



**Environmental Educators of
North Carolina
2022 Annual Report**

Letter from the President

Build a better future with EENC. More than just a tagline, this powerful statement fueled our passion and drive throughout 2022. We embarked on a mission to strengthen the field of environmental education, empowering individuals across all North Carolina communities to become catalysts for a just and sustainable world. Together, we accomplished remarkable milestones that have set us on a path of positive change.



Elise Tellez

In collaboration with our partners at the NC Office of Environmental Education and Public Affairs and the NC Department of Public Instruction, we kicked off an ambitious two-year project in February: the revision of North Carolina's Environmental Literacy Plan. This crucial document outlines our state's goals and strategies to enhance environmental literacy on a statewide scale. Getting environmental education incorporated into state curriculum standards is one of the quickest ways to ensure all students experience this transformative learning. This incorporation also helps policymakers, funders, education institutions, and the general public recognize and invest in environmental education. So when the NC K-12 Science Standards revision process started in May, we knew our community needed to be a part of the process. Based on the preliminary drafts, we are optimistic there will be a new environmental strand that extends across grade levels, and that would not have happened without our community's involvement.

As we looked inward, we dedicated significant time and effort to building a brighter future for EENC. This meant our focus was on preparing to embrace new opportunities and avenues for growth and identifying ways to build capacity. In our pursuit of becoming a national model, we crafted a comprehensive multi-year staffing plan. This strategic initiative enables us to amplify our impact, driving us closer to our goals while providing enhanced support to our invaluable community. We wasted no time in putting this plan into motion, as by the end of the year, we had already initiated the process of recruiting our third staff member. Simultaneously, our visionary Board of Directors analyzed our policy manual and bylaws, making critical updates to ensure clarity, adaptability, and flexibility as our organization evolves. We were overjoyed when these changes were approved by our membership in the fall, reinforcing our commitment to transparent governance and community collaboration.

Looking ahead, we are brimming with excitement for what the future holds. In 2023, we will continue to champion environmental education, advocating for its integration at both policy and practice levels. We will forge partnerships, expand our networks, and raise our voices to ensure that our vision of a sustainable and equitable world resonates far and wide. To all our members, partners, volunteers, and supporters, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering dedication and belief in the power of environmental education. Together, we are transforming lives and shaping a brighter future.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elise Tellez".

Letter from the Executive Director



Lauren Pyle

This past year has been an exciting year for EENC - and we've made great efforts toward our strategic goal of becoming a better resource to our state's environmental education community. Working with our partners at Chatham County Solid Waste & Recycling and the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance, we completed a 2-year EPA-funded project to expand the Don't Waste It! Curriculum across the southeast. Not only did we complete this project on time, despite planning the entire project prior to the pandemic, but we met or exceeded every single one of our goals for participation and learning.

We also added a new online course to our offerings, focused on Universal Design for Learning. This course prompts educators to focus on how they plan and teach - not just what they teach in order to help them to better serve diverse populations, specifically those with learning differences, physical accessibility needs, and language barriers. Now that the design is complete, EENC will be able to continue to offer this course regularly for years to come - as well as share this course with other statewide environmental education associations.

Finally, we've been working to understand and address the findings of the first phase of the SEEA Landscape Analysis. The results from this project have helped us get in front of completely new audiences, from funders to community organizations to other associations, and we've been prioritizing our efforts to help address these gaps both internally, like improving our member demographics collection, and externally, like our work on the eeGuidance for Equitable Pay and Hiring. We will continue to prioritize work that addresses these gaps, with the hope of seeing measurable progress when the next round of data collection is complete in 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Pyle". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.



2022 by the Numbers

9 Mini-Grants
Awarded to
EE projects

540 Members
Across North
Carolina

76 Events
Workshops,
Courses, & more!

170 Attendees
At our 31st
Annual Conference

18 Board Members
Volunteering
their time

602 Educators
Trained in the
Don't Waste It!
Curriculum





2022 Highlights

January Launched SEEA Landscape Analysis Dashboard

February Opened Legacy Giving to support EENC's work

March Unveiled a new online Universal Design for Learning in EE course and toolkit

April Began development of eeGuidance for Equitable Hiring

May Began the process of updating North Carolina's Environmental Literacy Plan

June Developed a multi-year staffing plan

July Completed the 2-year Don't Waste It! project

August Hosted EENC's 31st Annual Conference at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh, NC

September Awarded 7 individuals and organizations

October Launched Phase 2 of SEEA Landscape Analysis

November EENC staff presented at the NAAEE Research Symposium and Conference in Tucson, AZ

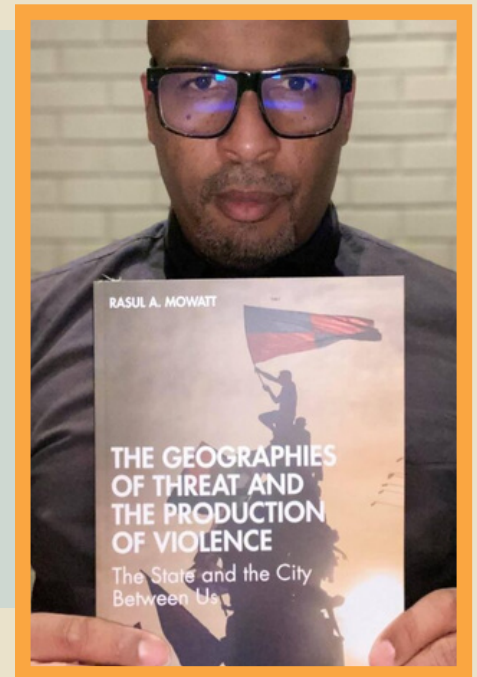
December Actively engaged in the NC K-12 Science Standards review process



2022 Conference

EENC's 31st Annual Conference, "rEEdefine," was held September 9 and 10 at the McKimmon Conference and Event Center on NC State's campus in Raleigh, NC. The event saw 170 attendees over the two days, participating in 24 different sessions focused on redefining how we reflect, connect and identify in the field of environmental education (EE).

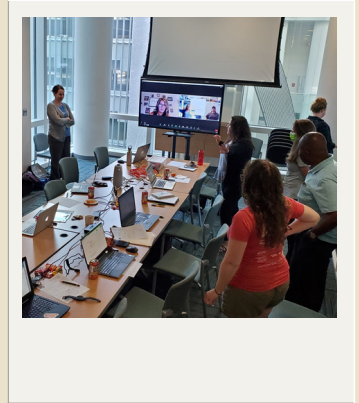
The keynote speaker was Dr. Rasul Mowatt (right), NC State's Department Head of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management. Mowatt helped us better understand the definition of "decolonization," a topic of national interest in environmental education right now, and shared resources to deepen our knowledge, as well as strategies for environmental educators to incorporate Critical Teaching into our valuable work.



rEEdefining Environmental Education



Affinity groups were launched at the conference to create communities of common interests, identities, or experiences. These groups play a vital role in ensuring an inclusive environment where all are valued, included, and empowered to succeed. During the conference, EENC hosted spaces for educators who identify as BIPOC, LGBTQ+, neurodivergent, and under 30.



Join Us!

The 2023 Annual Conference will be held at Camp Rockfish, near Fayetteville, NC. Field trips and workshops will be on Thursday, September 7, and the conference will be on Friday and Saturday, September 8 and 9, 2023.

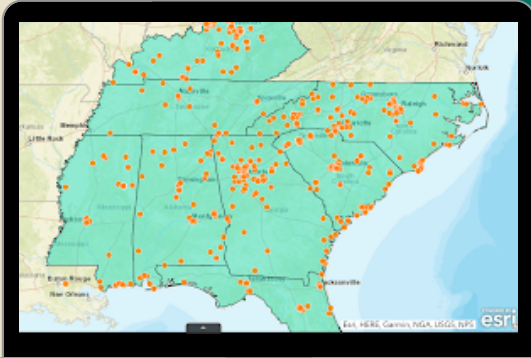
Learn more at eenc.org/conference.

Celebrating 2022 Award Winners



Environmental Educator of the Year: Linda Kinney; Lindsey Baker
Exceptional Environmental Education Program: Community Yacunne (Fish) Camp, Waccamaw Siouan STEM Studio
Outstanding Partner: Chatham County Solid Waste & Recycling
Outstanding Service: Amy Renfranz
Outstanding Newcomer: Breanna Walker
Outstanding Practitioner: Christine Goforth

Understanding the Landscape of Environmental Education in North Carolina



What does environmental education look like on the ground? How do we work together to strengthen EE in the Southeast? What would a stronger, more inclusive EE movement look like? In February 2022, the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance (SEEA), of which EENC is a part, revealed the answers to these questions when it released the findings of a regional landscape analysis of nonformal environmental education.

Key Findings

- Providers are collectively reaching a huge number of youth through direct teaching and field trips on very limited budgets.
- Elementary-age students are most likely to be receiving environmental education opportunities. There are gaps in early childhood and high school opportunities.
- The average entry-level salary for environmental educators is 15-25% lower than other comparable fields such as forestry, tourism, and education.
- Evaluation of environmental education programs is limited and underutilized.
- There are gaps in services found across the region in rural areas, areas with the highest social vulnerability index, and areas with the lowest income.
- Few organizations are collecting demographic information that could be used to better understand the reach and impact of the field.



At our April retreat, the EENC Board of Directors prioritized the findings to identify which areas we wanted to focus on - above and beyond EENC's existing plans - over the next 12 months. The three gaps selected by the board for EENC to work on include addressing gaps in our eastern NC counties, the need for support around the importance of evaluating programs, and gaps in high school opportunities.

EENC shared these results through webinars, conference presentations, and website articles. We also presented these findings to funders in partnership with the SEEA Executive Director at the Blue Sky Funders' Briefing in September 2022.

Using our online dashboard and map, you can explore the outcomes of the analysis in more detail and learn how to use our new tools to build or strengthen your own EE programs and networks.



Engaging in Advocacy Around the NC K-12 Science Standards Revision

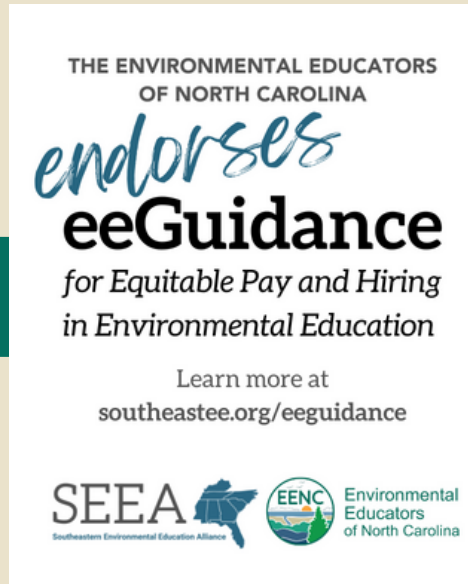
In 2022, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) initiated the process of revising our state's science standards. During the last K-12 Science Standard Course of Study revision in 2010, many elements of environmental literacy were incorporated into the standards, so EENC knew it was essential to engage our community in this process to protect and strengthen that connection.

In late May, NC DPI announced the first phase: a public "stakeholder survey" to gather feedback on the existing standards. EENC immediately crafted news articles and emails encouraging the EE community to participate. Then in November, NC DPI released the first draft of the new science standards for public review. EENC rapidly compiled all the standards into a preview document and co-hosted a working session with our partners at the NC Office of Environmental Education and Public Affairs to gather comments across the range of expertise of the EE community. EENC then distributed this widely and asked educators to individually submit this collective feedback to amplify our community's priorities.

This revision process will continue into 2023. Building on the success of this initial advocacy, EENC plans to continue to inform and engage our community in each opportunity for public feedback. Once those standards are released in 2023, EENC will work to ensure that all educators in our state are aware of the changes and will provide training and resources so that educators understand how environmental education supports high-quality science instruction.



Developing an eeGuidance for Equitable Pay and Hiring



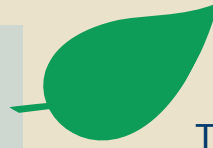
The SEEA Landscape Analysis findings confirmed what many of us working in environmental education already know: there are inequities in pay and benefits. To address this, SEEA gathered a team to develop an eeGuidance for Equitable Pay and Hiring.

This white paper provides concrete tools and suggestions for designing and posting positions, serves as a tool for individuals and organizations to advocate for increasing EE salaries, and helps establish industry standards for pay and hiring. Once released, we hope this document will help improve employee retention, attract and sustain more diverse talent, establish our field as a viable profession, and ultimately make environmental education equitable.

EENC coordinated this regional project, recruiting a six-person writing team and a group of 22 advisors from all over North America representing a wide range of experiences, roles, identities, and expertise. Teams worked together for six months to develop a document that covers pay and benefits, position design, recruitment, and hiring processes and practices. The final document provides researched explanations of why these areas matter. It outlines specific minimum standards for employers to enact immediately and identifies the target standards that we all must work toward to transform employment in our field.

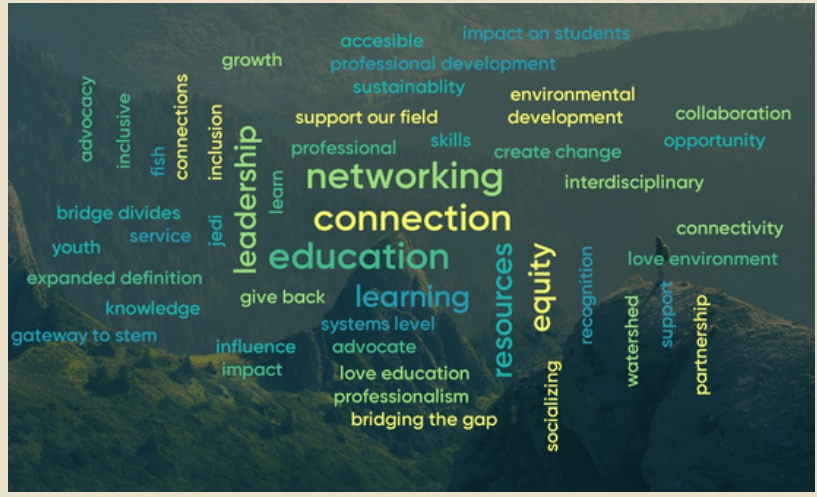
The drafting for this document was completed in December and will be released by SEEA in early 2023.

Board of Directors



- President:** Elise Tellez
- President-Elect:** Amy Juliana
- Past-President:** Erin Hines
- Secretary:** Elise Parker
- Treasurer:** Lauren Lampley
- Communications Chair:** Will Freund
- Policy Chair:** Brian Wuertz
- Education Chair:** Alayna Schmidt
- Membership Chair:** Barnabas Coker
- Partnership Chair:** Hannah Latranga (partial term)
- Conference Chair:** Hannah Barg (partial term)
- Resource Development Chair:** Stephanie Fiocca
- Western Section Chair:** Dana Miller
- Piedmont Section Chair:** Breanna Walker
- Central Section Chair:** Phil Cox
- Eastern Section Chair:** Amy Renfranz

The EENC Board of Directors is comprised of individuals who represent the community our organization serves. In addition to their programmatic work, like hosting section events, advising the advocacy process for the science standards, and supporting the conference, the Board focused significant effort on building internal capacity. The Board met virtually for monthly conference calls and four times throughout the year for more extended board meetings: January 29th, virtual; April 8-10th, Caraway Conference Center (Board Retreat); June 11th, Gaston County Museum; December 3rd, Horizons Unlimited.



Board of Directors

EENC was invited to send three representatives to the final ee360 Leadership Clinic hosted by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). President Elise Tellez and Policy Chair Brian Wuertz represented EENC at this international gathering of NAAEE Affiliates, along with Executive Director Lauren Pyle. Not only were they able to dig into some deep planning for the organization, they also got to share EENC's experiences and lessons learned with other Affiliates and participate in sessions with experts on communications, fundraising, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This leadership clinic inspired EENC to explore shared leadership models, explicitly map out power and decision-making in our leadership, and develop a multi-year staffing plan that outlines a gradual plan to shift core operations from the working board to paid staff.



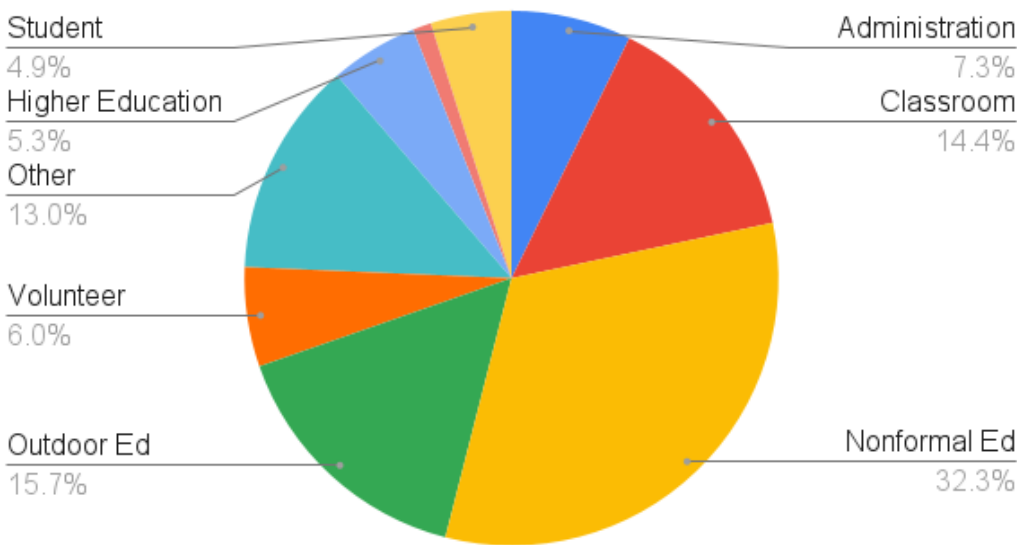
In May, EENC worked with consultant Dave Chase to begin developing a values statement, which will be published in 2023. In addition, the Board completed a thorough review of our by-laws and policy manual. The board proposed updates to the by-laws to improve operations and have greater responsiveness to support our community in the future; the membership voted to approve these changes. The new by-laws provide geographic flexibility and outreach for the future, prepare for growth, incorporate staff roles, and improve workflow efficiency.

Membership Summary

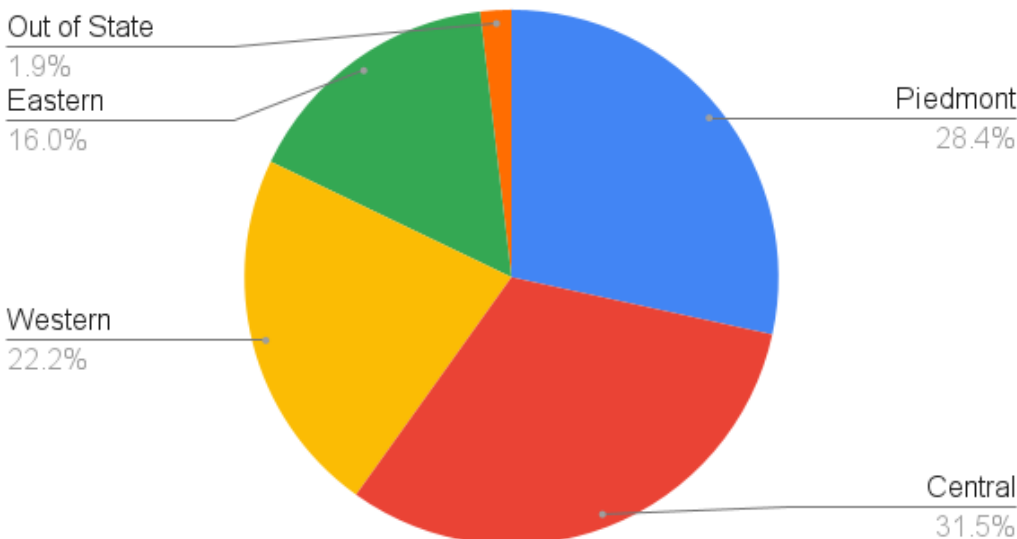
EENC ended the year with 540 total members.

In June, new demographic questions were added to the member program to better understand our community makeup. Data will be used as a progress marker to assess how we are meeting our mission, vision, and strategic goals, and we will analyze the results annually. Thus far, 23% of our members have opted to share this information.

Professional Roles of EENC Members



Membership by Section

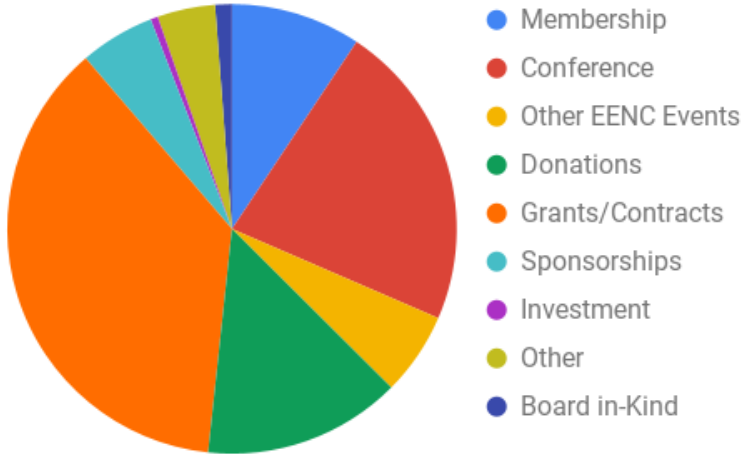


2022 Organizational Members

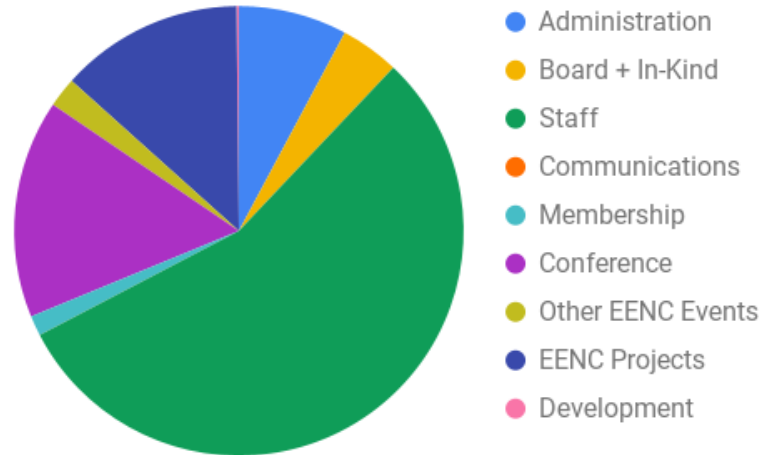
- RiverLink
- Foothills Equestrian Nature Center
- Wilkes Soil & Water Conservation District
- Chimney Rock Management, LLC
- Agape Center for Environmental Education
- North Carolina Zoo
- Earthshine Lodge
- Wonder Connection
- WNC Nature Center
- Rivendell Farms of the Carolinas
- Valle Crucis Community Park
- Muddy Sneakers
- Rowan Wild
- The North Carolina Arboretum
- Horizons Unlimited

Financial Summary

2022 Income

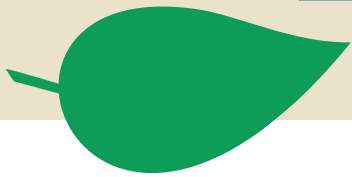


2022 Expenses



EENC's 2022 total income was \$144,876, and the total expenses were \$175,504. This operating deficit was planned. EENC uses accrual-based accounting procedures, meaning income and expenses are logged as soon as they are confirmed rather than when they are actually received or paid. EENC reported a financial surplus in 2021, much of which was grant funding awarded in 2021 for projects completed in 2022. All grants awarded in 2022 were completed in 2022, providing no new financial carryover for the following year. In addition, EENC planned to use funding from previous years to cover the cost of an audit, which per our policy manual, is completed every three years. EENC completed a full audit with the external accounting firm Corliss & Solomon in 2022, and the final report included a clean audit opinion. The EENC Board of Directors approved the 2023 budget in November, which included a substantial increase in both income and expenses in preparation for hiring a third staff member.

2022 Sponsors



Duke Gardens // UNCW Environmental Sciences // Keep Nature Wild

Thanks to our Generous Donors!

Alexandra Bradley, Allison Pierce, Amy Juliana, Amy Renfranz, Andrea Burns, Andrew Courts, Anne Ireton, Asa Duffee, Audrey Dunn, Barbara Bays, Barry and Melody Lineberger, Becky Venne Eschenburg, Beth Cranford, Bobbie Stager, Brandon Ninberg, Breanna Walker, Brian Embry, Brian Wuertz, Camille Brown, Catherine Fitzpatrick, Charlene Kennedy, Charlotte Clark, Chelsea Sloggy, Cheryl Grim, Chip Freund, Christina Calcaterra, Christine Wittmeier, Cody Parker, Cristen Walker, Danette Scott, David Geiger, David Juliana, Dawn Chavez, Deborah Miller, Deidra Goodwin, Diane Braswell, Diane Polley, Donald Renfranz, Donna Tolar, Elisabeth Mangum, Elise Parker, Elise Tellez, Elissa Anderson, Emily May, Emily Oostveen, Erin Hines, Frankie Lineberger, Gretchen Perez, Hannah Latragna, James Sinanis, James Topelski, Janet Tooman, Jasa Woods, Jelene Ellington, Jimmy Walker, John and Connie Dages, John White, Judy Braus, June Huff, Karan Wood, Karen Martin, Karen Webb, Katherine Brooks, Katrina Whaley, Keith Bamberger, Krista Brinckek, Kristin Perk, Laura Downey, Lauren Pharr, Leyla Rich, Lucy Carte, Margaret Maag, Mary Meyer, Matt Aldridge, Mazie Smith, Michael Dages, Michael Smith, Mir Youngquist-Thurow, Nathaniel Grim, Nicole Florack, R Mark Rose, Rachel Glenn Edwards, Renee Strnad, Richard Brightman, Roni Darnell, Samuel Laurie, Sarah Coombs, Sarah Guest, Sarah Muthler, Shannon Jones, Sophia Stephenson, Stacey Tabb, Stephanie Avett, Stephanie Borrett, Susan Reynolds, Terri Kirby Hathaway, Theresa Lineberger, Tina White, Trevor Heffley, William Dages, William Moore, and the many anonymous supporters who help make our work possible.



2022



Environmental
Educators
of North Carolina