

## 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 (CDE) 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

---

After presenting an initial draft of the Colorado Environmental Education Plan (CEEP) to the State Board of Education 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 used to collect feedback from the general public. From January through March, 2012, over 250 Coloradoans took part in these outreach efforts conducted in Alamosa, Aurora, Denver, Durango, Grand Junction, Greeley, and Pueblo. The following organizations were invited and/or participated in focus groups and outreach meetings. Organizations listed in **boldface** were present at feedback sessions.

**Adams 12 School District**  
**Alliance for Sustainable Colorado**  
Angling University  
**Aspen Center for Environmental Studies**  
**Audubon Society of Greater Denver**  
**Aurora Public Schools**  
**Beulah School of Natural Sciences**  
**Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks**  
**Department**  
**Boulder Valley School District**  
Bull Moose Sportmen's Alliance  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
**Butterfly Pavilion**  
**Cal-Wood Education Center**  
**Catamount Institute**  
**Cherry Creek School District**  
**Citizens for Clean Energy**  
**City of Durango**  
**City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department**  
**Colorado Alliance for Environmental**  
**Education**  
**Colorado Bowhunters Association**  
**Colorado Canyons Association**  
**Colorado Community College System**  
**Colorado Council for Wildlife Rehabilitation**

**Colorado Department of Natural Resources**  
**Colorado Department of Public Health and**  
**Environment**  
**Colorado Farm Bureau**  
**Colorado Livestock Association**  
**Colorado Mule Deer Association**  
**Colorado Oil and Gas Association**  
Colorado Outfitters Association  
**Colorado Parks and Recreation Association**  
**Colorado Parks and Wildlife**  
**Colorado Pheasants Forever**  
**Colorado River Watch**  
**Colorado Sportsman Wildlife Fund**  
Colorado State 4-H Shooting Sports  
**Colorado State Forest Service**  
Colorado Traditional Archers Society  
**Colorado Trout Unlimited**  
**Colorado Youth Outdoors**  
**Colvig Silver Camps**  
**Community Members**  
**Crazy Horse Educational Expeditions**  
**CSU Environmental Learning Center**  
**CSU Extension**  
**CSU, Pueblo**  
**Denver Public Schools**

**Denver Water Youth Education Program**  
**Denver Zoo**  
 Ducks Unlimited  
**Durango Nature Studies**  
**Fort Lewis College**  
**Friends of Dinosaur Ridge**  
**Gone Feral LLC**  
**Grand Valley Anglers**  
**Grand Valley Audubon**  
**High Plains Environmental Center**  
**Jeffco Open Space**  
**Jeffco Outdoor Lab Schools**  
**Larimer County Natural Resources**  
**Lincoln Middle School**  
**McKinstry**  
**Mesa County District 51 Schools Outdoor Education Program**  
**Mountain Park Environmental Center**  
 Mule Deer Foundation  
**National Park Service**  
**National Park Service - Colorado National Monument**  
 National Wild Turkey Federation  
**Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo**  
**Outdoor Education of Western Colorado**  
**Outdoor Lab Foundation**  
**Partners for a Clean Environment**  
**Poudre Learning Center**  
**Pueblo City High School**  
**Pueblo City-County Health Department**

**Regis University**  
**Rio Grande National Forest**  
**Roaring Fork Conservancy**  
 Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society  
**Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory**  
 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
**Roxborough State Park**  
**San Juan Mountains Association**  
**San Luis Valley Environmental and Conservation Education Council**  
**Senator Michael Bennett's office**  
**South Metro Fire Rescue**  
**Southwest Colorado Community College**  
**Teaching Environmental Science Naturally Program**  
 The Flyfisher Group  
**Thorne Nature Experience**  
**Trout Unlimited**  
**University of Colorado Denver Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences**  
**University of Northern Colorado**  
**US Forest Service**  
**Valley Courier Newspaper**  
**Water Center at Colorado Mesa University**  
**Widefield School Dist. #3**  
 Wild Sheep Foundation  
**Wildland Awareness and Educational Institute**  
**Yampah Mountain High School**  
**Your True Nature**

---

## Feedback

---

Five themes emerged from focus group, public meetings, and online feedback sessions. The themes identified 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 would 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 proposed No Child Left Inside Act.
- An acknowledgement of the programs already in existence, work that is already being done, and what needs to be created.
- The recommendation to include explicit connections between the plan and natural resources, agriculture, and sportsmen as well as to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).
- A connection of the plan to the classroom and school, recognizing that environmental education is outdoors *and* indoors.

---

## Revisions to the Colorado Environmental Education Plan

---

In response to feedback from focus groups and public meetings, the Colorado Department of Education and Colorado Department of Natural Resources conducted a qualitative analysis of all comments submitted. Following the analysis, all comments were reviewed and considered for inclusion in the final plan. The following criteria guided the decision making process: the recommendations (1) were within the scope of the legislation, (2) added value to the plan, (3) clarified the intent of the plan, and (4) were not in conflict with other recommendations.