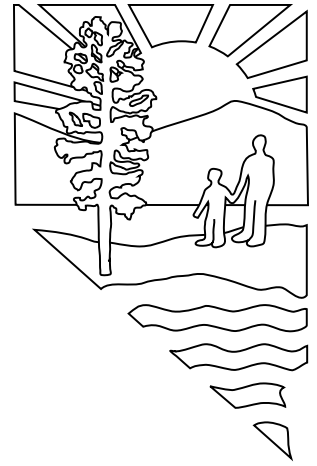


NNREC

Nevada Natural Resource Education Council

a catalyst for environmental literacy



August 18, 2007

Congressman Dean Heller
House of Representatives
1023 Longworth HOB, Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Heller,

The Nevada Natural Resources Education Council (NNREC) and our partners ask that you support the No Child Left Inside Act of 2007, as introduced by Congressman John Sarbanes of Maryland. As a member of the House Education Committee, we hope that you will take the opportunity to carefully consider the act and become a co-sponsor. NNREC and its partners believe that the act will greatly increase opportunities for students to participate in additional activities that will enhance their science skills, improve their overall academic achievement, improve their quality of health and lead to increased stewardship of our natural resources.

The act would provide funding for increased training for teachers in environmental education and outdoor learning, encourage states to develop environmental literacy plans, and build state capacity for environmental education. NNREC is already working on these three areas, using funding from nonprofit organizations and state agencies, as well as support from a large number of partners. We feel that the act would accelerate these efforts by recognizing and funding them at the federal level. A key element of the Environmental Literacy Guideline which we have developed creates county level programs that partner school districts with agencies, organizations, businesses, higher education and the public to develop and support programs that create an understanding of and attachment to the place that people live and make their living.

Many of our members are teachers and nonformal educators who work with schools, and we have seen the intended effects of No Child Left Behind nearly eliminate science and social studies from schools in favor of reading and math. Lower science test scores, lack of classroom motivation, a detachment from the local community and natural environment, and childhood health problems are the result. Students in Nevada are not getting the classroom and field education necessary to give them a strong foundation in science: 45% of 4th graders were “below basic proficiency” in 2005, ranking students in Nevada in the bottom 20% of states. Without a good foundation in science in elementary school and beyond, students don’t understand – nor do they care about – their local environment and what they can do to conserve and protect it. Upon seeing Lake Tahoe for the first time, a 6th grader from Reno once asked “are there sharks in this ocean?” Many students don’t know the difference between a lake and an ocean, nor that Nevada itself used to be covered by an ocean. They need to be given this foundation in earth sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences so that they understand how ecosystems, weather and water, and climate are interrelated

and impact our entire state. The No Child Left Inside Act will correct course and bring real-world learning back into the classroom.

We would like to schedule an appointment with one of your staff members in the state to further discuss the act and the benefits of environmental education to academic performance, an informed and responsible citizenry, and a higher quality of life in Nevada. The Nevada Natural Resource Education Council is the only statewide organization supporting environmental education, but we work with a large number of state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, school districts, higher education institutions, and businesses to serve as a catalyst for environmental literacy. We are proud of the work we do, and that of our partners, and would be pleased to tell you more about our work.

Sincerely,



Dan Allison
Executive Director
775-882-2375 / 775-997-4937 / director@nnrec.org



Stephanie Lefevre
President of the Board of Directors
775-625-2480 / orchid@cascadeaccess.com