



Photo credit: Lauren Lampley

# 2021 Annual Report Environmental Educators of North Carolina

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## 2021 Highlights

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUNE JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

Collected information from 133 EE programs in NC for SEEA Landscape Analysis

Awarded \$2604 in mini-grants to EE organizations in NC

Hosted two train-the-trainer workshops on the Don't Waste It! curriculum

Launched our new online Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Environmental Education course

Finalized updated Strategic Plan

Added staff position, selecting Michelle Pearce as our Program Coordinator

Hosted SEEA and EENC joint conference at Lutheridge in Arden, NC

Finalized new Vision Statement

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

When exposed to wind and rain, rocks can be weathered into beautiful shapes. I think this is true of organizations as well, as difficult challenges can result in learning and introspective growth. As EENC weathered another year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we thought critically about where we are as an organization, and where we want to be.

In January, our Board of Directors began work on an updated [Strategic Plan](#), structuring our focus areas for the next three years. These focus areas include advocating for the field of EE, forming strategic partnerships, increasing the recognition of EENC as a resource, and building the internal capacity of EENC as an organization. We also worked with consultant Dave Chase to articulate our shared [vision](#) for a better world, a future in which individuals across all NC communities are empowered to inspire a just and sustainable world; environmental education's societal value is recognized; and there is a sense of belonging for educators from all walks of life.

As the year advanced, we buckled down and began to implement our approved plan. We launched three grant-funded programs approved as Criteria I workshops for the NC Environmental Education Certification. These included a waste and recycling educator's guide and training called "Don't Waste It!;" an online justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion training designed specifically for environmental educators; and an inquiry-based, outdoor learning workshop, which utilizes the BEETLES resources developed by the Lawrence Hall of Science. We were also able to grow our staff by hiring Michelle Pearce as Program Coordinator, which will allow us to continue expanding our support for environmental educators in North Carolina.

These achievements and more reflect the tremendous effort and dedication of Executive Director Lauren Pyle; our Board of Directors; our volunteers; our members; and our partners. 2021 was certainly a year of *becoming*, as we continue to take the shape of who we are called to be. - **Erin Hines, 2021 EENC President**



EENC's mission is to build connections, provide professional development, and promote excellence for North Carolina's community of environmental educators.

# – 2021 by the Numbers

## 100% GOALS MET

### TRAINING WORKSHOPS

All workshops and courses offered by EENC in 2021 met their learning goals based on participant evaluations.

## 569 MEMBERS

### ACROSS N.C.

EENC is the professional organization for environmental educators in the state. Membership increased by 22% thanks to new membership benefits and levels launched in January.

## 3383 HOURS

### DEDICATED BY VOLUNTEERS

EENC's board members and many others dedicated thousands of hours toward supporting the organization's efforts in 2021. The monetary value of these hours (at standard rate of \$25.43 per hour, from Independent Sector) is \$86,030.

## 2 EMPLOYEES

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### PROGRAM COORDINATOR

In September 2021, Michelle Pearce joined us in the newly created Program Coordinator staff position. In this role, she will manage our professional development programs and support a variety of other projects across our state.





# 2021 Annual Conference

## 30th Anniversary



On September 10th-11th, our environmental education community assembled for the 30th anniversary of our annual conference, hosted jointly with the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance (SEEA). The theme was rEEmerge. After over a year of virtual events, 183 attendees gathered in-person at Lutheridge Camp and Conference Center in Arden, NC.



2021 Annual Conference Attendees

### A Well-Planned Event

Longtime Board Members and Conference Co-Chairs Shannon Culpepper and Chris Goforth led the planning of the 2021 Conference. It must be said that Shannon Culpepper has served seven years on the board and has planned three conferences. One of those conferences was relocated in two weeks due to hurricane damage. Another was transitioned to a virtual conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year presented its own set of challenges as pandemic conditions continued, but Shannon and Chris (six year Board service) navigated the challenges with experience and grace to provide a well-organized conference for attendees.

**Before the conference began, scholarships were awarded that assisted 35 individuals in paying registration costs— a total of \$3,290.**

The conference was preceded by 2 full-day workshops and 3 local, field trip options including a service-learning opportunity to remove invasive species from Mud Creek. The schedule continued with 35 sessions led by leaders in the field from across the southeast.

These sessions inspired and challenged us- such as one session titled, “Do It For the Culture,” led by a group of Florida high school students presenting their experiences with culturally-responsive pedagogy.

The busy schedule also included a Research Symposium with oral and poster presentations. These sessions showcased the newest findings in environmental education research being performed in our region.

### Keynote

Our keynote speaker on September 10th was Dr. Trish O’Kane. O’Kane shared stories from a birding club partnering youth with college students, highlighting the importance of mentors in inspiring youth to care for the natural world.

Thanks to the generous support from conference attendees, we raised \$8,680 for future diversity, equity, and inclusion programs through our virtual auction.



Keynote speaker Dr. Trish O’Kane

### Congratulations to the 2021 award winners!

Each year, EENC recognizes environmental educators, members, organizations, and partners for their valuable contributions to EENC, the North Carolina community, and to the field of environmental education.

#### Environmental Educator of the Year:

Nicolette Cagle

#### Exceptional Environmental Education Program:

STEM Outreach Program, Highlands Biological Station

#### Outstanding Partner:

Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance

#### Outstanding Newcomer:

Brian Wuertz

#### Outstanding Practitioner:

Marissa Blackburn

#### Outstanding Service:

Shannon Culpepper

#### Melva Fager Okun Life Achievement:

Terri Kirby Hathaway



# A Picture of Environmental Education

## Participating in SEEA's Regional Landscape Analysis

In 2021, EENC along with the N.C. Office of Environmental Education and Public Affairs and the North Carolina Association of Environmental Education Centers collected information from over 133 EE programs. This data was compiled with that of other programs across the southeast to complete a landscape analysis coordinated by the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance (SEEA). Funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Pisces Foundation, the project included a comprehensive study of the environmental education already happening on the ground and was designed to help us—and many others—better understand the challenges and opportunities for environmental education in the southeast.



We found that environmental education in the southeast faces many challenges. We found that senior staff leadership and audiences served by environmental education providers do not reflect the overall demographics of the region. The average entry-level salary for environmental educators is 15-25% lower than comparable fields. 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.

And yet, while challenges exist, many strengths of environmental education programs in the region were also made clear. More than two million youth in the southeast are served annually. Each year, EE takes place in 16,355 schools. And throughout the southeast, 79,857 volunteers assist with EE programs. We look forward to more deeply reviewing the results of our state-level results and developing plans to advance our field in 2022.

You can learn more about this project at [eenc.org/landscape](https://eenc.org/landscape).

## Additional Events

### Section Events

Section Chairs work to hold events throughout the year, which vary in topic and location. These events are a way for local environmental educators to network with each other and are open to members and non-members. Below are some 2021 highlights.



#### Eastern

The Eastern section was active this year with paddling excursions and a Book & Social club that launched in June. In May they kayaked at Greenfield Lake, and in October they explored Bull Bay.

#### Central

The Central section was busy with their

Nature Book Club and field trips. In July, they got back to in-person events with a paddle at Robertson Millpond.

#### Piedmont

The Piedmont Section also launched a book club in May of this year, meeting virtually every other month. In September, they enjoyed a guided paddle led by the Catawba Riverkeepers along the South Fork branch.

#### Western

The Western Section hosted several fun field trips this year. They hosted a guided hike of the Pink Beds and Cradle of Forestry in May, went apple picking in September, and visited the Western Nature Center for a behind-the-scenes tour in December.

#### Workshops

Utilizing the online workshops developed in 2020, EENC hosted five Guidelines for Excellence workshops to help educators deepen their understanding of environmental literacy and what it means to be a professional environmental educator. EENC is also now home to North Carolina's newest Criteria I workshop:

Inquiry-Based Outdoor Learning: Using BEETLES in NC. In 2021, we trained educators from across the southeast to become Don't Waste It! facilitators and created a new, highly interactive online workshop on this curriculum.

### Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Training

This summer, we launched a 15-hour asynchronous "Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in EE" online course, serving over 80 people across three cohorts. We also engaged expert consultants to facilitate deeper-dive workshops on "Equity and Pedagogy" and "Building an Organizational Equity Plan" to further educators' journeys.

### Online Events

EENC has maintained an active online presence, hosting 11 webinars serving 1180 participants, five community calls for 83 people, and cohosting monthly webinars with the North American Association for Environmental Education and Green Teacher.

# EENC Board of Directors

An all-volunteer Board of Directors governs EENC, and 100% of our board members contribute financially to the organization each year.



## 2021 Board of Directors

**President:** Erin Hines

**President- Elect:** Elise Tellez

**Past-President:** Amy Renfranz

**Secretary:** Crystal Phelps

**Treasurer:** Lauren Lampley

**Communications Chair:** Brian Wuertz

**Education Chair:** Michelle Pearce (partial term)

**Membership Chair:** Barnabas Coker

**Partnership Chair:** Renee Strnad

**Conference Co-Chairs:** Shannon Culpepper & Chris Goforth

**Resource Development Chair:** Chelsea Sloggy

**Eastern Section Chair:** Marissa Blackburn

**Central Section Chair:** Phil Cox

**Piedmont Section Chair:** Mary Meyer

**Western Section Chair:** Libbie Dobbs-Alexander

The 2021 Board consisted of seventeen members who work to seek funding for the organization and manage the budget; plan the annual conference and other events; manage and recruit members; and much more. Section Chairs organize section-specific events, and help spread the word about the activities of members within their section.

In addition to monthly conference calls, Board Members meet quarterly at locations around the state, including a multi-day retreat in January. These longer sessions allow time for the Board to gather as a team, and work through some of the more complex tasks of running a nonprofit. This year, most of the quarterly meetings were held virtually, with the exception of our Summer Quarterly Meeting on June 12th at Lutheridge Camp and Conference Center.

## Charting the Course

### EENC'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE



Individuals across all North Carolina communities are empowered by their knowledge, skills, convictions, and abilities to inspire a just and sustainable world.



Environmental education's substantial societal value is recognized and invested in widely by policymakers, funders, education institutions, and the general public through our advocacy work.



EENC is a national model, creating a stronger sense of belonging for educators from all walks of life where varied skills and experiences are celebrated.

One of the most vital functions of a Board of Directors is to chart the course for their nonprofit. Every three years, EENC's Board works with their Executive Director to update our organization's Strategic Plan.

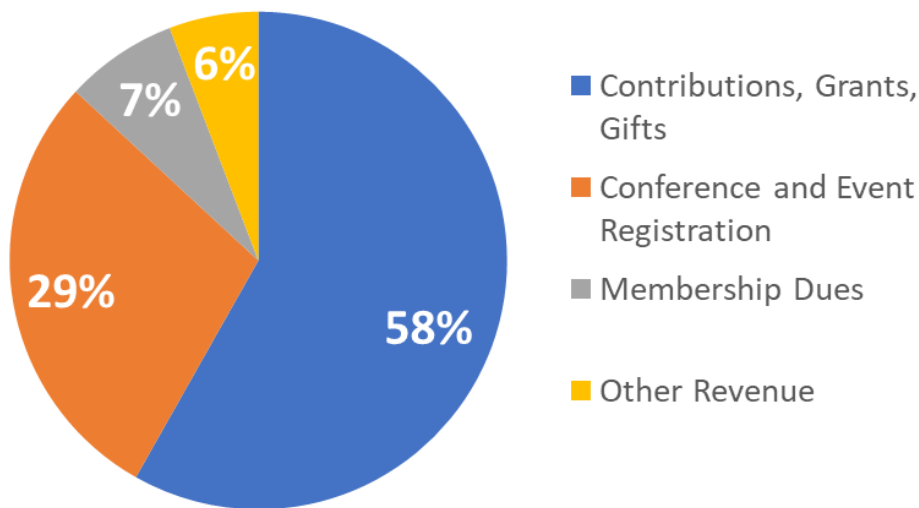
In preparation for writing the new plan, we reviewed progress from the previous plan, feedback from our community survey, recommendations from an EE COVID-19 advisory group, and an Equity and Engagement Strategy Plan drafted by the 2019 EENC Board. We wove this input into our new plan, centered around the four focus areas of advocacy, partnerships, marketing/programming, and internal capacity. Across focus areas, we strove to prioritize justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to consider a broad definition of environmental education beyond classrooms and EE centers. You can review the full plan on our website at [eenc.org/about](https://eenc.org/about).

This process also gives us an opportunity to review our guiding light- our mission and vision. We decided our vision statement, in particular, needed revisiting as we have grown as an organization. We considered the question, "What does the future look like if we are successful at our mission?" We were inspired by envisioning a just, sustainable world where environmental education's value to society is recognized, and where EENC creates a sense of belonging for a diversity of educators. You can read our full vision on the left.

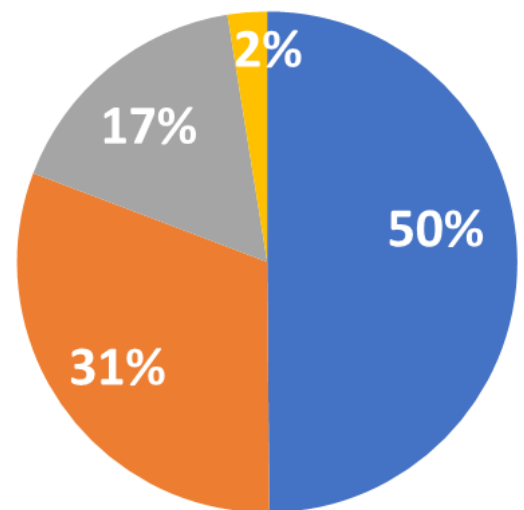
# Budget Summary

## INCOME

Contributions, Grants, Gifts	\$102,362.41
Conference and Event Registration	\$50,475.00
Membership Dues	\$12,877.50
Other Revenue	\$10,199.87
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$175,914.78</b>



- Administration
- Conference and Other Events
- Projects
- Other



## EXPENSES

Administration (Staff, Board, and Operational Expenses)	\$81,177
Conference and Other Events	\$50,291
Projects (Mini-grants, Grant-based Projects)	\$27,188
Other (Membership, Communications, and Fundraising)	\$4,130
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$162,786</b>

EENC's total income in 2021 was \$175,915 and total expenses were \$162,786. This was the third year the organization has employed a full-time Executive Director, and the first year of employing a part-time Program Coordinator for last quarter.



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