

## Background

---

In 2010, House Bill 10-1131 was passed creating a Colorado Kids Outdoors Grant Program, administered through the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, and requiring the Colorado Department of Education to adopt a statewide plan for environmental education. The goals of both the grant program and the statewide plan are twofold: (1) to improve young people's knowledge of the environment and (2) to increase young people's opportunities for outdoor educational experiences. In partnership with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, CDE developed the Colorado Environmental Education Plan as a roadmap for building the partnerships and awareness needed to promote, coordinate, and sustain standards-based environmental education across the state.

## Outreach Efforts

---

After presenting an initial draft of the Colorado Environmental Education Plan to the State Board in January, 2012, the department conducted 14 public meetings and focus groups with K-12 educators, natural resources constituents, environmental educators, and sportsmen groups. In addition, an online survey was open for 30 days in an effort to collect feedback from the general public. From January through March, 2012, over 250 Coloradans took part in these outreach efforts conducted in Alamosa, Aurora, Denver, Durango, Grand Junction, Greeley, and Pueblo.

The following organizations are a representative sample of those who were invited and/or participated in the Plan feedback. **Boldface** organizations were present at feedback sessions.

Angling University  
**Aspen Center for Environmental Studies**  
Bull Moose Sportmen's Alliance  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
**City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks**  
**Department**  
**Colorado Canyons Association**  
Colorado Traditional Archers Society  
**Colorado Bowhunters Association**  
**Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment**  
**Colorado Farm Bureau**  
**Colorado Livestock Association**  
**Colorado Mule Deer Association**  
**Colorado Oil & Gas Association**  
Colorado Outfitters Association  
**Colorado Parks and Wildlife**  
**Colorado Pheasants Forever**  
Colorado State 4-H Shooting Sports  
**Colorado Trout Unlimited**  
**Colorado Youth Outdoors**  
**Denver Water Youth Education Programs**

**Denver Zoo**  
Ducks Unlimited  
The Flyfisher Group  
**Fort Lewis College**  
**Grand Valley Audubon**  
Grand Valley Anglers  
**Jeffco Outdoor Lab Schools**  
Mule Deer Foundation  
**National Park Service**  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
**Outdoor Education of Western Colorado**  
Pheasants Forever  
**Regis University**  
**Roaring Fork Conservancy**  
**Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory**  
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
**US Forest Service**  
**Water Center at Colorado Mesa University**  
**Wildland Awareness and Educational Institute**  
Wild Sheep Foundation

---

## Feedback

---

Through a qualitative analysis of the responses, five themes emerged from focus group, public meetings, and online feedback sessions. The themes were issues related to: **implementation, dissemination, funding, evaluation, and general comments**. All feedback was considered in the revision of the Colorado Environmental Education plan.

### 1. Implementation issues included:

- The potential lack of commitment of teachers, districts, and administrators in implementing the CEEP;
- The nature of the Colorado Environmental Education Council (CEELC), including, the composition of membership, how members will be selected, and the timeline for the creating the council; and,
- The challenge of implementation for teachers in a time of budget cuts.

### 2. Dissemination issues included:

- Concerns over the dissemination of the CEEP, specifically related to how to get the plan into the hands of all interested parties;
- The importance of strengthening, and if necessary, developing networks or partnerships of environmental educator program providers, school districts, and teachers; and,
- How environmental education providers can better connect with educators.

### 3. Funding issues included:

- Concerns related to funding the dissemination, implementation (including teacher training and field trip transportation), and evaluation of this plan.

### 4. Evaluation issues included:

- How to evaluate of the effectiveness of the plan; and,
- How to evaluate students' level of environmental literacy.

### 5. Recommended changes to CEEP included:

- The suggestion to align the plan with the No Child Left Inside Act
- Clarify what is already being done and what needs to be created; honor the work that is already being done.
- Include direct/explicit connections between the plan and natural resources, such as water, and sportsmen (hunting, fishing).
- Include connections to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).
- Connect the plan to the classroom and school; environmental education is outdoors *and* indoors.

## Revisions to the Colorado Environmental Education Plan

In response to feedback from focus groups and public meetings, the following outlines the process through which revisions were made to the CEEP.

A small committee including representatives from the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education, Colorado Parks & Wildlife and the Colorado Department of Education conducted a qualitative analysis of all comments collected during the feedback sessions.

1. Members of the committee conducted an independent review of the comments.
2. Themes emerged during the analysis.
3. The members of the committee met to compare identified themes and to “norm” their analyses to ensure consistency.
4. Finally, the themes were assigned a color and all comments were color coded.

Following the qualitative analysis, all comments were reviewed for inclusion or exclusion from the revision. The criteria for inclusion/exclusion were determined based on whether or not it was within the scope of the legislation, and whether or not there were conflicting recommendations. Below is a sampling of how comments were addressed in the revised plan.

Comment	Addressed	CEEP Reference
It is essential that this plan meets all the guidelines of the proposed federal No Child Left Inside act, to help Colorado qualify for federal grants.	The three primary goals of the CEEP are aligned with the goals of the No Child Left Inside Act	pgs. 7, 13
Colorado Farm Bureau questions why agriculture is not being represented on the Colorado Environmental Education Plan.	Agriculture included in Colorado’s Current Landscape section (pg. 8); Highlight on Bear Creek High School’s agricultural program (pg. 41)	pgs. 8, 10, 41
There should be a plan for revision (every 5 years?) and for evaluating the effectiveness of the plans.	Revising the CEEP was added as a responsibility of the Leadership Council	pg. 17
There needs to be language that makes it clear that environmental education can be taught in a variety of outdoor environments from city parks to federal/state/private lands.	“Opportunities exist in rural, urban and suburban locales, and within many cultural contexts. In addition, learning experiences at state and regional historic sites, local museums, and on local school grounds, also provide invaluable opportunities...” (pg. 14).	pgs. 14, 20
Further emphasis should be placed on hunting and fishing outdoor experiences.	“Colorado schools and community providers have the opportunity to promote outdoor recreation, such as hunting, fishing, archery and adventure education, to ensure all students have the opportunity to foster connections and routines in the outdoors” (pg. 8)	pgs. 8, 24