

A Forest for Every Classroom (FFEC) March 16 Community Meeting

Thank you to those that attended the March 16 informational meeting, sharing your time and ideas!

Attendees:

Laura Law, Glacier National Park
Teresa Wenum, Flathead National Forest
Melissa Sladek, Crown of the Continent
Research Learning Center
Holly McKenzie, Project Learning Tree
Monica Elser, Flathead Lake Biological Station
Kathy Martin, Hockaday Museum of Art
Cynthia Ingelfinger, Flathead Conservation
District
Mark Freidline, Kalispell City Parks and
Recreation
Marycaye Dover, West Valley School
Carolan Coughlin, Montana Conservation
Corps
Joni Packard, Youth Engagement, Forest
Service, Northern Region

Lisa Bickell, Montana Natural History Center
Hans Bodenhamer, Bigfork High School
Rick Moore, Dept. of Natural Resources and
Conservation
Nikki Reed, Whitefish High School
Tim Eichner, Flathead Valley Community
College
Eliza Thomas, NW MT Educational
Cooperative
Deb Franciosi, Project Criss
Ashley Mason, Flathead CORE
Greg Poncin, Dept. of Natural Resources and
Conservation
Laurie Lapan, Deer Park School
Diann Ericson

Welcome, Introductions, Meeting Overview

The Flathead Community of Resource Educators (CORE) hosted the meeting for attendees to learn about the FFEC program and to help share their interests, ideas and ways to help bring FFEC to the Flathead Watershed. Flathead CORE is a network of individuals and organizations working together to increase awareness and understanding about the natural, historical and cultural resources of the Flathead Region. To learn more about the Flathead Community of Resource Educators, visit <http://flatheadcore.org/>

Through introductions and the “My Place” activity, where participants shared a favorite outdoor spot, we were all reminded of our attachment to ‘place’ and its value in education, knowing more about the place you live, a key element of the FFEC program. The program focus is on ‘placed-based’ learning, using the local community and environment to teach concepts in math, science, history and more – stressing hands-on, real-world experiences.

Understanding the *Forest for Every Classroom* Program

We shared the first eight minutes of a [FFEC video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MuumaniKSeo) that offered an overview of the program including the program’s Vermont beginning in 2000 – a partnership effort between Shelburne Farms, The National Park Service’s Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and the Conservation Study Institute, Northeast Natural Resource Center of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and Green Mountain National Forest. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MuumaniKSeo>

You can also [read about the program’s start, learn more about its foundational principles, the program’s comprehensive evaluation and replications of the program in other locations.](#)

<https://www.nps.gov/mabi/learn/education/history-of-forest-for-every-classroom.htm>

Thank you *Joni Packard with the Northern Region of the Forest Service* and *Lisa Bickell, Education Director with the Montana Natural History Center* for sharing information about the Forest for Every Classroom Program and their involvement with past FFEC projects. Through funding and in-kind assistance, the Forest Service helped support FFEC projects that took place 2009 through 2011 in the Elkhorn Mountains (Helena area) and the Lower Clark Fork program out of Missoula, 2013 through 2015; the Forest Service worked closely with non-profit partners that acted as fiscal agents and provided administrative support to FFEC in project planning and implementation. The Montana Natural History Center was the fiscal agent and provided the large share of administrative support to the Lower Clark Fork FFEC project.

There is opportunity to bring the FFEC program to the Flathead Watershed with the Forest Service offering some funding and in-kind support; plus assistance, mentoring from Lisa and Joni, sharing program materials, agendas, advice on program logistics and more, to help support a program here.

Having a strong non-profit partner in place to act as a fiscal agent to administer funds, is a key piece to the program's success. The program model also involves a strong steering committee that represents the many interests/organizations coming together to help plan and implement the year-long program.

Both Lisa and Joni stressed the program's value to educators and the community. Many past program participants shared how it was the best professional development program they've been involved with – it takes commitment, time, can be challenging, yet very rewarding and meaningful.

Mapping Our Place

Identify geographic places; people/organizations; topic/themes to include in a Flathead Watershed FFEC program. What is important for FFEC participants to learn about in our community? What are the available resources to help implement FFEC?

In small groups, participants listed key resources.

Geographic places

Cultural – Conrad Mansion; Demersville; Museum at Central School; historic downtowns; Hockaday Museum; Wheeler House (in GNP); Flathead Indian Reservation; DeSmet (historic wooden boat, Lake McDonald tours); petroglyphs, Flathead Lake and near Kila; Bigfork Summer Playhouse

Natural

- Lone Pine State Park
- Big Creek Outdoor Education Center
- Lake McDonald
- Big Mountain (Whitefish Mtn. Resort and Summit Nature Center)
- Hungry Horse Dam and Reservoir
- Libby Dam
- Whitefish Trail
- area fish hatcheries (US Fish and Wildlife Service and Fish, Wildlife and Parks)
- Creston Hatchery nature trail and streamside amphitheater, multi-use pavilion, and Arbor Day Foundation Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom
- Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
- Woodland Park bike trail

- Rails to Trails bike/walk paths
- Flathead Lake and Wildhorse Island
- Flathead River Corridor – oxbows, wetlands
- Pine Grove Pond (fishing access site);
- Dry Bridge Park, Kalispell
Bigfork Nature Trail
- Natl. Bison Range
- Lost Trail Wildlife Refuge
- Rivers Edge Park, Columbia Falls
- Veterans Home in Columbia Falls, native garden
- ice age geology locations
- Glacier Natl. Park and native plant nursery
- state parks
- Stillwater State Forest

People/Organizations

Public Agencies –

- MSU, Flathead County Extension Service;
- Flathead Lake Biological Station, University of Montana;
- Flathead Conservation District;
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 1;
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (refuges, hatchery);
- U.S. Forest Service;
- U.S. Geological Survey;
- U.S. Park Service;
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation;
- Imagine IF Libraries;
- MT Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation;
- Flathead County Animal Shelter

Education – Flathead Valley Community College; Montana Office of Public Instruction; area public schools; NW MT Educational Cooperative; music and art schools; Project Learning Tree;

Organizations –

- Montana Logging Association
- Flathead Lakers
- Whitefish Legacy Partners
- Hockaday Museum of Art
- Flathead Audubon
- Whitefish Lake Institute
- Montana Conservation Corps
- Montana Food Corps
- Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation
- Montana Wilderness Assoc. Flathead
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
- Natl. Parks Conservation Association
- Climate Smart Glacier Country
- Water for Flathead’s Future
- Citizens for a Better Flathead
- Foy’s to Blacktail Trail
- NW MT Historical Society
- Crown of the Continent Guitar Workshop and Festival
- Glacier Symphony
- Sons of Norway; Farmers Markets
- local service organizations (Rotary, Lions, Eagles)
- Women in Timber
- Flathead and NW MT Backcountry Horseman
- Montanans for Multiple Use
- Flathead Trout Unlimited
- Ravenwood Outdoor Learning Center
- Glacier Institute
- MT Trappers Assoc.

Private business/industry/individuals – Stoltze Land and Lumber; RBM Lumber; area healthcare professionals (The Wave, Summit Medical Fitness Center, Straight Blast Gym...); railroad – BNSF,

Mission Mtn. Railroad; farming, logging and construction families; private donors; community supported agriculture farms; Jack Stanford and Bonnie Ellis; Lex Blood; Jack Gladstone;

Topics/Themes

Natural Resources

- forest management
- school trust land management
- invasive species including AIS
- fisheries including native and non-native; climate change and landscape changes
- water quality (impervious surface, riparian buffers, groundwater)
- rivers, lakes, streams
- pollinators
- wildlife
- snow science
- fire ecology
- agriculture and soil health trees/forestry/plants/habitat and connectivity
- microscopic life
- conservation

Recreation/Tourism - tourism including eco-tourism; avalanche safety; multiple uses – trails, access; map and compass;

Cultural/Education – sustainable communities; multi-generation connections; art; Native American; human occupation; building pride in one’s community; youth leadership; service learning; engineering

Health – mental health/mindfulness; risk management, safety;

Implementing A Forest for Every Classroom in the Flathead

A draft implementation schedule was shared with program planning taking place in 2017 and the program workshops taking place in 2018.

Program participants were asked to share how they would be interested in helping to bring FFEC to the Flathead Watershed – providing a workshop location/lodging, being an instructor, being part of the steering committee and more.

Potential Venues/Locations for workshops –

- Flathead Valley Community College (classroom and outdoor learning space, computer lab)
- NW Montana Educational Cooperative conference room at the Linderman Building
- Center for Sustainability greenhouse and gardens, Whitefish School District
- Flathead Lake Biological Station (classroom and outdoor space for learning; lodging)
- Summit Preparatory School, 500 forested acres with trails to use as outdoor learning space and lodging;
- Hockaday Art Museum tours and classroom space

Skills/resources to share –

- Tim Eichner – teaching GIS and GPS mapping and forest measurements; access to tools (d-tapes, clinometers, logger tapes, macro equip. etc for water

monitoring; marketing through FVCC continuing education and website.

- Eliza Sorte – Indian Education for All, lesson planning, children’s literature, teacher recruitment and networking; grading; copy work; small fund for food (up to \$500); OPI renewal units
- Melissa Sladek – climate change education; help recruit resource experts; help with marketing materials and media
- Deb Franciosi – Indian Education for All (IEFA); teacher of record for grad class; grade portfolios; help guest instructors design lesson plans/presentations; curriculum design in general; grant writing; writing up materials in general (marketing, editing, etc.)
- Diann Ericson – teaching forestry survey/timber cruise and ecology; connecting curriculum and outdoor education
- Ashley Mason – teaching the geology of NW Montana, Glacier Natl. Park and earth science; help with marketing and administration, making community connections
- Kathy Martin – art connections for all types of projects, plus art and history connections and art and culture (IEFA)
- Mike Koopel – teaching lake, stream ecology
- Valerie Kurth – teaching forest ecology/soils
- Flathead Conservation District – steering committee help; planning/logistics help; networking, coordination and potential funding
- Potential resource Center for Native Plants and Matt Folz with Xanterra and Farmhands

Next steps....

There was a lot of positive energy and feedback from the group to bring FFEC to the Flathead Watershed. Those teachers in attendance felt strongly this would be a valued training and even though it is a bigger commitment, educators would purposefully choose to attend, knowing they would limit themselves to perhaps just this training for the year.

Attendees recognized the commitment and were willing to help take part on the steering committee, be an instructor, offer a venue or location for workshops/sessions, help with university credit and project grading and more.

The one big piece needing to be in place soon, to move forward with implementing in 2018, is the partnership with a non-profit to take on the role of fiscal agent. Flathead CORE will follow up with a couple of suggested and potentially interested groups/organizations to fill that role.

Thank you and do contact Teresa Wenum twenum@fs.fed.us, Melissa Sladak melissa_sladek@nps.gov or Laura Law laura_law@nps.gov if you have questions, want to find out more or to help out!