

directions



The journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

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RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER -
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Risk Management AN IMPERATIVE FOR NATURE CENTERS

Glenn D. Hoagland
Executive Director

Scott W. Brown

Director of Finance & Administration
Mohonk Preserve
Milwaukee, WI

not be driven by fear, we can nevertheless be smart about how to minimize risks, and develop an organizational culture that anticipates and responds easily to situations that could give rise to liability.

Nature Centers do good work that benefits the public and enriches people's lives. Yet in today's litigious world, the nature center is by no means immune to liability from lawsuits. We must minimize our liability risks through best safety practices in our programs, in how we manage our land and facilities, in staff training, and in the prudent assessment and management of risks.

This article has come about after participating in a workshop at the 2005 ANCA Summit called "*Big Trouble in Bedlam: Managing Risks, Security and Crisis with Serenity and Poise.*" Those participating in the workshop agreed that while we should

The best way for a nature center to safeguard itself is to carefully structure its programs and policies and train its staff and volunteers so as to have careful oversight of all activities. Limiting your exposure through preventive program design and implementation is perhaps the best way to mitigate risks.

Use the checklist titled "*How Exposed Are You?*" to see if your nature center has designed its programs so as to anticipate someone getting hurt, errors or lapses in judgment by your visitors, staff, Board or volunteers, or acts by others against your organization (i.e. theft or vandalism, etc.).

(continued on page 4)

"Nature does nothing in vane." —Sir Thomas Browne

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President's Message

Tim Sandsmark
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What a crazy winter it's been. Record snows, record highs, record lows, snow in Malibu! At the time I'm writing this in early February here in Colorado it's close to 60 degrees outside and the huge snow piles which have temporarily raised the elevation on Lookout Mountain from 7600 to 7610 feet are beginning to melt. Since December 20th we will have received almost 120" of snow and because of cold weather it has remained in place for much longer than usual. In the meantime those of you in the midwest and east are in the midst of a deep freeze. While we were getting our big snows in December and January, many of you were basking in unusually mild weather. Is it partially related to global warming and climate change? Perhaps... certainly more and more evidence seems to indicate that this is the case. Our jobs of educating about and connecting with people with nature have never been more important. (See "Tackling Big Issues" on page 8.)

In an effort to help you do this, ANCA is working hard on your behalf.

The first item of note is the search process for ANCA's first Executive Director. The search committee comprised of Corky McReynolds, as chair, Pat Welch, Bo Glover, Saul Weisburg, and myself has been conducting telephone interviews and making reference calls for the top candidates. We have some excellent

applicants and by the time you receive this newsletter we should have a final candidate selected. Our hope is that the new Executive Director will start in May and be intimately involved with annual Summit planning and organization as well as getting up to speed with the ANCA Board and strategic planning initiatives.

One of the resources that has been helpful in conducting our search has been ANCA's newest monograph titled *The Search for Extraordinary Leadership* authored by Corky McReynolds of Treehaven Environmental Learning Center. This monograph was developed to outline a best practices process to engage and complete a successful search and screen for a center's next extraordinary leader.

This monograph is the third published in ANCA's Monograph series. The series is intended to be a supplement to the *Director's Guide to Best Practices* and will continue to set best practices for the profession. This process was made possible through the generosity of ANCA's members. At the 2003 Summit in Ohio, \$9,000 was raised as seed money to pay for the first monographs. Many of you generously responded to this "Fund-The-Need" drive. Three monographs have now been published with a fourth on the way. In addition to *The Search for Extraordinary Leadership*, Don Watson authored two monographs - *Interpretive Design of Nature Centers - Exhibits* and *Interpretive Design of*

(continued on next page)

Nature Centers – Buildings. The “Exhibits” monograph provides guidelines and recommendations to undertake an exhibit design project in new or existing sites and spaces. Topics include interpretive planning, visitor studies, interpretive artifacts and anecdotes, outdoor exhibits and interpretive trails, and evaluation. Suggested formats are provided for selecting and managing exhibit consultants and coordinating exhibits with buildings and sites. The “Buildings” monograph is for those involved with planning new sites and buildings and/or remodeling existing sites and buildings for interpretation, exhibits, and educational programs.

A fourth monograph is nearing completion. *Citizen Science Programming* should be available soon.

The price for all monographs is \$12 plus \$2 shipping. Order today by contacting Larry Brown at ANCA, 1000 Aullwood Road, Dayton, OH 45414. Phone: 937-890-7360 or 800-490-2622 or email: lbrown@audubon.org.

We are also nearing completion of the web-based salary and benefits survey. Many of you gave very generously at the 2005 Summit in Michigan during the “Fund-the-Need” portion of the auction to create a web-based salary and benefits survey that would provide current information of nature center salaries and benefits for several different positions that are typical at most centers (directors, education/program directors, educators/naturalists, development directors, office, maintenance staff, etc.). This survey is designed to be updated at any time. The most recent ANCA salary survey was done in 2001 and was a very valuable tool for many administrators, but was a major undertaking and difficult to update in a timely manner. Thanks to advances in web-based technology, surveys that can be custom designed and updated continuously are now possible. Stay tuned for information on the ANCA listserv and your email as to when this will be ready for you to use.

You should also be receiving your registration packets soon in the mail regarding ANCA’s Green & Gold Summit at Schlitz Audubon Nature Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Information is also on ANCA’s website at www.natctr.org. This promises to be another great gathering. I look forward to seeing you there in August!

Keep up the important work you do and thanks for your belief and support of ANCA! 🍁

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Risk Management

(continued from page 1)

Insurance

Most states have statutes providing some protection to landowners from certain types of lawsuits by visitors, and some also protect non-profit or public-benefit corporations against certain types of liability when acting responsibly (and not negligently) as a body. However, each state is different, and these statutes can be limited as to their scope, and should not be relied on in lieu of insurance.

Understanding that even the most well-designed programs and preventive land management practices cannot eliminate risks, the role of a good insurance policy (or policies) cannot be understated. Perhaps the most important of these is commercial general liability (GL) because of the magnitude of potential loss that a successful claim against you might represent. GL covers mainly "slip and fall," and payments for injuries sustained on your property.

Although each organization is different and should consult its insurance agent on needed coverage, most nature centers, including Mohonk Preserve, maintain coverage of \$1 million per occurrence, \$2 million aggregate per year, with excess limits coverage (an "umbrella") of \$5 million.

Finding the Right Coverage

To make sure you get the coverage you need, interview insurance agents and thoroughly educate them about your programs. Bring them out for a tour of your operations and programs. A good agent will become your advocate with the carriers and do the work to customize your bid and package it competitively, ultimately getting you placed with a reputable carrier. Carriers are rated by AM Best as to their excellence, and also rated as to the size of their financial assets to back up claims. Depending on what riskier activities you may need to insure (specialized recreational programs such as river-rafting, ropes courses, rock climbing, large public events, special use and management practices such as prescribed burns, etc.) you may need to buy supplemental coverages. Or your insurance may be placed with a "special risk carrier" that specializes in covering

riskier activities. If your suite of activities is uniquely risky the mainstream insurance industry typically will pass on quoting insurance, or will not offer a competitively priced bid. Some special hazards may be excluded by a given carrier in making an offer to bind insurance.



photo by Marty Molitoris

No matter the size of your facility or the types of activities you offer having the proper insurance coverage is vital.

This article has only scratched the surface of the complex topic of risk management and liability insurance coverage. Not every nature center needs all the coverages listed in the sidebar, and wise decisions will have to be made about your scale of operation, how much risk your organization can feasibly mitigate, how much insurance you can afford to purchase, and how much to self-insure. We should continue to share our experiences through ANCA to help each other be well informed and to keep our visitors and programs as safe and trouble-free as possible. 🍂

The 6,600 acre Mohonk Preserve is New York State's largest non-profit nature preserve. Its rugged mountain terrain is visited by 150,000 annually for nature programs, wildlife observation, rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, and hunting on 65 miles of multi-use trails and carriage roads. Founded 43 years ago, the Preserve has never been sued by a recreational visitor.

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HOW EXPOSED ARE YOU?

Does your nature center have in place these procedures/protocols?

- General safety protocols for programs
- Staff training/safety expertise (first aid, CPR, first responder, etc)
- Search and Rescue Plan
- Incident Command System (ICS) protocol (for major incidents - hostage, wildfire, etc.)
- Building evacuation plan (often done with your local fire company)
- Crisis communication plan (media; parents)
- Sexual harassment training
- Criminal background checks for all staff and volunteers who work with children
- Security/gate control
- Vehicle safety
- Hazard tree inventory/record and plan of maintenance
- Incident reports; accident reports
- Signage on land as to hazards or land and wildlife encounters, notice of individual responsibility to assume risk
- Signage on any multi-use trails as to user etiquette
- Notice, waiver, and assumption of risk, and release language on membership cards, day passes, permits (individual and group) and signed acknowledgement
- Insurance rider (your center as named insured and/or additional insured) for school groups and other institutions
- Affirmation of medical information record on file for school students participating in nature center programs
- Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act through barrier-free and accessible physical/structural settings, and staff trained to deliver inclusive programming for people with disabilities.

DOES YOUR NATURE CENTER HAVE THESE INSURANCES?

- General liability (covering bodily injury and property damage, fire damage, etc.)
- Excess liability/Umbrella coverage ("umbrella policy" extends your general liability if GL policy limits are not enough or are exhausted)
- Property (covering specific locations and physical structures and their replacement if lost or damaged. - i.e. visitor center, teaching pavilion, etc)
- Title (securing the validity of deeds you hold to your land and insuring against adverse deed claims)
- Equipment (including exhibition floater for your exhibits, property on exhibition or in transit, valuable papers and records, fine art)
- Auto (bodily injury and property damage for all owned and hired vehicles)
- Professional error insurance (for instructor error in programs or error in pre-hospital care of the injured by staff)
- Directors and Officers Insurance (fiduciary insurance for wrongful acts, breach of duty, poor business judgments, etc)
- Employee Bond (for breach of employee duty, misappropriation, theft, etc.)
- Worker's compensation;
- Volunteer medical policy (covers volunteer's accidental death or if injured/hospitalized)



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National Dialogue - Spotlights Children & Nature

Ken Finch
President

Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood
Omaha, NE

Last September more than 325 people gathered at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in West Virginia for the first “National Dialogue on Children and Nature.”

This event was sponsored by The Conservation Fund, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (which runs the NCTC facility), and Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Among the several ANCA members who attended the meeting, Jack Shea (Teton Science Schools) was one of the presenters and Ken Finch (Green Hearts INC) officially represented ANCA.

The invitation-only conference was a

testament to the growing influence of Louv’s landmark book. The organizers deliberately gathered a wide cross-section of professionals, including environmental educators, conservationists, doctors, residential developers, urban planners, governmental and nonprofit leaders, and even a senior Disney planner. The goal was to harvest the group’s collective wisdom about how to get kids back outside.

The initial evening reception featured an especially inspirational talk by Charles Jordan, Chair of The



photo by Bob Bailie

A great resource for restoring children’s bonds with the outdoors is The Children and Nature Network. Learn more at www.cnaturenet.org

Conservation Fund and a long-time leader in the parks and recreation field. Drawing on his own experiences, Jordan stressed the multiple benefits of outdoor play for children of all races and backgrounds, focusing especially on the underserved urban audiences who often have limited access to natural areas. The following morning kicked off with a thoughtful keynote presentation by Dirk Kempthorne, U.S. Secretary of Interior. Kempthorne

stressed that he and Interior are committed to help with a new “Leave No Child Inside” initiative, and he urged that we all unite behind the power of our common childhood experiences. “We are here today to light a fire of passion that opens the doors to the great outdoors so children can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch

nature,” said Kempthorne. “Government can never do all that parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles should do . . . (but government) can be a catalyst, an encourager, a motivator.”

The next two days were filled with an intense, rich, and at times overwhelming collection of presentations and facilitated small group discussions. Research data came from numerous individuals, including Dr. Michael Suk of the University of Florida, Dr. Terry Neu of Sacred Heart University, David Orr of Oberlin College, Lowell Monke (author of *Breaking Down the Digital Walls*), Stephen Kellert from Yale

University, and Robin Moore from the Natural Learning Initiative at North Carolina State University. Amidst a huge number of quotable moments, Monke brought out much laughter when talking about his opposition to the use of computers in elementary school. He noted that when elementary teachers ask him what they should do with their high-powered computers, his standard reply is,

(continued on next page)


“Sell them to the high school, and then use the money to buy your students shovels so they can go outside and dig for night crawlers.”

Inspiring talks of new directions and actions already underway came from Gina McCarthy, the Commissioner of Connecticut’s Department of Environmental Protection; John Flicker, the President of National Audubon Society; and Richard Louv himself. Jack Shea also drew a very positive response for his description of the innovative efforts they have been undertaking at Teton Science Schools in Jackson, Wyoming, which will be the host site for ANCA’s 2008 Summit. While describing how he worked through various roadblocks to their new environmental charter school, Jack left the audience chuckling with a tongue-in-cheek – and perhaps slightly political – bit of advice, “Fake right, and go left.”

The National Dialogue was squarely aimed at identifying new methodologies to combat nature-deficit disorder – not just for the sake of promoting conservation values, but for children’s overall social, mental, and physical well-being. In fact, the conference’s emphasis was more on health than conservation, but everyone in attendance seemed to understand that the two can very easily go hand-in-hand.

Thus far, conference follow-up actions have been modest, though the potential for major new national initiatives remains strong. One important step, though, is that Louv and a core group of supporters have started “The Children and Nature Network”, which aims to be a resource and “driver” for new efforts in restoring children’s bonds with the outdoors. The conference proceedings are now available on the Network’s website: www.cnaturenet.org. Also on this website are a research bibliography, summaries of key research studies that delineate the benefits of outdoor play, and a collection of current news reports related to the topic. ANCA members will find it well worth their time to browse this site.

Over the past few years, ANCA’s members and organizations have been increasingly turning their work and philosophies towards the directions embodied in the National Dialogue on Children and Nature. With the wide participation and impressive momentum that the conference demonstrated, it seems clear that reuniting children and the outdoors is a growing wave that nature centers are uniquely positioned to support. 🌿



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Profiles: Tackling Big Issues: Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

Kimberly Skyelander, Ph.D.
Executive Director/President
Wolf Ridge Environmental
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Finland, MN

Global warming and climate change are finally making the mainstream news. Controversial? Sure. Should we educate folks about this issue? You bet.

At Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center in northeastern Minnesota, we believe in tackling these big issues. Being part of the solution means helping people discover the relationships between how nature works, how humans use nature, and how environmental issues affect us both personally and as a member of society.

How do our actions affect the environment? Are there other ways that we can meet our needs while still respecting the natural processes we all depend upon? Wolf Ridge is developing a new integrated project that addresses these questions called *Human Connections to Nature's Timing: The Relationships between Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Phenology*. That's a mouthful for sure. We call it *Nature's Timing* for short.

The project has several components: a class lesson plan, interactive computer displays, teacher training, and school outreach. The interdisciplinary curriculum will explore the interactions between weather patterns and energy consumption, and how these interactions in turn affect climate change and phenology.

Phenology, in case you aren't familiar with the term, is the study of the timing of biological events or the response of living organisms to seasonal and climatic changes. Human influences, climate, and weather cause periodic variations in the stages of birth and death, reproduction

and germination, pollination and fruiting, migration and nesting. These variations can help us understand the health of ecosystems and how they respond to climate change.

The *Nature's Timing* project is the brainstorm of senior naturalist, Peter Harris. "I've been interested in energy, phenology, and the atmosphere for about 20 years now," says Harris. "It's really exciting that phenology is being used to help predict climate change because we can really learn a lot from nature. For instance, are butterflies emerging earlier or later this year, and how does that relate to our weather patterns? How do our energy emissions affect the weather which in turn affects when buds first open up? The whole birth, emerging, death thing is really quite fascinating."

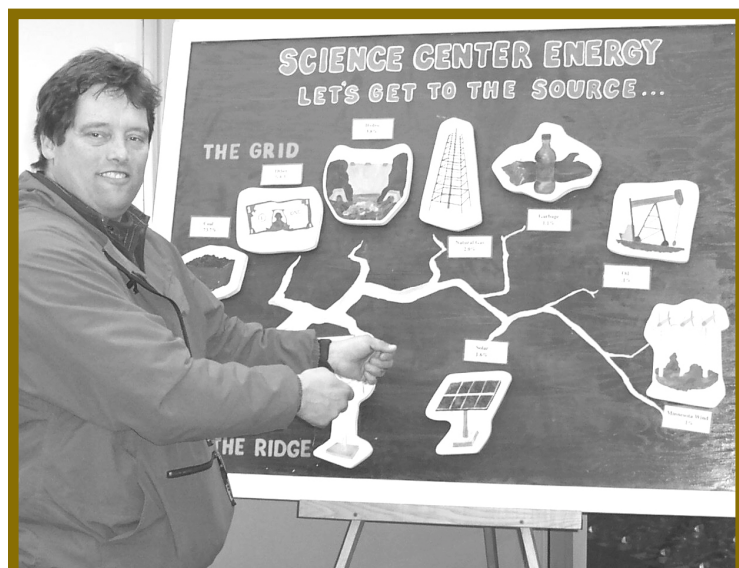


photo by Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

Peter Grey, Senior Naturalist at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center, developed "Nature's Timing" a program which explores the interactions between climate change, renewable energy, and phenology.

Climate change, renewable energy, and phenology are becoming increasingly important issues in our communities, both locally and globally. It is critical that people be provided with balanced information, hands-on relevant experiences, and critical thinking skills so they can understand and implement sustainable solutions to these related issues. This curriculum introduces these skills to youth, and gives teachers the tools and techniques they need to help students make informed decisions based on scientific and social considerations.

What will students do in this class? They will study the connections between climate change, energy use, and phenology through outdoor hands-on activities throughout our 2000 acre natural area, and through

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real-time renewable energy and weather computer displays on campus. The science displays will allow students to monitor local/regional weather patterns and compare them to energy use on the Wolf Ridge campus and around Minnesota. This data will then be compared and analyzed in conjunction with field phenology observations gathered directly by students. (To view the real time energy production from our wind turbine and solar panels and our energy use in our science center, visit <http://view2.fatspaniel.net/FST/Portal>).

Teachers will receive multi-day professional development activities including workshops, field activities, outdoor teaching, and seminars on renewable energy production, state-of-the-art climate science, hands-on phenology investigation, and sustainable solutions to climate change issues. Techniques for incorporating these concepts into the classroom will also be taught. The real time energy, phenology, and weather display storybooks and curriculum will go on-line to assist teachers and students throughout the state. Wolf Ridge has partnered with several organizations to develop this integrated curriculum including the state-wide group Community Energy Resource Teams (CERTS) based at the University of Minnesota, Minnesota Power, 3M Corporation, The Freshwater Society, and Great River Energy.

We are excited about this project. Like you, we believe in the future; we believe in our youth, and we believe that by working together we will find solutions to some of the challenging issues that we now face. With a little hope and "can-do" attitude there's no telling where we can go!

Another project that might interest folks is our Student Teacher Program. Since the fall of 2004, five student teachers from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN have stayed at Wolf Ridge to complete their undergraduate teaching degrees. The student teachers spend 7 weeks during the fall with us, 7 weeks during the winter in traditional classrooms, and the remaining 23 weeks back with us teaching environmental education.

The goal of the Wolf Ridge Student Teacher Program is to help the teachers learn to integrate both formal and non-formal environmental education teaching skills in a traditional classroom while also providing them extensive opportunities to practice teaching in an outdoor setting.

Where will the Wolf Ridge student teachers be in 5-10 years? I don't know. I do know that all five of the student teachers were recruited and hired by schools even before they finished the program! They are passing on what they learned about education and the environment from those who inspired them. Hopefully a student in one of their classes will be inspired to follow in their footsteps. 🌿



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To learn more about Flying WILD and Flying WILD partnerships, please contact us or visit our website at www.flyingwild.org.

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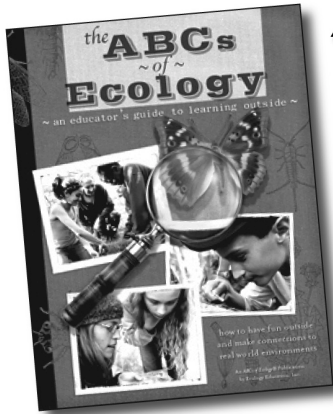
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Dayton, OH 45414



ANCA Summit XIII

*Green & Gold
Getaway*

Aug. 22-25, 2007

Schlitz Audubon
Nature Center
Milwaukee, WI

www.sanc.org

*This is the ONE conference you
don't want to miss!*

**Registration information:
www.natctr.org**

ANCA TECHNICAL CONSULTS: *Your friend in the business!*

- Long Range & Strategic Planning
- Review Education Programs
- Mission focus
- Fundraising and Fiscal Management
- Facility Planning
 - Buildings
 - Exhibits
 - Trails
- Starting a Center
- Management Strategies
- Use Planning

To find out more contact:
Bo Glover at 949-645-8489
boglo@aol.com

We know the business, we're in it too!

directions

c/o Aullwood Audubon Center
1000 Aullwood Road
Dayton, OH 45414

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