

Conservation Congress 2014

The Results

Conservation Education:

Giving the Public a Greater Knowledge and Appreciation of Our Natural Resources

Recommendations:

1. Build and Use Partners to Develop and Distribute Educational Materials

The group recommended that IDNR should expand its educational partners across the state and utilize them to develop and distribute educational materials. Suggestions included using partner experts in developing Webcasts and materials, using partners to help with ENTICE (Environment and Nature Training Institute for Conservation Education) educator training and using partners to help reach minorities and underserved areas.

2. Engage in Web-based Education and Outreach

With very little staff and funding available, the best way to reach the most people is to utilize technology and make educational materials available via the Web. Web-based lessons, online ENTICE workshops, video podcasts and other Web-based programs will continue to exist but other options that can be explored and added include Webcasts, Webinars and mobile phone apps. The Kids for Conservation® program will be added as a Web-based version when staff and funding permit. Web-based programming will be targeted to various age groups and users (landowners, educators, school children, etc.).

3. Conduct an Asset Inventory and Needs Assessment within IDNR

Although Education is, in itself, a Division in IDNR, education and outreach activities are conducted throughout IDNR without agency coordination. Regular communication is needed between all IDNR Offices/Divisions about all educational activities that are occurring. An asset inventory would allow the IDNR to find out what educational activities are occurring in the agency, assess gaps that may exist in needs of our agency and our audiences and work together internally and externally to get information out to partners, constituents and other targeted audiences.

4. Need More Staff and Funding to Develop and Promote Outreach and Education to All

Qualified staff members are needed in the Division of Education to meet the demands of creating materials and implementing programs. To advance in utilizing Web-based educational options, qualified staff members must be hired and provided with the technological tools needed to deliver the desired products. Funding must be dedicated to the Division of Education in order to create materials, hire staff, provide more grants and, most importantly, to be able to reach the hardest and most critical students and populations (minorities and poor areas of the state).

5. Public Needs to be Able to Purchase Educational Materials Online

Understanding that there are virtually no dollars for the printing of materials, IDNR needs to make available for purchase manuals, posters, videos and other educational materials for the general public with the goal of generating revenue. Offering educational materials for purchase would require development of new publications and/or agreements with the photographers and others who have provided resources for the current publications.