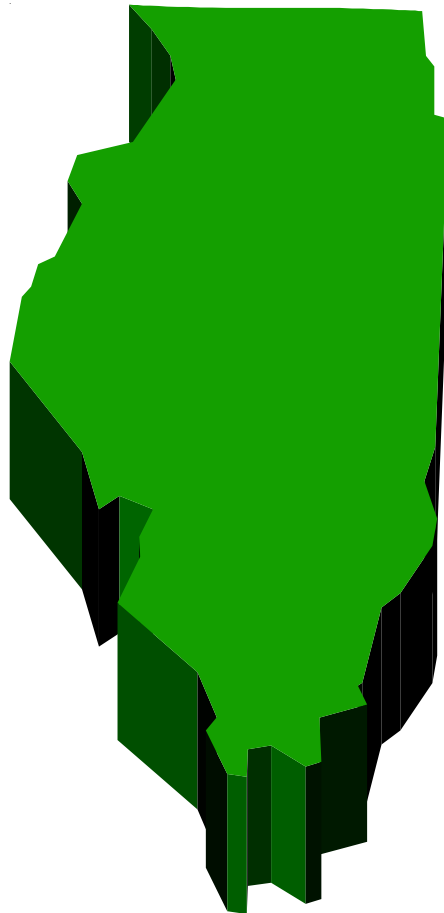


# **Environmental Literacy for Illinois:**

*A strategic plan for  
environmental education  
in Illinois*

**September 2005**



## **FOREWORD**

The *Environmental Literacy for Illinois*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Environmental Literacy for Illinois* (EL for IL) strategic plan is a systemic five-year plan, designed to fully incorporate environmental education into Illinois learning opportunities. This plan prioritizes those needs and outlines strategies to provide the necessary direction for the establishment of environmental literacy as an integral part of lifelong learning. Annual action plans and budgets for such an effort may be generated from this document. The plan will play a central role in achieving the goals of each focus area by:

- providing a mechanism for implementing environmental education programs and utilizing the resources of Illinois' communities;
- assisting citizen access to local, state, and federal environmental information and data resources;
- designing implementation options for modeling and adapting effective programs;
- developing a mechanism for including business, industry, civic groups, etc. in partnership opportunities, including career awareness;
- providing avenues for environmental learning for providers from throughout the learning continuum, including preservice, inservice and informal education, as well as scientific expertise;
- correlating with emerging and existing national, state, and local standards and recommendations; and
- continuing internal evaluation and external review.

At the original writing in 1995 each of these specialists chaired a committee focusing on an area of environmental education need in Illinois:

Ms. Kathy Andrews, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Springfield; Dr. John Beaver, Western Illinois University, Macomb; Ms. Nan Buckardt, Lake County Forest Preserves, Libertyville; Ms. Carol Fialkowski, The Field Museum, Chicago; Dr. Marylin Lisowski, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston; Ms. Judy Mann, Environmental Education Association of Illinois (EEAI), Olympia Fields; Ms. Gwen Pollock, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Springfield; Mr. Mike Schneider, Regional Office of Education, Belleville; Dr. Deborah Simmons, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb; Dr. Trudy Volk and Mr. Versil Withrow, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; Dr. Robert A. Williams, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

2005 Revision Team:

Ms. Kathy Andrews and Ms. Randy Wiseman, IDNR, Springfield; Ms. Nan Buckardt, Lake County Forest Preserves, Libertyville; Ms. Carol Fialkowski, Field Museum (retired), Chicago; Ms. Mary Lamb, Environmental Education Consultant, Park Ridge; Ms. Kristin Jacobson, Forest Park Nature Center, Peoria Heights; Mr. Steve Kolsto and Ms. Kristi Morris – Richards, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Springfield; Ms. Judy Miller, Urbana Park District Anita Purves Nature Center, Urbana; Ms. Gwen Pollock, ISBE, Springfield; Ms. Mary Rice, Spring Valley Nature Sanctuary, Schaumburg; Ms. Angela Smith, EEAI, McLean; Ms. Tara Wisnewski, Forest Preserve District of Will County, Mokena

## INTRODUCTION

The *Environmental Literacy for Illinois* (EL for IL) strategic plan is the culmination of the efforts of dedicated individuals from throughout Illinois who represent public schools, colleges, universities, resource agencies, businesses, government agencies, and nonformal environmental education providers. These visionaries have long aspired to establish an Illinois plan for environmental education.

In 1957, legislation directed the first mandates for conservation education in Illinois. Over the years, individuals and organizations on the local, regional and state levels have focused energies on successful activities and projects to improve lifelong learning and decision-making skills relating to our environment. Many of these programs have been used in Illinois, providing for inservice teacher education and classroom activities. In 1991, the Conservation Education Advisory Board (CEAB) began the development of its own strategic plan for conservation education, having an impact on agency-directed efforts. Task forces charged by the Governor and Conservation Congress have made recommendations regarding the necessity of coordinated environmental education efforts.

The efforts for the original plan began officially in 1993 with informal meetings organized through Lieutenant Governor Kustra, the Governor's Science Advisory Council, the Illinois State Board of Education, Center on Scientific Literacy and other member agencies of the Conservation Education Advisory Board. Model legislation, which has been enacted in several states, served as a template for the original design of EL for IL.

The actual formulation of EL for IL began in earnest in late 1994 and continued through the spring of 1995, funded through the Illinois State Board of Education's Center on Scientific Literacy. During this time, committees met to design a plan that can bring effective, meaningful environmental education to the schools in Illinois.



3. Legislation mandates a division of Environmental Education at the Illinois State Board of Education, however, the position has not been established.
4. Environmental education centers exist at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and Northern Illinois University. Publicly and privately funded environmental centers are found throughout the state. For the most part, the Illinois centers operate independently and little coordination exists between programs.
6. The Environmental Education Association of Illinois (EEAI), founded in 1972, has over 200 members from throughout the state. Their master plan focuses on services to both nonformal and teacher members including training, web-based resource lists and its annual conference.

The Illinois Environmental Education Advancement Consortium (IEEAC) was established in March 1993. It has received grants from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Many projects have been completed through such funding. IEEAC has promoted the upgrading of preservice environmental education, encouraged the incorporation of environmental education into grades K-12, provided a workshop for inservice providers, created a website for the organization, and funded the update of EL for IL in 1998 and 2005.

7. An on-line database of EE resources exists at [www.IllinoisEE.org](http://www.IllinoisEE.org).
8. EEAII hosts an annual conference each spring.
9. An instruction requirement does exist, as currently listed in the School Code of Illinois, amended by P.A. 86-229, 2, eff. Jan. 1, 1990... “in every public school there shall be instruction, study and discussion of current problems and need in the conservation of natural resources, including but not limited to air pollution, water pollution, waste reduction and recycling, the effects of excessive use of pesticides, preservation of wilderness areas, forest management, protection of wildlife and humane care of domestic animals.”
10. EE correlations exist for all IL Learning Standards. EE correlations for Science and Social Studies descriptors also exist.



## STEERING COMMITTEE

GOAL #1	Steering Committee efforts will develop a process to ensure statewide implementation of the <i>Environmental Literacy for Illinois</i> (EL for IL) Strategic Plan.
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### **OBJECTIVE 1: Develop a plan to provide oversight.**

- Strategies:
1. Select subcommittee chairs, one per goal, to ensure diverse representation of state-wide shareholders, with revolving 3-5 year terms.
  2. Design, adapt and implement a five year governance plan that encourages data collection and assessment throughout the work done on each of the EL for IL goals.
  3. Connect oversight responsibilities to applicable agencies and organizations to delegate and assume responsibilities to a greater network of EL leaders.

### **OBJECTIVE 2: Ensure integration of goal planning and timelines.**

- Strategies:
1. Implement and revise objectives and strategies as needed.
  2. Coordinate communication among EL for IL subcommittees.



**IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR GOAL #1**  
**(goal.objective.strategy)**

YEAR	1.1.1	1.1.2	1.1.3	1.2.1	1.2.2	1.2.3	1.3.1	1.3.2	1.3.3	1.3.4	1.4.1	1.4.2
1	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X
4	X	X	X		X		X	X	X			X
5	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X	

## EVALUATION

GOAL #2: Evaluation efforts will establish a mechanism for assessing, analyzing and

## ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES

**GOAL #3:** Electronic Information Resources efforts will expand the use and usefulness of the environmental literacy (EL) internet resource.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Identify providers of environmental literacy information for incorporation into the statewide database ([www.IllinoisEE.org](http://www.IllinoisEE.org)).**

- Strategies:
1. Establish criteria for incorporation of quality links into the existing database.
  2. Review appropriate format for resources links annually.
  3. Research and promote existing electronic resources.
  4. Establish links to identified resources.
  5. Investigate potential links to new EL sites and centers in Illinois.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Assure access of quality EL resources.**

- Strategies:
1. Identify environmental literacy needs of diverse (expected and unexpected) audiences and populations.
  2. Develop and implement marketing strategies to promote awareness and access to EL internet resources.
  3. Evaluate effectiveness, quality and utility of EL internet resources.
  4. Survey EL providers, teachers and leaders to update trends, new ideas, concepts, resources and needs.
  5. Identify emerging EL concepts or issues that require access or development of new resources.

### IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR GOAL #3 (goal.objective.strategy)

YEAR	3.1.1	3.1.2	3.1.3	3.1.4	3.1.5	3.2.1	3.2.2	3.2.3	3.2.4	3.2.5
1	X	X		X		X			X	
2			X	X	X		X	X	X	X

## PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

GOAL #4 Preservice Teacher Education efforts will expand opportunities to increase awareness and skills in environmental literacy for teachers-to-be.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Establish a mechanism to exchange models of successful environmental education (EE) curriculum/instruction/assessment between post-secondary and nonformal environmental educators for preservice settings.**

- Strategies:
1. Arrange annual conferences for environmental education instructors.
  2. Research and implement a funding mechanism to establish networks.
  3. Compile listing of “providers” (e.g. colleges of education, art/science faculty, nonformals, etc.) for networking.
  4. Conduct comparative study of existing preservice EE efforts and opportunities according to content area standards (CAS).

**OBJECTIVE 2: Broaden environmental literacy opportunities for learning for preservice teachers.**

- Strategies:
1. Provide live and virtual environmental literacy opportunities for teachers-to-be, such as symposia, field experiences, independent study and practicum.
  2. Market learning opportunities to preservice teachers and faculty.
  3. Survey current providers of environmental courses or components.
  4. Develop and implement assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of programs.

**OBJECTIVE 3: Develop innovative standards-based environmental science specialization programs at undergraduate and graduate levels.**

- Strategies:
1. Collect current data and make projections about supply and demand for Environmental Studies specialization.
  2. Develop contacts in Illinois universities and colleges who can facilitate implementation of the environmental science specialization at institutions.
  3. Convene or meet individually with deans of colleges of education and post-secondary leaders for discussion, interest and action-planning.
  4. Seek funding for creation and program development.
  5. Propose basic standards-based framework for policy and program development.

### IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR GOAL #4 (goal.objective.strategy)

YEAR	41.1	4.1.2	4.1.3	4.1.4	4.2.1	4.2.2	4.2.3	4.2.4	4.3.1	4.3.2	4.3.3	4.2.4	4.2.5
1	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X			
2		X	X	X	X	X	X			X			
3					X	X	X	X			X	X	
4					X	X	X	X			X	X	X
5					X	X	X				X		X

## INSERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

**GOAL #5** Inservice Teacher Education efforts will promote incorporation of environmental literacy programs into PreK-12 teaching and learning.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Provide support for development and implementation of effective programs, activities and resources for standards-led environmentally literate classrooms.**

- Strategies:
1. Market resource opportunities to teachers and administrators effectively.
  2. Develop and implement supplemental models if needed.
  3. Develop, conduct and analyze periodic classroom needs assessments for environmental literacy resources and options.
  4. Emphasize access to CORE<sup>2</sup> resources and website resources.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Support opportunities for PreK-12 classroom teachers to deepen and broaden their own expertise in environmental literacy concepts, strategies and resources.**

- Strategies:
1. Develop criteria to evaluate effectiveness of opportunities.
  2. Conduct, analyze and respond to periodic teacher needs assessments.
  3. Access and sustain funding sources by marketing documented student achievement and classroom/teacher needs to decision-makers.
  4. Extend opportunities to PreK-12 teachers with attention to underserved audiences.
  5. Encourage partnerships for delivery and networking for implementation.

**OBJECTIVE 3: Pursue Master Environmental Literacy designation for teachers, classrooms, schools and districts.**

- Strategies:
1. Develop criteria for qualifications and responsibilities for all categories.
  2. Develop strategies to fund, promote, select, and recognize Master Environmental Literacy efforts.

### IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR GOAL #5 (goal.objective.strategy)

YEAR	5.1.1	5.1.2	5.1.3	5.1.4	5.2.1	5.2.2	5.2.3	5.2.4	5.2.5	5.3.1	5.3.2
1	X		X	X		X	X	X	X		
2	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
4	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
5	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		



## ENVIRONMENTAL CAREERS

GOAL #7	Environmental Careers efforts will promote environmental careers and career oriented partnerships among business, government, community and school interests.
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**OBJECTIVE 1: Coordinate development and dissemination of environmental career programs that link to the stages of career knowledge; awareness (grades K-6), exploration (grades 6-8), orientation (grades 9-10) and preparation (grades 11-12).**

- Strategies:
1. Develop, compile and circulate the results of a comprehensive survey collecting information on environmental careers, training sources and partnerships.
  2. Develop, compile and circulate information on environmental community service programs, field experiences, scholarships, internships/externships, conferences and other like opportunities.
  3. Work with the Career and Technical Education Division at Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and regional Education for Employment (EFE) Centers for possible integration of EL focus and concepts into applicable, established programs.
  4. Routinely update this information on the [www.IllinoisEE.org](http://www.IllinoisEE.org) database and market its utility.

### IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR GOAL #7 (goal.objective.strategy)

YEAR	7.1.1	7.1.2	7.1.3	7.1.4
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# **ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SITES AND CENTERS**



## GRANTS AND MINI-GRANTS FUNDING

**GOAL #9** Grants and Mini-Grants Funding efforts will establish mechanisms to assist grant providers and applicants to maximize success for funding environmental literacy projects.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Identify and promote potential funding sources.**

- Strategies:
1. Identify potential funding sources.
  2. Promote partnership opportunities.
  3. Disseminate information through the statewide database, [www.IllinoisEE.org](http://www.IllinoisEE.org) website, and other electronic means.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Develop a mini-grant template for grant funders and applicants.**

- Strategies:
1. Research existing grant programs to develop models for establishing mini-grants.
  2. Compare mini-grant programs to generalize policy structures review criteria for grant requirements, application processes and project evaluation.
  3. Promote environmental literacy mini-grant templates both for funders and applicants.

**OBJECTIVE 3: Encourage educators to utilize grant funding for environmental literacy projects.**

- Strategies:
1. Develop an on-line tutorial that includes tips for successful grant writing, current buzz words, questions to consider, pointers to incorporate, suggestions for directions etc...
  2. Offer a peer-preview service of proposal draft prior to its submission.

### IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR GOAL #9 (goal.objective.strategy)

YEAR	9.1.1	9.1.2	9.1.3	9.2.1	9.2.2	9.2.3	9.3.1	9.3.2
1	X	X						
2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	X	X	X			X	X	X
4	X	X	X			X		X
5	X	X	X			X		X

