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REACH-ing FOR OUR DREAMS!

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More than half a decade ago, several individuals and agency and organization representatives decided it was time to act upon the belief that conservation and the environment in Iowa needed a more generous and reliable funding source. Representatives of two dozen agencies and organizations, coordinated by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, worked with several key legislators to draft the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program. The program itself passed the Iowa House and Senate unanimously and, after a little haggling over funding, was signed by Governor Branstad in May 1989.

A key provision of the REAP act was the establishment of the Conservation Education Program which would receive the first \$350,000 of allocated funding. Further, many of the aspects of the legislation (soil conservation, for example) contained an environmental education component. For these reasons, the Conservation Education Program (CEP) board determined that it was time to gather together the full range of individuals and agency representatives who had an interest or stake in environmental education in Iowa for the second "Governor's Conference on Environmental Education." The goal for this group was to establish priorities for environmental education in Iowa for the 1990's.

Environmental education is a life-long process which promotes, encourages and fosters connections with and responsibility for the living and non-living world. An environmentally educated person, then, is one whose behaviors and lifestyle reflect those connections and responsibilities. Obviously, if we are dealing with one's place in natural cycles, in environmentally responsible decision-making and with a lifelong process, it becomes clear that our priorities for environmental education must address the need of all Iowa citizens, in school and out, indoors and out, interested and not.

In ranked order, the Governor's Conference participants established the following priorities: lifestyles and decision-making; adult and community education; professional training and teacher licensure; coordi-

nation and cooperation; curriculum and program development; government, business, labor and industry; incentives; Environmental Education (EE) in formal education and critical issues. These priorities have been revisited and revised. They have been used by the REAP CEP to establish priorities for its grant programs and they have been reviewed by many of the original sponsoring organizations. Iowa Association of Naturalists (IAN), for example, has determined that one of the areas in which its members can have a particularly unique influence is adult and community education.

Using the momentum established by the REAP legislation and the Governor's Conference, a group of "movers and shakers," including several IAN members, have begun meeting to continue developing a long-term, statewide strategy for environmental education, along with specific legislation and fundable programs that will help us REACH those long-term goals.

REACH symbolizes our vision for environmental education and our understanding that we must REACH for our dreams in order to make our vision become reality. The following seven audiences have been identified: pre-school students, elementary students, secondary students, youth groups, post-secondary students, teacher education and adults.

After several meetings, the following projects (to which we are not yet limited) have been established as priorities for action that will ultimately take the form of environmental education legislation:

- Implementation of the Curriculum Framework for EE currently under development by the Department of Education;

- Development of a pre-school EE program;

- Development of an EE "Capstone" course for all Iowa college undergraduates;

- Upgrading EE staff statewide;

- Upgrading residential EE facilities and

- Developing a comprehensive and well-coordinated adult and community EE program.

If we are to REACH our vision, we need the support of all educators and the full variety of individuals who have a stake in environmental education in Iowa. As IAN members, we can provide input to the REACH committee. More importantly, we can inform the educators with whom we work about our plans for making the vision a reality.

We have reached a time to make environmental education an important part of all adaption. We are the ones who can and must make that happen.

A great deal of thinking, writing, revising and fact-finding remains to be done. The REACH committee has established a timeline which calls for a legislative package ready for submission to the Iowa House and Senate during the fall of 1993. All IAN members are invited to REACH for their dreams and become involved in this exciting effort.

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