



An Advocate's Guide to the FY 2025 EE Appropriations Campaign March/April 2024

Background

Federal environmental education (EE) programs through the EPA and NOAA provide critical funding for state and local education initiatives that help students and the general public participate in community decisions about environmental issues. *For fiscal year 2025, we are seeking a needed funding increase for these essential programs.*

Appropriations subcommittees in the Senate and House will begin to hold meetings in the coming weeks to determine funding allocations for the FY '25 budget. These allocations will be influenced, in part, by requests that come from other members of Congress in the form of "Dear Colleague" letters in support of individual programs. **It is important that we generate as many Congressional signatures for the letters regarding EE programs at NOAA and EPA as possible over the next couple of weeks! The letters may have different deadlines, but all timelines are all very short so we urge you to make your initial emails/calls ASAP - today!**

If you have any questions, contact:

Brock Adler, brockadler@gmail.com or Sarah Bodor, sarah@naaee.org - Thanks!

The Programs

National Environmental Education Act / EPA Office of Environmental Education

This 30-year-old federal program directs essential grants to EE across the country. It funds innovative programming, facilitates key professional development, enables scholars and practitioners to conduct basic research, and provides vital basic services for the field. The program is central to the work of EE, including a local grant program key for communities all around the US. [Environmental Education Grant Descriptions | US EPA](#) (Link is external.)

- **NAAEE Position:** This very effective program should be funded at \$14 million for fiscal year 2025.
- **Our Ask:** We urge Representatives to sign a letter circulated by Rep. Neguse (CO-2) and Rep. Magaziner (RI-2) to appropriators in support of this funding, and

Senators to sign a similar letter from Sen. Gillibrand (NY), to the Senate subcommittee that focuses on the Interior and other departments, including the EPA program.

- FYI, here is the letter that is currently being [circulated in the House](#) in support of EPA/NEEA funding, and here's the [Senate letter from last year](#) that you can refer to and/or forward to Congressional offices.

Download our [fact sheet on funding the National Environmental Education Act](#) via the EPA Office of Environmental Education to share with Congressional offices.

The deadlines for us to request support for the House and Senate letters have not been set, but they will likely be the first weeks of April - SO ACTING SOONER IS BETTER!

NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (B-WET)

The NOAA B-WET program promotes locally relevant, experiential learning for K-12 students. The competitive, peer-reviewed funding promotes “meaningful watershed educational experiences” in six regions: California, Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, Hawai'i, New England, and the Pacific Northwest. Since 2002, NOAA has invested over \$100 million to support more than 800 B-WET projects. Funding has been stagnant over the past few years, while the need for this type of education has grown dramatically. www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/awards (Link is external.)

- **NAAEE Position:** We endorse increased funding to \$12 million for fiscal year 2025..
- **Our Ask:** We urge Members of Congress to sign a combined letter to Appropriators in support of this funding, and for the ELP Grant Program - LETTER NOT AVAILABLE YET.

NOAA Environmental Literacy Program (ELP)

This important program provides the public with science-based environmental education related to increasing community resilience and efficacy in solving local environmental problems. Funding for the ELP program has been level for a number of years, while demand for the funding has grown. www.elp-awards.education.noaa.gov/index.php (Link is external.)

- **NAAEE Position:** We endorse increased funding to \$8 million for fiscal year 2025.
- **Our Ask:** We urge Members of Congress to sign a combined letter to Appropriators in support of this funding, and the B-WET program.

Download or link our [fact sheet on NOAA B-WET and ELP funding](#) to share with Congressional offices.

NOAA Education has a new [story map](#) that offers vivid examples of funding impacts across the agency's suite of programs.

The House and Senate deadlines have not been set yet.

What You Can Do and How To Do It

If this is the first time you have participated in this effort, here is a [complete guide](#) to the advocacy process. It does overlap some with the material in this document, but if you think you need the basics, then read that guide first.

Contact the D.C. offices of your Senators and Representatives to ask that they sign on to “Dear Colleague” letters in support of EE programs at NOAA (specifically, the Bay Watershed Education and Training program and Environmental Literacy Grants) and EPA (specifically the Office of Environmental Education). If you already have a relationship with a staff member in your Congressional offices, you should email them directly with the request. If you don’t have a current contact, check this [spreadsheet](#) to see if we have a contact (or sometimes two) for you to email. If not, call the D.C. offices using the script below to find out who the right person is to email.

- Check your Senators’ or Representatives’ [record of support for EE](#). If they have signed on to these letters in the past, **or supported EE in any fashion**, be sure to mention this in your email or call—it can make the decision to sign on again a no-brainer! *Note on the spreadsheet there’s a tab on the bottom to toggle between House and Senate.*
- If you call, then email follow up materials (including the fact sheets on grant programs at [NOAA](#) and [EPA](#)) so that the staff have the information they need to follow through. *This is a very routine process for them at this time of year and they are very familiar with these types of requests.*
- We are especially interested in asking legislators who are: freshmen, on appropriations committees, and anybody who has EVER supported our cause.
- Let us know how it went so that we can track outreach and monitor any needed follow up.
- NOTE: Members of the Senate and House appropriations committees often will not sign on to these letters of support, but they are in a position to be champions for, and endorse the programs internally in the committee, so please especially contact them!

Whom to Contact

If you already have a contact in an office, this is the very best person with whom to connect! If not, this [spreadsheet](#) has the names and emails for many contacts in Congressional offices. If there isn’t a contact listed, you will need to call the Washington DC offices of the legislator and ask who is the appropriations support coordinator and what is their email address. It may be hard to get this information over the phone but don’t give up! Our request does not always fit neatly into any of the tight categories that the people who answer the phone have a response. If they don’t know who the appropriations person might be, you could ask for the legislative staff who deals with education or the environment. If they give you two different names and emails, send a single email addressed to both of the people jointly.

Sample email to make a request - email is the preferred way to contact your legislators

(Note: bold/italic text in () is to be replaced by information you provide)

Subject: Appropriations programmatic sign-on letter request: EPA and NOAA Offices of Environmental Education

Hi -----,

EPA and NOAA education funding is essential for addressing our environmental challenges. These programs have very modest budgets, but the schools, nature centers, water conservation districts, and other organizations who benefit from the grant and other programs do a lot with a little!

Our district and state has benefited greatly from these programs; here are the fantastic grants received in the state and locally in the past ten years. ***(Ad link to the specific list from your state found in [this folder](#))***

Please help secure this crucial funding by having Representative/Senator ***(Your member of Congress)*** join many other Members of Congress and sign on to these letters:

EPA support letters circulated by: Reps. Magaziner (RI-2) and Neguse (CO-2), and Sen. Gillibrand (NY).

NOAA letters circulate by: ***(TBD)***

Deadline C.O.B. ***(TBD)***

Thank you for supporting environmental education!

(Your name)

(Your affiliation, if applicable; “member, your state EE association” is okay)

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Sample scripts for phone outreach

Sample telephone script for Senate outreach

(Ask if it is possible to speak to the person who handles appropriations issues related to the environment. It may not be; that is fine.)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is [name] from [city or town]. I am calling [on behalf of [organization and/or state environmental ed association]], to urge Senator [Name] to sign on to two Dear Colleague Letters in support of important appropriations for environmental education grants at EPA and NOAA.

The first asks the appropriations committee to provide a boost in funding for the National Environmental Education Act for fiscal year 2025. This letter is being circulated by Senator Gillibrand, who is asking that the program be funded at \$14 million. EPA’s environmental education grants are small but critical investments that provide significant returns for our communities and the local environment. Funding for this office has been stagnant for a decade and \$14M is the original amount authorized in 1990.

[If applicable, provide a description of the funding provided to your organization or within your state through an EPA grant. Find details on awarded grants by state here: [Environmental Education \(EE\) Grants | US EPA](#)]

A second letter urges Congress to support funding for the vital NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training and Environmental Literacy grant programs. Please sign on to this letter in support of these important programs—it is being circulated by Senator Baldwin’s office.

Environmental education is critical for [state]. It provides non-regulatory solutions to complex problems, engages students in real-world learning, and supports a healthy quality of life.

I will follow up with you by email with copies of the letters and contact information. Should I send these materials to you or is there another person I should contact?

Thank you for your time.

Sample script for House outreach

(Ask if it is possible to speak to the person who handles appropriations issues related to the environment. It may not be; that is fine)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is [name] from [city or town]. I am calling [on behalf of x organization, if appropriate] to urge Representative XXXXX to sign on to two Dear Colleague Letters in support of important appropriations for environmental education grants at EPA and NOAA.

The first asks the appropriations committee to provide a boost in funding for the National Environmental Education Act for fiscal year 2025. This letter is being circulated by Representatives Neguse and Langevin, who are asking for \$14 million for the program. EPA's environmental education grants are small but critical investments that yield significant returns for our communities and the local environment. Funding for this office has been stagnant for a decade and \$14M is the original amount authorized in 1990.

[If applicable, provide a description of the funding provided to your organization or within the Congressional district through an EPA grant. Find details on awarded grants by state here: [Environmental Education \(EE\) Grants | US EPA](#)]

A second letter urges Congress to appropriate \$12 million for the vital NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training program, and \$8 million for the Environmental Literacy Program. This represents a modest increase in funding over previous years. It also includes a request for funding to support climate change education. Please sign on to this letter in support of these important programs—it is being circulated by Rep. Kathy Castor.

Environmental education is critical for [state and district]. It provides non-regulatory solutions to complex problems, engages students and the general public in real-world learning, and supports a healthy quality of life.

I will follow up with you by email with copies of the letters and contact information. Should I send these materials to you or is there another person I should contact?

Thank you for your time.