

December 7, 2011

Two Letters, one sent to each of the below:

Dr. Jane Lubchenco NOAA Administrator	Louisa Koch NOAA Office of Education Director NOAA Education Council Chair
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Dear ,

As the chair of the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS), I am writing to express our concern about the loss of many dynamic, cost-effective, and acclaimed educational programs that partner with the MBNMS to promote understanding, appreciation, and conservation of the Sanctuary. This loss is a direct result of last year's congressional budget cut of the California Bay Watershed Education and Training (CA-BWET) Program as a separate line item from the current 2011-2012 budget. Since B-WET funds were to be allocated to grantees in Fall 2011 their loss is already acutely apparent.

The SAC respectfully requests that the **CA-BWET allocation be placed into the NOAA budget** with the other B-WET programs to be administered through the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. If this request cannot be accomplished this year, we ask that language be developed for allocating a portion of **funds going to the NOAA Office of Education to be allocated to CA-BWET programming.**

To support our request, we gathered quotes from a sampling of the impacted organizations:

- "Previously we had been able to reach over 520 Salinas students from over 10 elementary schools in the Salinas Valley with our CA-BWET funding. This year we have had over a third of our schools drop out of participating all together. The work and time we had put into developing these relationships with the individuals' schools and their families have been negatively impacted by this cut. While these schools are working to try to raise the necessary funds to continue their meaningful outdoor experiences, many have had to cancel due to lack of funding." – Exploring New Horizons, Felton, CA
- "We leverage B-WET grant funds for our watershed education efforts along California's Central Coast, supporting staff-led classroom presentations and field trips for economically disadvantaged youth in under-resourced schools. SOS has been able to provide meaningful watershed education to over 400 students and has built valuable partnerships with schoolteachers and administrators. Students participating in our program showed significant increases in knowledge regarding their local environment as well as significant increases in behavior changes related to waste reduction and stewardship practices. SOS has not been able to partner with our schools due to lack of funds, and teachers and administrators have shown frustration in not being able to utilize these resources that we spent so much time building together". – Save Our Shores, Santa Cruz, CA
- "In 2010-2011, BWET funded a project allowing 60 5th grade students at Robert Down Elementary School to explore their personal connection to the Monterey Bay watershed by learning about the challenges currently facing California sea otters. The BWET program allowed students to connect classroom learning to real-world experiences and learning opportunities in the local environment...At a time when science is not taught at public elementary schools and when many middle and high schools teach science through memorization or textbook reading, it is so very important to support funding for the BWET program; BWET provided students with opportunities to learn science as it should be taught – with students as active learners engaged in meaningful activities that connect to, yet extend beyond, classroom learning". – Parent, Robert Down Elementary School, Pacific Grove, CA

The California B-WET program promotes locally relevant, systemic experiential learning in the K-12 environment.

- In fiscal year 2010, CA B-WET funded **35 awards**, totaling **>\$2,000,000**, collectively reaching **12,680 students** and training **440 teachers**.
- Each year CA B-WET provides more than **\$1,000,000** in the creation of **jobs** and **\$500,000** in the form of resources that go directly **to schools and teachers**.¹
- CA B-WET builds capacity in underserved and underrepresented communities to support environmental literacy by requiring that applicants work with **Title 1 schools**.
- **100%** of CA B-WET funds support the President Obama's **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) initiative**
- Annually, more than **\$200,000** in CA B-WET funds supports the **Ocean Guardian School Program**, a **school-based program** that inspires students to implement stewardship projects to protect our ocean resources.

Evaluation results for National B-WET programs² find them to be overwhelmingly **effective** with collective gains in:

- teachers' confidence in their ability to implement ocean science curriculum
- students' characteristics associated with environmental stewardship
- students' knowledge in watershed issues
- students' enjoyment of learning about and protecting the ocean
- students' and teachers ability to identify ways in which watersheds and sanctuaries can become polluted

The **America COMPETES** Act (33 U.S.C. 893a) specifically calls out the NOAA B-WET Program as a model program and notes that the B-WET Program was cited by **the National Research Council** for its rigorous program-wide assessment of performance and impact among students and teachers. These funds represent an investment in our future, both as early job and skills training in STEM related fields, and in terms of developing an informed, engaged, environmentally and scientifically literate youth force--tomorrow's citizens and leaders.

Please respond to our request and use any means possible to reinstate CA-WET for fiscal year 2012 and for the years to come.

Sincerely,

Chris Harrold
Sanctuary Advisory Council Chair

¹ Compiled by Seaberry Nachbar, CA B-WET Coordinator, from FY10 funded awards.

² NOAA California B-WET Program Project Evaluation Report Review 2007-2008 *and* An Evaluation of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training Program Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences