

Education and Outreach Subcommittee Meeting VI

March 11, 2010 4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Attendees: Alicia Malloy, Mary Cutler, Sara Peel, Linda Prokopy, Darci Zolman

Float Trip Planning Option:

Darci Zolman provided an overview of the two efforts in which she has been involved – the Arrow Head RC&D River Expedition and the Warsaw High School-Tippecanoe Watershed Foundation float event. Darci's input will lay the foundation for any float trips/events we plan as part of our educational effort.

- Arrow Head RC&D started their river expeditions 17 years ago and have won state and national awards for their efforts.
- Their trip begins at the Tippecanoe State Park on the Tippecanoe River, while the TWF trip occurs on Grassy Creek from the boat landing to Lake Tippecanoe.
- Originally, Arrow Head RC&D borrowed rafts from the national guard; they now own their own rafts at a cost of \$1500/raft including paddles, life jackets, etc.
- They complete five day trips over a two week period in September with approximately 100 students/day.

How it works:

- Cost: \$10/student to cover insurance, drinks, and raft maintenance
- Students arrive at the park at 8:30 with the first activity an on-land one starting at 9:00 am. This helps get everyone on the same page re: expectations and allows stragglers to mix in with the group before pushing off.
- The on-land effort includes a safety lecture. Their insurance requires that life jackets must be worn and be buckled while in the boat. They are also required to wear sturdy shoes without open toes. Students not following this rule are not permitted to participate. Note: standard insurance umbrella does not cover this event, special insurance is required.
- Two adults per raft – for the RC&D event the RC&D provides most of the volunteers on the rafts as staff so that they can act as adult educators while on the water.
- Each adult receives a packet of information and instructions including safety check and information to be covered.
- They always have Conservation Officers along on the trip but the sheriff's dive team may be another option.
- For the RC&D trip, they pull off the river three times: forestry (10:15), water quality (11:30), and wildlife (1:15). For the forestry stop, local consultants, state foresters, etc provide a tour and discussion of forestry topics. The water quality session includes macroinvertebrate sample and water chemistry testing and is conducted by two on-raft adult volunteers. The wildlife stop occurs at the nature center where river otters and freshwater mussels are detailed. For both the forestry and wildlife stops, instructors meet the rafts on the land.
- The goal: get students to connect with the river, localize their experience, and provide team building opportunity.
- Students are mixed among schools within each boat, provide their own lunches, and load gear at the end of the day. Each student signs a code of conduct form prior to arriving.
- Each boat takes a quiz and notes throughout the day. The winning boat receives t-shirts and it is normally pretty competitive between groups.

- Volunteer recruitment: RC&D covers a 10 county area so there are a large number of volunteers from which to pull. Their volunteers are SWCD employees, from the state park, DNR, and a few local landowners. Over the 17 year program, a core group of volunteers has been established. For the TWF trip, it is relatively new; however, the partnership with TWF has allowed for the use of on-lake volunteers to provide their pontoons and partner stream and lake education together. Goshen College also provides instructors for the day-long event as a trade off for Darci instructing them on environmental education.
- Cancellation: they've never had to cancel but have delayed their launch before. Some schools have cancelled on them and they do bow to school policy on student safety and timing.
- Getting started: The first time they conducted this event, they rafted for two days within one week. Volunteers spent countless hours on the river trying to time things out – first in canoes then in rafts. They originated with a 6 mile trip, then cut it to 4.5 mile trip and maintain that length. This length was best due to needing to compact the day on the water for the students so as not to exhaust them and to allow all students to be back in time for practices, etc. Darci recommended that we look at maps to determine appropriate length and options, and then float the river to figure out our stops. Potential partners to make this more of a global effort: Wabash RC&D. Sara will contact to ascertain interest and work with Mary and Alicia to move things forward.
- If we want to use their canoes we must plan around the following schedules:
 - Sullivan County: first week in October
 - Arrow Head: first two weeks in September
 - TWF: last week in August