

Niobrara Valley Outdoor Education Partnership (NVOEP) Education Newsletter

Spring 2017



NVOEP Vision: Preservation of the Niobrara Valley's extraordinary natural and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NVOEP Mission: To promote local education leading to the understanding, enjoyment and sustainable utilization of outdoor resources.

What is the NVOEP?

A dynamic partnership of the following organizations:

- Area schools
- Early childhood educators
- Libraries
- National Park Service
- Natural Resource Districts (NRD)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Nature Enthusiasts/Interested Citizens
- Nebraska Forest Service
- Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
- Niobrara Council
- Northern Prairies Land Trust
- Outfitters
- Scout leaders
- The Nature Conservancy – Niobrara Valley Preserve
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension & 4-H
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



A sample of our projects:

- Spring Outdoor Family Fun Day
- Arbor Day Program
- Niobrara Council Summer Camps
- Nature Fest (Fall Field Day for 5th graders)
- Springview Schools Resource Day
- Pre-School Nature Programs
- Outdoor Classroom at Zion School
- Old West Nature Day
- Afterschool Nature Clubs

Many NVOEP members are using social media! Become a fan or follow us to stay up-to-date and link to great outdoor resources.

"In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand and we will understand only what we are taught" -Babe Dioum

Niobrara Council offers many education opportunities

Wendy Murphy- Education Programs, Niobrara Council murphy@niobraracouncil.org (402) 376-2793

Niobrara Council is available to work with teachers to create and provide **classroom and field trip experiences** that meet state education standards and achieve learning objectives.

The following is a list of the subject areas that I offer for lessons, presentations, and activities. If an area of interest is not listed, please contact me, I can adapt lessons I have, find new ones, or create them.

- Mammals, Birds, Insects, Raptors, Reptiles, Fish or Amphibians of Nebraska
- Prairies
- Water
- Soil
- Hiking
- Birding
- Hunting and hunting laws
- Streams and stream ecology
- Nature Art & Crafts
- Music
- Nature Writing
- Trees
- Habitats / Ecosystems
- Pollution / Recycling
- Fire Ecology
- Biological Surveys
- Erosion
- Senses
- Genetics
- Adaptations
- Food Chains / Food Webs
- Nebraska Native Plants
- Invasive Species
- Threatened and Endangered Species

Lessons are...

- Interdisciplinary – combining more than one core subject area
- Aligned with Nebraska State Educational Standards
- Hands-on and interactive
- Encourage students to use critical thinking skills
- Local place-based education
- For ages pre-K through adult
- FREE!



Wendy Murphy, from the Niobrara Council works with students at Zion School to evaluate and create backyard habitat for wildlife.

I also offer Educator Workshops including:

- Project WILD (K-12 grades)
- Growing Up WILD (ages 3-7).
- National Archery in the Schools (NASP) (4-12 grades)

Help pass the word along...

Do you have students who would really benefit from some fun, educational and FREE outdoor experiences? Some great options:

- Afterschool Club
- Summer Camps
- Weekend Workshops
- Outdoor Skills Days
- Family Events

Be watching your school mailbox for flyers and announcements.

Northern Prairies Land Trust / Nebraska Game & Parks Commission

Kelly Corman, from NPLT, is available to help with subject matter pertaining to **ecosystems, pollinators, wildlife, plants, and prescribed fire**. In partnership with Nebraska Game and Parks, Kelly can provide support for a hands-on **Mammal Trunk** and **Bird Trunk** (see below) and a **"Niobrara Trunk"** that combines mammal and bird topics with special emphasis on local species. All trunks are available for teachers to use.

Kelly Corman

402-684-2921 or Kelly.Corman@nebraska.gov

Birds of Nebraska Education Trunk

Teach about birds of Nebraska, bird adaptations, and how to find birds and identify them by sight and sound. The bird trunks include birding by ear CDs, an "Identifyer," bird field guides, books, migration posters, bird bingo, and a variety of other hands-on bird activities and educational games. Students can even examine owl pellets, skulls, wings, feet, and feathers of birds found throughout Nebraska.



Mammals of Nebraska Education Trunk

Whether you're teaching about prairie mammals, carnivores, herbivores, and omnivores, animal skulls and teeth or animal adaptations, the mammal trunks offer educators a variety of hands-on, inquiry-based learning activities. Curriculum guides, field guides, posters, books, and videos will help educators and students become more familiar with local wildlife. There is also a fantastic assortment of furs, skulls, and tracks that learners of all ages will enjoy.

NE Forest Service



- The Conservation Education program of the Nebraska Forest Service can provide a variety of activities and resources to teach about the environment and engage children in the outdoors.
- The Sustainable Schoolyard Partnership (SSP) is a multi-partner, statewide initiative available to Nebraska elementary, middle, and high schools
- The Conservation Education Program offers fun, hand-on training to help educators teach young people about the environment.

Jennifer Corman

Forest Fuels Project Coordinator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Nebraska Forest Service

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National Park Service

The Niobrara National Scenic River, a unit of your National Park Service, is available to work with educators in advance to create and provide classroom and field trip experiences that meet state standards for education and achieve your learning objectives. NPS staff coordinates **"Nature Fest" in September** each year for fifth grade students. In the summer our focus is providing visitor services along the National Scenic River. **Ranger talks and guided walks** are held at Smith Falls State Park, and coordinate **"Outdoor Family Fun Day"** in April.

Visit our website at www.nps.gov/niob and check out our Schedule of Events for details.





Upcoming Events

February

6-11 – Niobrara Council Open House
17-20 – Great Backyard Bird Count

April

4, 11, 18, 25 - Niobrara Afterschool Nature Club - Springview
17-23 – National Park Service Week
22 – Earth Day
22 – Outdoor Family Fun Day, Smith Falls
24 – Pollinator Workshop – Rock County Elementary
28 – Arbor Day

May

2 - Niobrara Afterschool Nature Club - Springview
20 – Niobrara River Clean-Up Day

June

Weekly NPS Ranger Programs Begin, Smith Falls
3 – National Trails Day Service Project
5 – 4H Camp Outdoor Skill Day - Valentine
10 - National Get Outdoors Day
24 – Great American Backyard Campout
TBD - Niobrara Council Summer Camps

July

National Parks and Recreation Month
7 - Wildlife & Prescribed Fire Seminar and Tour
9-10 - NPS Camp Adventure with My Parents (CAMP)
14 – Sand Hills Discovery Experience

August

1-5 - Niobrara Council Teen Camp & Neb. Star Party
6-7 - NPS Camp Adventure with My Parents (CAMP)
17-21 – Cherry Co. Fair Booth/Activities
27-29 – Keya Paha Co. Fair Booth/Activities

Be sure to check out all of the websites for the NVOEP

Resource Corner

Contact members for helpful tools. In addition, here are some favorite resources for environmental education:



Sandhills Discovery Experience

<http://sandhillsdiscovery.org/>

An annual conference with optional tours held in Ainsworth. This year's theme is "Lakes, Rivers, and Creeks".

Children and Nature Network

<http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

The website of the "father" of the children and outdoors movement, Richard Louv. Tons of research articles and opportunities to interact with other teachers.

National Wildlife Federation

<http://www.nwf.org/>

Tons of great activities, tips and ideas for schools, families, and communities. Learn how to certify your schoolyard as habitat friendly or find steps to becoming an eco school. Learn about the "Green Hour" movement.

Nature Rocks

<http://www.naturerocks.org/>

Sign up for the FREE seasonal outdoor activity guide.

Let's Move Outside

<http://www.letsmove.gov/lets-move-outside>

Become part of the new initiative from Michele Obama to fight childhood obesity by encouraging physical activity.

Great American Backyard Campout

www.backyardcampout.org

Celebrate June 25

National Get Outdoors Day

<http://www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org/>

Ideas and materials to help you celebrate this June 11 holiday or adapt for a "get outdoors day" of your own during the school year.

National Environmental Education Foundation

<http://www.neefusa.org/>

Also check out the Nebraska Affiliate of this professional association.

Leave No Trace

<http://lnt.org/>

Teach youth how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly.

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. –Nelson Mandela

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NEED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES FOR YOUR CLASSROOM??

Don't forget! The Niobrara Council Office has many great resources for use in your classroom. In addition to an extensive library of books and publications, there are curricula and outdoor exploration tools. All items are available to check-out for FREE! For a complete listing, go to <http://niobraracouncil.org> on the "Education" page.

*Watch for our next
issue in early fall!*

Want a contact list of NVOEP members and their areas of expertise? Contact (402) 376-2793 or e-mail info@niobraracouncil.org
We would LOVE to come to your classroom!