April xx, 2017

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Udall, Chairman Calvert, and Ranking Member McCollum,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to fund the National Environmental Education Act (NEEA) at $8.7 million in the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations bill. We thank you for your past support of NEEA and ask that you maintain level funding for this highly effective program.

Programs funded through NEEA have far-reaching and well-documented positive impacts. They enable citizens from all walks of life to make informed, scientifically sound environmental decisions regarding energy consumption, water quality and conservation, and energy efficiency at homes, schools, and other buildings. They provide practical applications for math, science, technology and engineering. Research indicates that this type of education increases critical thinking and the problem solving skills necessary to foster innovation and keep America competitive in a fiercely global economy.

Since 1990 the NEEA has served as a highly effective tool for improving student performance in science and math and protecting public health. NEEA Grants support programs that help build 21st Century skills and promote job training and innovation. Moreover, this relatively small investment in communities yields an impressive return, fostering public-private partnerships that leverage scarce federal resources to address local needs and priorities.

NEEA created the Office of Environmental Education within the Environmental Protection Agency to establish guidelines and best practices based on sound research in the field and support state and local efforts. These guidelines establish a neutral approach to environmental issues that considers all perspectives and encourages a non-regulatory approach to address them. Environmental education does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. Rather, fact-based information teaches individuals how to view and critique all sides of an issue and enhances their own problem-solving and decision-making skills.
The NEEA is essential to continued efforts to engage individuals and communities in understanding their local environment and human health, and in taking responsibility for protecting both. As you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year 2018, please continue your support for NEEA with level funding.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

North American Association for Environmental Education