

An Advocate's Guide to the FY21 EE Appropriations Campaign

Background

Federal environmental education (EE) programs through the EPA and NOAA have been crucial in funding local education initiatives that help students and the general public participate in community decisions about environmental issues. **Critical funding for these programs have once again been targeted for elimination in the President's budget proposal this year, and we need Congress to protect them in the federal budget.** For fiscal year 2021, we are seeking an overdue funding increase for these essential programs.

Appropriations committees in the Senate and House are will begin to hold meetings in the coming weeks to determine funding allocations for the FY21 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 Programs

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

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 \$50 million to support more than 600 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 the FY 2010 level of \$12 million
- **Our Ask: We urge Members of Congress to sign a letter to Appropriators in support of this funding**

NOAA Environmental Literacy Grant (ELG) Program

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



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- **NAAEE Position:** We endorse increased funding back to the FY 2010 level of \$8 million
- **Our Ask: We urge Members of Congress to sign a letter to Appropriators in support of this funding**

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

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. www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants(link is external)

- **NAAEE Position:** This very successful program should be funded at \$10 million for fiscal year 2021, a modest increase from FY 2016 appropriation of \$9.6 million, which was then cut to \$8.7 million for the past few years
- **Our Ask: We urge Members of Congress to sign a letter to Appropriators in support of this funding**

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

What You Can Do

Call the offices of your Senators and Representative 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 can also just email them directly with the request.

- Check your Senators’ or Representative’s [record of support for EE](#). If they have signed on to these letters in the past, be sure to mention this during your call—it can make the decision to sign on again a no-brainer!
- Ask to speak to the person in the office who handles environmental appropriations. If that person is unavailable, leave your message with the person on the line, but ask for an email address for the person with whom you should follow up.
- Send follow up materials (including the fact sheets on grant programs at [NOAA](#) and [EPA](#)) by email so that the staff have the information they need to follow through.



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- 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 the programs nonetheless!

Sample Scripts

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, if appropriate] to urge Senator 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 modest boost in funding for the National Environmental Education Act for fiscal year 2021. This letter is being circulated by Senator Gillibrand, who is asking that the program be funded at \$10 million. EPA's environmental education grants are small but critical investments that provide significant returns for our communities and the local environment.

*[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:
<https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>]*

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 organization, if appropriate] to urge Representative XXXXX to sign on to



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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 modest boost in funding for the National Environmental Education Act for fiscal year 2021. This letter is being circulated by Representatives Neguse and Langevin, who are asking for \$10 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.

[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: <https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>]

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. Please sign on to this letter in support of these important programs—it is being circulated by Rep. Jared Huffman.

Environmental education is critical for [state and district]. 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.

Additional Resources

[eeAdvocate: A Guide for Environmental Education Professionals and Supporters](#)