

# Virginia's Environmental Literacy Plan & Updates



# Virginia's Environmental Literacy Project

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- Currently using the Business Plan for Environmental Education in the Commonwealth of Virginia (VBPEE) – developed and implemented in 2003
- Through the Virginia Resource Use Education Council (VRUEC), have identified a workgroup to evaluate the current plan and to assess the needs for the “next generation” Environmental Literacy Plan
  - The development timeline will be proposed by this group.



# Overall Implementation of the VBPEE

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- The Virginia Department Conservation and Recreation (VDCR) Office of Environmental Education has been the coordinating agency for implementation of the VBPEE
- The designated principal providers for EE in VA are:
  - K-12 Schools (Virginia Department of Education)
  - Colleges and Universities (Virginia State Council of Higher Education)
  - Community-based Programs (Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation)



# Overall Implementation of the VBPEE

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- The Virginia Resource-Use Education Council (VRUEC) is the interagency group to support and implement the VBPEE.
- VRUEC
  - Celebrated 60 years of active service this year
  - The membership includes:
    - Virginia's state and federal natural resource agencies
    - Virginia's education agencies
    - Virginia's colleges of education and resource management
    - Education and environmental NGOs



# Focus of Current VBPEE K-12

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## ◉ Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences (MWEE)

- Every student in Virginia will experience a minimum of one MWEE in elementary school, one in middle school, and one in high school.
- Participation in MWEE is tracked by the VDOE annually through a survey.

## ◉ Outdoor classroom development and use

- Supported by VRUEC member organizations, particularly the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)





# Overall Implementation of the VBPEE

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## ◉ Virginia Naturally Website

- Clearinghouse for environmental education resources including information about:
  - volunteer opportunities
  - educational classes
  - places to visit
  - community events
  - watershed maps
  - lesson plans
  - recreational activities
- Maintained by the Virginia Office of Environmental Education



# Virginia Naturally Website

Virginia Naturally - Windows Internet Explorer provided by Virginia IT Partnership

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/virginia\_naturally/index.shtml

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Favorites Application Launched Free Hotmail Get more Add-ons

Virginia Naturally IntraNet Login

Page Safety Tools

Virginia.gov Online Services | Agencies | Governor | Help Search Virginia.Gov

DCR Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

Home Virginia Naturally

Overview Education Grants MWEE Outdoor Classrooms Partners and Networks

## VIRGINIA NATURALLY

### What is Virginia Naturally?

Virginia Naturally provides citizens and educators with a virtual library, where learning about Virginia's environment is just a click away. This is your gateway to statewide environmental education resources including information about volunteer opportunities, educational classes, places to visit, community events, watershed maps, lesson plans, and recreational activities, to name a few.

#### Who supports Virginia Naturally?

Public and private organizations and agencies dedicated to linking people to Virginia's natural and historic resources are the heart of this initiative. Using cutting-edge technology, this partnership provides a vast range of factual information and educational resources -- programs, publications, events, classes, and other services for adults and young people.

#### Become a Virginia Naturally partner

Public and private organizations that provide educational services to youth and adults can support the initiative by becoming Virginia Naturally partners. Partners are part of a statewide network working to build knowledge and skills in all Virginians and an appreciation for life-long learning and personal responsibility to conservation. There is a Virginia Naturally Calendar of Events that is available to advertise programs, activities, and events.

**Sign up** to be a Virginia Naturally partner. It's quick, easy and FREE!

#### Growing partnerships

Virginia Naturally established a partnership program for businesses and organizations that have environmental components or missions as part of their programs. At the end of 2010 the Virginia Office of Environmental Education reported that there are over 900 [Virginia Naturally Partners](#).

- Virginia Naturally Schools**  
As of 2010, 52 schools have been recognized as [Virginia Naturally schools](#) demonstrating exemplary practices in environmental education. Virginia Naturally schools make an effort to support environmental conservation and stewardship. A recognized school must continue to submit an annual plan and add an additional feature to its environmental and conservation plan each year.
- Virginia Naturally Grants Program**  
In 2002, in an effort to help teachers meet Bay Agreement's educational goals, the

#### Featured Topics

- [2012 Environmental Education Conference](#)
- [Virginia Naturally Annual Report for 2011 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Status of EE in Virginia \(PDF\)](#)
- [Watershed Educators Institute \(PDF\)](#)
- [Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience \(MWEE\) Resources](#)  
Curricula, partners, project ideas, field study locations and more
- [Project WET 2.0](#)
- [WET, WILD, Underground & Learning Tree Workshop Request Form](#)
- [Classroom Grant Evaluation Report \(PDF\)](#)

Local intranet 100%

# Sampling of Current VBPEE K-12 Programs

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- Virginia's Standard of Learning (SOL)
  - Purposefully have environmental education content embedded from K-12
  - The SOL are build in Learning Progressions from K-12
  - The science SOL are assessed in
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
    - 5<sup>th</sup> grade
    - 8<sup>th</sup> grade
    - End of Course for Earth Science, Biology, and Chemistry





# Sampling of Current VBPEE K-12 Programs

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## ● Virginia Naturally Schools

- Annual application process
- Schools apply to become a Virginia Naturally School
- Recognition for school efforts in environmental education, and supporting environmental conservation and stewardship
- Currently are 48 schools in Virginia who were recognized in 2011 (some have been recognized yearly for 12 years!)
- 2012 schools will be named shortly

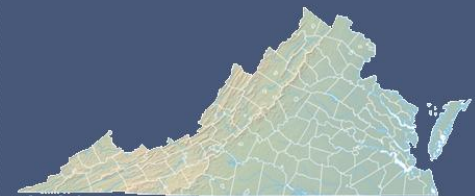


# Sampling of Current VBPEE K-12 Programs

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## ◉ Virginia Chesapeake Bay Academies

- Made possible through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) grant
- Conducted by VRUEC partners
- Six academies offered in the summer 2012 for 100 6-12 grade science teachers
- All academies were close to or at capacity



# Sampling of Current VBPEE K-12 Programs

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## ◉ Virginia Science Standards Institutes (VSSI)

- Sponsored through a VDOE Math Science Partnership grant with Longwood University
- Two week-long summer institutes conducted for K-3 teachers and administrators - school/division teams
- Conducted by VRUEC partners
- 57 participants



# Sampling of Current VBPEE K-12 Programs

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## ● The United States Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Award Program (USED GRS)

- Lead state agency is the VDOE in partnership with VRUEC
- Participated in 2011-2012
  - Had 10 Virginia schools apply
  - Selected three schools to be submitted to the national competition
  - Had two Virginia schools selected as national awardees
- Are participating in 2012-2013





# Sampling of Current VBPEE K-12 Programs

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- Proposed program with the Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals (VAESP)
  - Conduct a day-long conference session at the VAESP annual conference on MWEE, outdoor classrooms, and the cross-curricular connections with the SOL
  - Support the principals' schools during the 2013-14 school year to set up outdoor classrooms and conduct MWEE
  - Will be conducted by VRUEC partners



# Sampling of Current VBPEE College and University Programs

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## ● Longwood University

- Developed the Center for Excellence in Environmental Education (CE<sup>3</sup>) on their campus and at Hull Springs Farm located on the Chesapeake Bay
- Will be used by Longwood for
  - student education
  - K-12 teachers and students
  - community action groups
- VRUEC members part of the advisory group



# Sampling of Current VBPEE College and University Programs

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## • Mary Baldwin College

- Environmental Studies for teachers
- College is an active VRUEC partner

## • Lynchburg College Claytor Nature Center

- Offers environmental education courses and field study location for Lynchburg College students
- Offers environmental education experiences for the local K-12 community
- College is an active VRUEC partner



# Sampling of Current VBPEE College and University Programs

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## ● University of Richmond

- The Sustainability and Nature Institute for Educators in the School of Professional and Continuing Studies
- Focuses on the development of outdoor classrooms and their use
- University has applied for membership in the VRUEC

## ● Virginia Tech

- Multiple majors offered through the College of Natural Resources and Environment
- University is an active VRUEC member





# Sampling of Current VBPEE Community Programs

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- **Watershed Education Institutes**
  - Funded by NOAA
  - Nine one-day classes for non-formal educators
  - At the completion of the institutes, participants receive certification
  - Managed by VDEQ
  - Conducted by VRUEC partners
- **Environmental Education Leadership Program**
  - Cultivate a corps of highly qualified non-formal environmental educators
  - At the completion of each level, participants receive recognition certificate
  - Managed by the Office of Environmental Education



# Status of implementation of the business plan

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## Community-based Programs

- *Status:*
  - *VA Master Naturalists' program established*
  - *EE regional teams established and are functioning within their communities*
  - *Watershed education institutes*
  - *Community habitat program established*



# Sampling of Current VBPEE Community Programs

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- The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Title IV, Part B) program
  - Opportunities for academic enrichment during non-school hours, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.
  - VRUEC presented one day of concurrent sessions at the annual conference, highlighting resources and partnerships available



# Strengths of Virginia's Environmental Education

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- ◉ Alignment of programs to state goals
- ◉ Close partnerships between state agencies, private providers, colleges and universities, and Virginia's public education
- ◉ Have a strong Office of Environmental Education as a statewide clearinghouse





# Challenges for Virginia's Environmental Education

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- Change (made by the Virginia General Assembly) of the location and leadership of the Office of Environmental Education
  - Formally housed and led by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ)
  - As of July 1, 2012, the office and new leadership is part of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR)



# Challenges for Virginia's Environmental Education

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- Access to funding to support local, regional, and state projects
- Assessment of Environmental Literacy
  - Environmental education SOL are assessed yearly, but the assessment is of content knowledge
  - Need to develop assessments of actual environmental literacy



# Challenges for Virginia's Environmental Education

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- Development of a Virginia Environmental Literacy plan
  - Creation of the plan
  - Buy-in by education community before legislation
  - Implementation funds



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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