?
  + Frank - "Our histories, strategies, and visions for the future..." and "sharing creative state and regional examples..."

**Environmental Literacy Summit Discussion**

**Please note:** Decisions about the Summit will be made once federal employees return to work so that the full NOAA team can be consulted. An FAQ answering workgroup questions and concerns is forthcoming.

Workgroup Discussion –

* Who is responsible for organizing the state meetings?
  + Previously one state would host and find all the speakers, the space, etc.
* Timing in spring 2026 is a challenge. Many workgroup members expressed a lack of time/capacity/funding to convene in person state meetings.
  + Tammie/Chris K (PA) – Spring is a difficult time. It will be hard to find a time to gather all the leaders in PA.
  + Laura C/ Cassi C (VA) – No funding to convene something in person. Spring is a challenging time due to all new agency and gubernatorial leadership. Mandated to only be allowed to use free spaces. No money for food. Not enough time/capacity to plan this meeting on top of all the other parts of her job. Challenging to engage/receive responses/ get on the calendars of new leadership.
  + MD & Other states – legislative session kicks off in January
* Who are the people who need to be invited? From what agencies? Which leadership positions? How high up?
  + Grace Manubay - can we get a sense of who these leaders are? How high of a leader are we thinking?
  + Cassi - last time we requested to ask leadership level as high as DCR Director DOE Lead, Secretaries level etc.
  + Candace L-F - A list of the leader types we are targeting would be helpful
* Frank - can we share info on who’s meeting where/when. We would be able to join a MD meeting.
* Laura Collard - When we have a meeting in a state and invite superintendents and DNR agency heads and specific invitees based on what the topic is. What’s the target audience?
* Tammie – I’m worried about scheduling this before we know how things balance out. There are so many threats to funding and programs right now.  Agencies are trying to maintain service to their mission and constituents right now, without capsizing. Asks are being prioritized, and unless there is a very specific purpose and outcome/artifact to be produced, we will not be able to get the leadership to dedicate the time expected
* Laura Collard - Could we convene a shorter virtual meeting to review the new CBP goals?
  + Tammie - If we do virtual, we need to consider time as well.  Most executive staff do not have time for more than a 1 hour virtual meeting. I really am concerned with the responsibility of a state host as well
  + Laura Casdorph – If the audience really is the leaders of state agencies, I think there is no need for an all day meeting. They aren't likely to be interested in that level of detail. Short and virtual would be better.
  + Angel Burns – I agree this was run by the full broader team in the past as a regional/comprehensive summit. I don't think it should be organized within each state.
  + Candace - Summits in the past were organized by the CBP Program leadership team.  These state level meetings are a big ask.  An alternative is to develop state-specific briefs and distribute these
  + Zachary - we are already asking leadership to attend many meetings (OLP, learning labs) - likes the one state idea because of limited resources - we need a clear goal and outcome to bring people together
* Cassi - What is the point of having both a virtual forum and a summit? The audiences are different but we typically see the same people showing up. Getting buy-in to join from new folks in such a short amount of time will be difficult. New state reps won’t know who I am.
  + Olivia – EL Summit was a directive from the PSC to get the right state leaders in the room so that they don’t have to attend MB meetings
* Cassi – Could we try to engage leadership virtually at a portion of the Forum?
  + Olivia – as it is now, the Forum is a working session
* Tammie – every year that we’ve done the Summit the executive staff want to know what their role and the purpose is super clearly or they won’t attend.
* Candace - My thoughts: Forums focus on ELit leaders & we do work during the Forums.  Summit: high level leaders (Federal & state agencies) give summaries of ELit activity; its more of a show and tell session
* Jemima - But do the summit solely as a show & tell, virtually, as a webinar session- that is designed & run by NOAA CBO, and then each state shares their stories developed at the Forum in late Spring 2026
* Candace - What I have seen for the value of the Summits:  High level leaders hear what other  CB jurisdictions are doing to advance ELit & this helps catalyze further ELit efforts.  It has encouraged VA to stay engaged.
* Emily - And just a note that the Trust does have some BWET funding to support states' meeting facility rental (if in-person summit, and if needed).
* Krysta - Yes - the NOAA team will support the planning of each in-person meeting
* Olivia – Meredith can you make a poll?

A screenshot of a computer

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

* Cassi - Briefing for the CBA Goals is great framing for leadership
  + Grace - Yes, and maybe have the Natural Resources people help with the briefing to explain to the education people why they are included in the agreement.

Olivia - What do you want your state leaders to know about the environmental literacy outcomes of the 2014 Watershed Agreement? How do you want to tell them?

* Zachary: Has anyone done a video showcase?
* Tammie: A letter, perhaps a video, from NOAA and CBWA Management/Ed Workgroup discussing the changes and obligations would be very valuable.  It can be used to inform and remind
* Coreen: 1:  The goal matters. Their support for it matters. Educating students in the watershed contributes to the long game of success for all the other goals of the Bay Program -- it is foundational and transformative.  2:  Have teachers, students, superintendents tell leaders (and THANK leaders) the ways that the goal matters.
* Chris K: PA - DCNR is having monthly CBP check-in meetings. So, my leadership is aware and supportive of the updated ELit outcomes. However, I think it would be beneficial for all Secretaries to know of the updated outcomes and to understand why they are important to their agencies' work and how we can work together to move them forward.
* Olivia: MD DNR has similar CBP check-in meetings. Maybe it's a matter of inviting other state leaders to those existing meetings?

1. **11:00 ELIT/Tracking the Outcomes**

Lead: Meredith Lemke, Staffer

Meredith provided an update about the status of ELIT. Over the past year we have updated our outcomes and discussed what we may wish to update to collect for the next round of ELIT (2026). There is currently no funding available for ELIT, so we will be unable to implement those changes to the survey or integrate other existing data collection methods for the regional report. We propose maintaining the collection like in previous years for 2026. We can explore options to change the survey or integrate other data collection methods during the 2028 round of ELIT. Also, the ELIT survey has 3 state chosen questions. Those questions can be leveraged to collect some of the information that states wish to collect (e.g., the prevalence of ELPs) without changes to the survey.

**Decisions:**

1. State representatives indicated that a shorter period of time for ELIT input would be acceptable.

**Actions:**

1. Determine the months/time of year that ELIT will be administered.

**Discussion Notes:**

* Tom Ackerman: The loss of funding may not be a done deal yet since there were full funding levels in House and Senate - maybe this conversation is premature
* Is a shorter period for input (e.g. August - October instead of May - October) okay for states?
  + Tammie - PA has been hit or miss on survey responses. It’s hard no matter what. Short or long period doesn’t necessarily matter. The very beginning of the year is very hard for administrators because they’re gearing up for the school year. Having it last longer over the summer can help get more administrators to look at it.
  + Zachary - Shorter period is fine. It’s important to have a clear window of when it opens and closes so that we can let our districts know a month in advance that the survey is coming and what the purpose of it is for leadership that are new.
  + Laura Casdorph - I just wanted to echo what Tammy said. Summer and fall is a rough time because so many administrators change positions in the summer. I'm okay with it being shorter, but a different time of year.

1. **11:10  State and Regional Capacity Building Updates**

Lead: State agency representatives

State agency representatives are invited to provide updates that are relevant to the Education Workgroup membership (i.e. state policies, standards, frameworks, state-to-district communications/training, etc.).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **State / Jurisdiction** | **State or Regional Capacity Building Update** |
| Regional | Sustainable Schools CoP   * This group has not been active this year; we are considering shifting focus to provide a space for collaboration for schools working through green schools certification programs. * Lindsey Walker is coordinating. Please reach out with ideas or questions. [walkerl@nwf.org](mailto:walkerl@nwf.org) |
| VA | * K-12 Environmental Literacy Strategic Plan Awaiting approval from the Secretary of Natural Resources; currently at DOE. * EnviroLearn Professional Development Series Launched Spring 2025. Completed sessions: *WaterWise* and *Arts in Environmental Education* (with VMFA). Next session: *History in Environmental Education* (Oct 2025). 30 teachers were funded to bring projects into classrooms. Partners include USGS, SWCDs, State Parks, DOE, DWR, DOF, NGOs, VCA, and more. * iSEEVA GIS Map Launch  Officially launched in collaboration with GenThrive. Now includes 60 providers and 198 programs.   + [Virginia profile](https://genthrive.org/partner-organization/virginia-department-of-conservation-recreation/)   + [National dashboard](https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/daniel.ramirez3546/viz/Gen_ThriveNationalDashboard1_0/Dashboard) * Grants & Network Growth   + BWET & CBT grants in progress via VSELA and VAEE/VEN.   + District Environmental Literacy Plan template under revision; to be showcased at VSELA Pre-Conference (Oct 2025).   + VEN website launched:[vaelitnetwork.org](http://vaelitnetwork.org)   + 5 OF 8 VDOE Superintendent regions have regional network teams which are actively working to get established. * 2025 Expanded High School Science *Standards of Learning* are scheduled for final review at the Board of Education in November. These are for 11 high school courses without current standards, including Environmental Science. |
| PA | The [STEELS](https://www.pdesas.org/Page/Viewer/ViewPage/58/) standards are the state academic standards starting with this school year (effective 7/1/2025); new assessments have rolled out.  The PA ELit Network is retooling for 2026 - Steering Committee monthly meeting on 10/16, Cross-sector Partners bi-annual meeting on 10/17  New EE staff at PA DEP interested in joining and becoming more active in the EE workgroup and PA ELIT team. Tammie and Chris K. are chatting with them on 10/15 |
| DC | DOEE Budget cuts to Elementary MWEEs, fewer students will be engaged. Seeing 650 students combined, down from 2,000  DCEEC received CBT funding to hire network coordinator and the job posting is now open. |
| MD | * [Outdoor Learning Partnership](https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/Environmental-Education/Outdoor-Learning-Partnership.aspx)   + Voting on Recommendations and Actions for 2025 Annual Report * Maryland BWET Update   + Working in the Planning of Learning Labs * Final Rounds of Feedback on Maryland Environmental Literacy Plan Template * [CTE Program of Study Approval](https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/CTE/standards.aspx)   + Agriculture Science   + Horticultural Science   + Renewable Energy * MAEOE   + MAEOE Green Schools Applications open * MELAN   + Funding to expand regional hubs   + Aligning MELAN work into MAEOE strategic planning   + Maryland Genthrive in progress |
| DE | DAEE had a virtual conference in Sept & new Board nominations.  Announced new Communities in Nature Network- 1st Meeting October 29 (Virtual); Delaware State Parks joining Stroud & Red Clay School District on mini-MWEEs |

1. **11:30 Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:** January 5, 2026 from 10:00 – 11:30am

**Attendees:**

Meredith Lemke, Olivia Wisner, Vince Meldrum, Courtney Hallacher, Chelsea McClure, Zachary Carey, Samantha Cotten, Ellen Powell, Frank Rodgers, Lori Schoenwiesner, Cassiopeia Camara, Grace Manubay, Angel Burns, Tom Ackerman, Candace Lutzow-Felling, Anne Self, Laura Casdorph, Stephanie Tuckfield, Tamara Peffer, Michelle Niedermeier, Mindy Musser, Lindsey Walker, Chris Kemmerer, Laura Collard, Coreen Weilminster, Kendra Bierman, Adrienne Farfalla, Emily Stransky, Julie Travaglini, Karen Mullin, Jemima Clark, Krysta Hougen-Ryall