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spring 2016

directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

Find Your North Star ~ Summit XXII ~ Audubon Center of the North Woods

Bryan Wood
Executive Director
Audubon Center of the North Woods
Sandstone, MN

It's not often during the course of a given year that we as nature center directors and administrators have the chance to step back, take a deep breath, and be reminded of why we are in this profession. To have the chance to think about the impact we hope to make for our shared planet and for the next generation. It is rarer still to be surrounded by scores of peers who share your passion for nature and education, who understand your trials and tribulations, your opportunities and successes and want to share their experiences to help you become better at your position. That just doesn't happen in many fields. The ANCA Summit offers such an opportunity.

For twenty one years, the ANCA Summit has provided a respite for nature

center directors and administrators from across the country to come together to brainstorm, collaborate, share, confide, and gain strength to head back to our centers better than when we left. It allows that incredible feeling of realizing you're not alone in what you're doing, that there are dedicated and talented individuals in every state waiting to be part of your support network to help you succeed. This might all seem like soaring rhetoric and that you can't really experience all this at some conference. And you're right. But the ANCA Summit isn't just some conference!

This is the premier opportunity for nature centers and administrators in the US to come together in a unique format of expert-led workshops, peer-led facilitated sessions, and intimate open space discussions. The wealth of knowledge that is brought together

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Founded in 1989, the Association of Nature Center Administrators is a private non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting best leadership and management practices for nature and environmental learning centers.

Serving more than 600 members, ANCA is the leader in the profession.



Rooted in Experience. Reaching for Excellence.

Directions is a quarterly publication of the Association of Nature Center Administrators, distributed to members of ANCA as a membership benefit.

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Director's Notes

Moving Forward

Jen Levy
Executive Director
Association of Nature Center
Administrators
Logan, UT

Happy Spring! We have launched the 2016 Summit and I am looking forward to seeing our members in Minnesota in August. As Bryan Wood states in his article, the Summit provides the opportunity to be surrounded by peers who share your passion for the work you do and who bring the best ideas, lessons learned, experience, and challenges to the workshops, facilitated sessions, open space sessions, and many networking opportunities. I hope you will consider joining us!

In addition to looking forward to the Summit, we are moving forward on several projects and planning efforts. Since the release of the *ANCA Blue Ribbon Report*, we are looking for nature and environmental learning centers that demonstrate Blue Ribbon Best Practices. The Report explores what leaders in the field view as the societal and economic future of our industry over the next 25 years. The Report identifies significant trends and developments and provides recommendations for how ANCA can continue to support the growth of nature centers in the future.

One way we can do this is to share with you centers that are already demonstrating best practices in one of the major themes identified in the study. One example is Teton Raptor Center's Poo Poo Project (Page 6) – an innovative conservation effort that not only provides funding to the center but



also provides a solution to a serious conservation problem – wildlife entrapment. This is one great example of a member center that successfully integrates conservation ethics into their organization. We are looking for more stories to tell!

In February we reached out to the ANCA membership to help us identify centers and individuals who can provide expertise on the Blue Ribbon Report themes including:

- successfully integrating conservation and/or restoration ethics into their organizations;
- leading the conversation about education and advocacy concerning climate change;
- integrating technology into programming and business models
- promoting the value of nature and environmental learning centers in the community;
- successful collaborations
- developing and promoting innovative programs for high school, college, and adults focusing on field-based research, citizen science, and issue analysis;
- exploring the horizon beyond school programming;

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- successfully establishing relevancy in an increasingly nature disconnected society;
- centers who have explored new business models, adaptive funding, and sustainability;
- and, nature and environmental learning centers that are considered urban oases.

We received some great feedback, thank you to the survey participants. If you would like to contribute a Blue Ribbon Best Practice article for *Directions*, please let us know by emailing jenlevy@natctr.org.

At the February 26 Michigan Regional Meeting at the Chippewa Nature Center, Corky McReynolds, PhD, CPF met with attendees to explore six questions derived from the Blue Ribbon Report:

- How can we be relevant in our community?
- How do we become leaders in conservation, advocacy and community?
- How do we build resiliency?
- What programs will achieve impact?
- What programs will the community view as relevant?
- How does our leadership (board and staff) reflect our community?

Small groups met to discuss each question and then the session opened into a share fair to exchange ideas. The notes from this meeting are available on the ANCA Blue Ribbon Report webpage. We will be conducting a similar session at the Summit in August and sharing our results with the membership this fall.

We are also moving forward with our strategic plan, focusing our efforts on the four strategies we prioritized at the January ANCA board retreat:

1. Offer a spectrum of services

relevant to member needs.

2. Build ANCA's capacity (staff, board, funding) to serve our members.

3. Develop a variety of communications to reach members and nonmembers.


4. Explore/define relevance and trends in our profession.

We have reached out to new, mid-career, and veteran members to assess their needs and develop relevant programming at the upcoming Summit including leadership training for new leaders, wellness programs to stay healthy throughout our careers, and planning for retirement – both personally and professionally.

We are building ANCA's capacity with a plan to increase the staff, and we are currently in the middle of a move to a new cloud-based donor/member management system. We are looking forward to the added features that will allow us to better manage our growing membership, grow our major gifts program, and offer more online capabilities.

Our new marketing plan includes strategies for better member connections and engagement, new market materials and resources including social media, publications, and improvements to the Reciprocal Membership Program, and partnerships with like organizations.

We are working with a task force to consider developing an evaluation model for nature and environmental learning centers to collect, analyze, and communicate our collective impact.

The impact of our Strategic Planning Process has been significant. We will continue to focus our resources and energies on the strategies we identified to keep us moving forward. 



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collectively and then shared openly makes for a truly extraordinary experience. For these reasons and more, I extend my personal invitation for you to join us at the *Find Your North Star Summit*, August 17-21, 2016 at the Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW) in Sandstone, MN.

There are many things that we are looking forward to for this Summit. We are thrilled to be the first Minnesota site to host the ANCA Summit. With over 35 nature centers and 6 residential environmental learning centers (RELCs), Minnesota's commitment to environmental education is deep and is found throughout the entire state as these centers collectively connect hundreds of thou-

sands of individuals every year to nature. We are very excited to be hosting the Summit at an RELC, providing a more intimate and relaxed setting where attendees can spend more time with each other, and more time in nature. There is something uniquely different about a residential experience, where you share not only experiences, but meals and sleeping quarters. It has a way of enhancing and amplifying memories, connections, and experiences.

We are very pleased with our lineup of field trips, site visits, speakers, workshops, and the facilitated sessions scheduled thus far. Starting out the Summit will be pre-field trip options to explore Lake Superior's North Shore with

the Audubon Center of the North Woods' Emeritus Executive Director Mike Link, and canoeing the waters of Grindstone Lake. One track of ANCA In The Field will visit government-run Westwood Hills and Wood Lake Nature Centers, while the other will visit Dodge and Tamarac Nature Centers, both of which have robust nature-based preschools. Workshop topics include Fundamentals of Risk Management and Safety, Cultivating Major and Planned



Eagle's eye view of the Audubon Center of the North Woods campus.


Gifts, Performance Management and Coaching, The Planning Power of Purpose, Collaborative Partnerships, Achieving Personal Wellness, Developing a Crisis Management Plan, The Three Pillars of Nature Center Leadership, and Personal Financial Wellness.

Speakers include humorist Al Batt, and retired director of Treehaven, Corky McReynolds. Capping off the Summit Saturday evening will be music by yours truly as I accompany my father Douglas Wood. Post-field trip options include white-water rafting down the famous St. Louis River, pedaling on the Willard Munger state bike trail, and another option to get out and paddle on Grindstone Lake.

There has been a conscious choice amongst ACNW and ANCA staff and board members to offer workshops and facilitated sessions that appeal to all spectrums within the field. Whether you are new to the profession, are comfortably established, or are nearing the end of your career, this Summit will have something for you no matter where you are in your career. If it is has been a few years since you've attended the Summit, please consider coming

back and seeing who and what's new. If you've never attended the Summit, treat yourself to a professional experience immensely rewarding. And if you are a regular to these every summer, we look forward to your smiling face gracing our campus!

So please come one, come all to the

Find Your North Star Summit this August at the Audubon Center of the North Woods. We'll have the coffee on... 

Bryan Wood is the Executive Director of the Audubon Center of the North Woods, a 535-acre 501(c)(3) residential environmental learning center near Sandstone, MN. As Executive Director Bryan leads an organization with a \$1.6 million annual budget, 25 employees and 8 naturalist interns. He serves as a public relations advocate on behalf of the Audubon Center, and strives to form productive partnerships with individuals, schools, nonprofits, and corporations.

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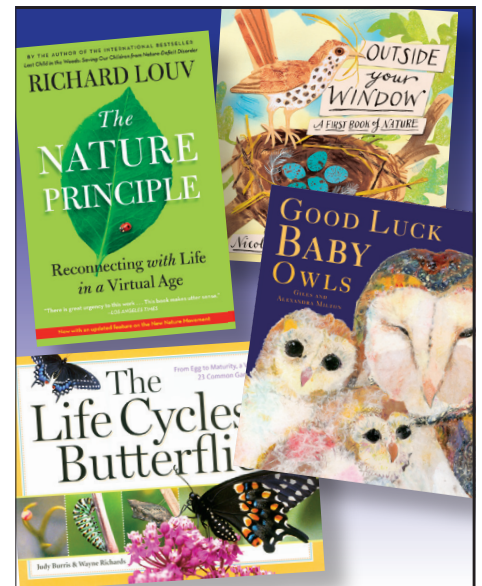
beetles

(Better Environmental Education, Teaching,
Learning & Expertise Sharing)
announces the launch of its redesigned website
beetlesproject.org

BETLES is devoted to infusing outdoor science programs with research-based approaches and tools to improve science teaching and learning. Resources include:

- versatile professional learning materials;
- student activities;
- how-to videos; and
- additional support for program leaders, field instructors, and classroom teachers.

BETLES resources are based on current research and understandings about how people learn, and tested by dozens of programs in diverse settings all over the country (and beyond!). More resources will continue to be released each month!



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Profile:

Poo Poo Project Goes Nationwide ~ an Innovative Conservation Effort!

David Watson
Director of Development and
Communications
Teton Raptor Center
Jackson Hole, WY

Can you imagine a small cavity nesting owl spending the last few days of its life struggling, trying to stay alive in the ‘basement’ of a vault toilet?

Or how about knowing, despite its best efforts, it will exhaustively flounder around in all that urine, feces, and used toilet paper only to succumb to starvation, dehydration, or disease.

Each year thousands of cavity-nesters, animals that prefer dark, narrow spaces for nesting and roosting, become entrapped in vertical open pipes such as ventilation pipes, claim stakes, and chimneys. Vault toilets, the self-contained restrooms found in many of America’s wilderness areas, feature vertical 12” diameter ventilation pipes that mimic the natural cavities preferred by various bird species for nesting, roosting, and caching food.

Public agencies use vault toilets to manage sanitary waste on their lands. The structures rely on the sun to heat the vent stack on the roof. The warmth causes air in the pipe to rise, pulling unpleasant-smelling air out of the building. The owls enter at the top of the vent, go down the pipe, and land in the waste-holding reservoir. Because the pipe is vertical and narrow, and made of plastic or metal, the birds are unable to fly or

even climb out.

Teton Raptor Center’s “Port-O-Potty Owl Project,” affectionately known as the “Poo-Poo Project,” aims to prevent wildlife entrapment within vent pipes found on vault toilets throughout the U.S. through the design, distribution, and installation of a special Poo-Poo screen. Currently 6,266



Photo Courtesy of Diane Diebold

The ventilation pipes on vault toilets attract cavity-nesting birds, the birds then become trapped in the effluent. This Northern Saw-whet Owl was rescued from a vault toilet in the Hume Lake Ranger District in Sequoia National Forest.

Poo-Poo screens can be found throughout 18 states, from Alaska to Texas, on primarily public lands and a handful of private properties. TRC recently celebrated our first Poo-Poo Project east of the Mississippi River at Congaree National Park in South Carolina.

In 2010, Teton Raptor Center, a raptor conservation leader, with

the support of a 1% for the Tetons grant, initiated a community-driven project to install 100 screens on the ventilation pipes of vault toilets throughout Grand Teton National Park, as well as Shoshone, Bridger-Teton, and Caribou-Targhee National Forests. In March 2014, Teton Raptor Center was awarded the prestigious “Wings Across the Americas Award for Habitat and Partnership” from the U.S. Forest Service in recognition of the conservation impact of the Poo-Poo Project. The award recognizes successful conservation work that typically happens through partnerships. Wings Across the Americas is a U.S. Forest Service program aimed at conserving populations and habitats of birds, bats, butterflies, dragonflies ... and the Poo-Poo Project could save thousands of birds.

“Grand Teton is honored to be associated with the Teton Raptor Center and included in this important conservation award, and we really appreciate the recognition by the US Forest Service. However, the credit really goes to the Teton Raptor Center for their real world conservation savvy and the insight they demonstrated by coming up with this simple product that stands to benefit millions of acres of public lands across our country. Our hats are off to them,” said Steve Cain, Senior Wildlife Biologist (retired), Grand Teton National Park and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway.

(continued on page 7)

Since the pilot project, TRC has researched, developed, and distributed the Poo-Poo screens to mitigate wildlife entrapment, creating a conservation solution to a national-scale problem and increasing awareness to this wildlife hazard and accessibility to this product by reducing the price from other screen covers by over 70%. TRC's Poo-Poo screens are extremely durable, easy to install, very affordable, and have superior ventilation.

There are thousands of vault toilets on America's public lands. These wildlife traps are also found on private lands in the form of a variety of human structures that resemble natural cavities but can prove lethal to a number of species. The problem is wide spread throughout the United States and affects several species that have been recognized as endangered or threatened.

Teton Raptor Center saw a surge in Poo-Poo Screen sales after the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service released an agency publication titled "Keeping Wildlife Out of Vent Pipes, Chimneys, and Flues," recommending screens on vault toilet vents earlier this year.

In February of 2016, The Bureau of Land Management adopted a new policy of capping pipes and plastic tubes on public lands that annually lead to the unintentional deaths of up to 100,000 cavity-dwelling birds, reptiles, and animals that think they've found a safe home. U.S. BLM Director Neil Kornze said the executive memorandum he issued to BLM field offices required agency personnel to identify and cap or

screen survey markers, pipes, vents, signposts, fences, and other structures.

"We are proud of the success of the Poo-Poo Project, made possible through so many partnerships with public lands managers, volunteers, and conservationists. This project is a model for the innovative solutions that Teton Rap-



Photo Courtesy of Teton Raptor Center

Teton Raptor Center designed a vent screen that effectively prevents birds from entering vent stacks without compromising ventilation.

tor Center endeavors to pursue to help protect the wildlife we love. While we've distributed 5,849 Poo-poo Screens, we know there's so much work left to do to elevate awareness and understanding of the hazards of open pipes on both public and private lands," said David Watson, TRC's Poo-Poo Project Coordinator.

Teton Raptor Center is a non-profit organization located in Jackson Hole, Wyoming that advances raptor conservation through education, research and rehabilitation.

It has been an ANCA Member since 2010 and was the recipient of a scholarship for an ANCA Peer Consult in 2014. The consult team included David Catlin (National Audubon Society, formerly), Louise Shimmel (Cascades Raptor Center) and Paul Tebbel (Effie Yeaw Nature Center).

The Poo-Poo Project is a creative and simple wildlife solution to a nationwide conservation issue. It involves private and public landowners collaborating to increase the scale of the Poo-Poo Project's impact, and it is a great community, education, volunteer, and conservation opportunity.

Poo-Poo Screens can be purchased for \$29.95/screen or at a bulk rate of 85 Poo-Poo Screens for \$2,495. Shipping and handling is included.

In addition to expanding awareness of the Poo-Poo Project, in 2015, TRC conducted 360 educational programs for 18,000 people, cared for 130 injured, ill or orphaned raptors at its rehabilitation clinic, and conducts raptor research projects on Great Grey Owls, Golden Eagles, Sage Grouse, and migratory songbirds.

To learn more about Teton Raptor Center's Poo-Poo Project, or their education, research, and rehabilitation programs, call (307) 203-2551 or visit www.tetonraptorcenter.org. 🌿

*David Watson is Teton Raptor Center's Director of Development and Communications. He has 25+ years of nonprofit management and fundraising experience. His favorite bird of prey is the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*).*

From The Field:

a Field Guide to Nonprofit Finances ~ Part I a Look at the Balance Sheet

Rich Patterson
Director Emeritus
Indian Creek Nature Center &
Patty Weisse
Director Emeritus
Balitomore Woods Nature Center

Nonprofit organizations provide services not available from for-profit or government sectors. People affiliate with nonprofits because they embrace the organization's mission. Often board members are motivated but unfamiliar with the quirks of nonprofit finance. One of the most important questions every board member should know the answer to is: "Do we have enough money to meet our upcoming financial obligations?"

Understanding the basics of a Statement of Financial Position (sometimes called a Balance Sheet) helps all board members feel more comfortable answering this question.

The Legs of Nonprofit Funding

Successful nonprofits have these distinctly different pools of money reflected on their balance sheet:

Operating Fund:

This covers such day-to-day operating costs as staff compensation, insurance, rent, and supplies. Income typically is generated by memberships, unrestricted contributions, endowment distributions, grants, and sales. Both income and expenses are encompassed in the annual budget, which is really just a guide to monitor finances. Once

"All board members should be informed and asking questions about their organization's finances. The importance of this can not be overstated."

Matt Regen, ANCA Accountant



grants or contributions earmarked by the donor for a specific use outside normal operating costs. Sometimes restricted assets appear on the financial statement in one lump but are spent over a longer period. This makes the statement appear more robust than it truly is.

There are two common traps created by restricted assets. First, a cash strapped organization uses it for something other than what the donor intended. This is unethical and the use of restricted funds is legally and contractually restricted and often requires special accounting procedures. Second, sometimes cash strapped organizations apply for restricted donations or grants simply because they can get the money. If the income does not fit the organization's purpose it creates "mission creep" and the tail begins wagging the dog.

the board approves the annual budget the executive director is responsible for managing it with board oversight. In general the more diverse the organization's income stream is the more financially stable it will be.

You can tell if your organization has enough money to meet its obligations by tracking its current assets and current liabilities on the balance sheet. Simply put, the current assets (what you have) should substantially exceed the current liabilities (what you owe). If not, board members should be asking questions.

All organizations have fluctuations in cash flow throughout the year. While there is no magic formula for how much cash reserves an organization should have, generally having three month's of operating expenses in cash reserves is a good idea.

Restricted Fund:

This is often a hard concept for people coming from the for-profit sector to understand. From time to time money is received from

Reserve Fund:

A reserve fund is unrestricted money that can be used for any purpose. It is the rainy day fund. Healthy organizations maintain a cash reserve to meet needs unanticipated in the budget, such as the failure of a septic system. Normally board approval is needed to spend from this fund.

Endowment:


An endowment is neither a

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contingency nor a reserve fund. Its sole purpose is to provide an annual distribution that normally derives from investment growth. A well-managed endowment will grow over time to provide increasing distributions each year. Generally endowed assets do not appear on monthly financial statements and the management of assets and distribution of funds can be assigned to a group separate from the board of directors. All managing, investing, and spending decisions should be well documented to demonstrate compliance with your organization's policies. Individuals from outside your board of directors should review policies annually. Sometimes endowed funds bear the name of the donating person, group or family.

There are generally two types of endowed funds.

- Unrestricted endowed funds produce an annual cash distribution that goes into the operating fund and can be used for any purpose.

- Restricted endowed funds produce an annual distribution to be used only as the donor specified and the organization approved. These often support scholarships. Using the distribution for other purposes violates donor intent. 

Rich Patterson served as Director of the Dillon Nature Center from 1975-1978 and was Director of the Indian Creek Nature Center from 1978-2013. He is a seasoned fund raiser and financial manager.

Rich is a founder of the Association of Nature Center Administrators and has served on several nonprofit boards. He is past president of the Outdoor Writers Association of America.

He is the recipient of numerous awards including the 2007 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award.

Rich and his wife, Marion, are owners of Winding Pathways LLC, which encourages and assists people transform their yard and home to enhance natural beauty, stimulate curiosity, enhance learning, and provide economic benefit while yielding solitude peace, exercise, and satisfaction.

As Executive Director, Patty Weisse led Baltimore Woods Nature Center through a 14-year period of unprecedented growth in capacity and public engagement.



She was named Social Entrepreneur of the Year by the Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University. Today Patty serves as an active board member of ANCA and the Finger Lakes Land Trust. As a Capacity Building Consultant for Nonprofits, she helps stabilize their foundation and helps them increased earned revenues through entrepreneurial programs.

ANCA's Accountant, Matt Regen and Baltimore Woods Nature Center's Finance Committee member Gary Germain provided valuable input on this article.



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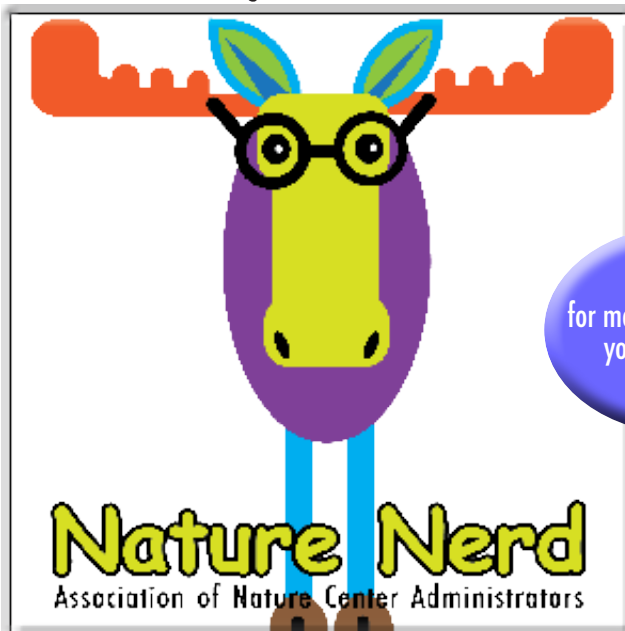
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Join our Nature Nerd Campaign and support the ANCA Summit Scholarship Fund. Just \$25 gets you this cool button to show how Nature Nerdy you really are.

Feet On The Ground:



Recent & Upcoming ANCA Activities Around the World



↑ The Dawes Arboretum hosted a successful 2016 Midwest Regional Meeting on April 8th. Over 20 nature center directors attended the gathering.

The Next Florida Regional Meeting will be on May 13 at the Gillespie Museum in DeLand, FL. ↓



The next Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting will be held October 7 at The Schuylkill Center in Philadelphia, PA. ↓



↑ 30+ people attended the 2016 Michigan Regional Meeting held at Chippewa Nature Center on February 26.



On March 24 Earthplace hosted the New England Regional Meeting. ↓



↑ The Texas 2016 ANCA Regional Meeting was hosted by Nueces Delta Preserve in Odem, TX. The agenda consisted of a tour of the center, dinner, facilitated discussions, and a panel discussion on resiliency.

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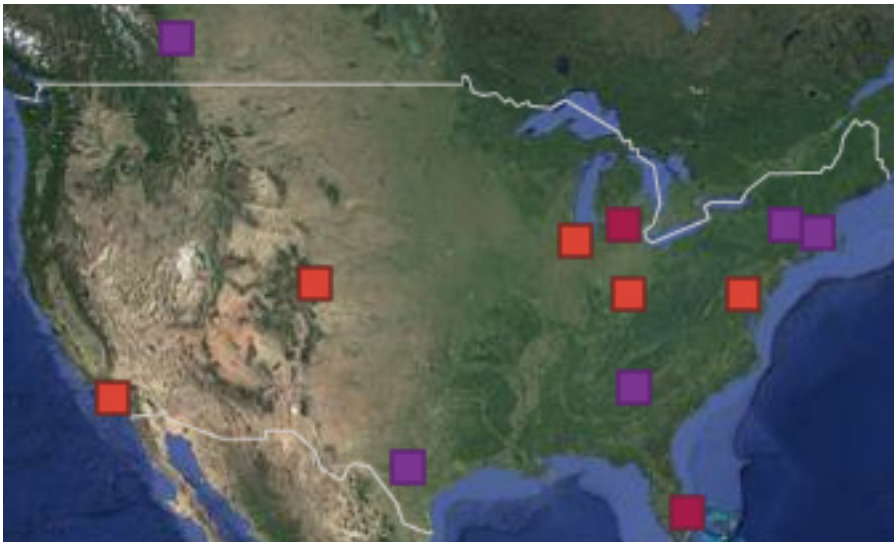
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ANCA Regional Meetings

In an effort to connect our members regionally, ANCA is now offering peer-to-peer opportunities for professional development in several regions across the country.

Click on the map to see if there's a meeting near you!

Upcoming ANCA Regional Meetings:

- Florida Regional Meeting – May 13
at the Gillespie Museum in DeLand
- Mid-Atlantic Meeting – Oct. 7
at Schuylkill Center in Philadelphia

NEW!

Peer Consult Financial Assistance Program

ANCA has initiated a new program that will award financial assistance twice per year for peer consults

These consults are designed to promote greater success in the nature and environmental learning center profession and to assist organizations that may not otherwise be able to afford the full consult fee.

Learn More

Application Deadlines: March 15 & Oct. 30

Peer Consults - We know the business. We're in it too!

ANCA offers consulting assistance to nature centers and other environmental education organizations at very reasonable rates.

The cost includes transportation, lodging, and meals for the team, plus a \$3,250 fee that goes toward supporting ANCA's professional services. Our board of directors and members provide these services with no personal financial gain, while you gain the advantage of advice and guidance from some of the profession's most respected and experienced leaders.

What can be covered? Well, just about anything involved with planning, funding, and operations.

Some topics include:

- Assistance with long range and strategic planning
- Review facilities and trails
- Program evaluation
- Personnel & human resources issues
- Fundraising and fiscal management
- Green building
- Exhibits
- Starting a center
- Organizational structure

Join the Team!

ANCA's Consult Services are a success because of it's members' participation on Consult Teams. Please consider sharing your experiences and lessons learned.

Consult Team members donate their time but all expenses are paid. Participating in a Consult is a great way to see other parts of the country, learn about other nature centers, and take home valuable knowledge for your own center.

So don't delay!!!

PLEASE fill out the skills survey in the Member's Section on ANCA's website at www.natctr.org.

To find out more about ANCA's Peer Consults contact:

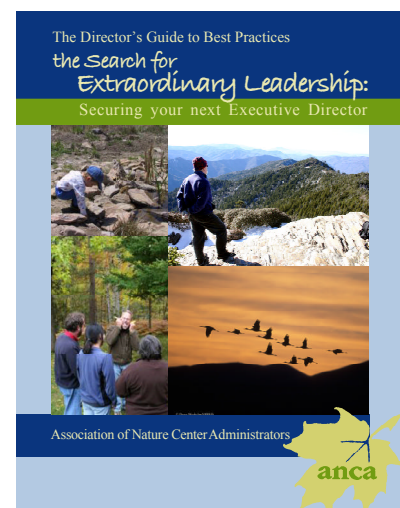
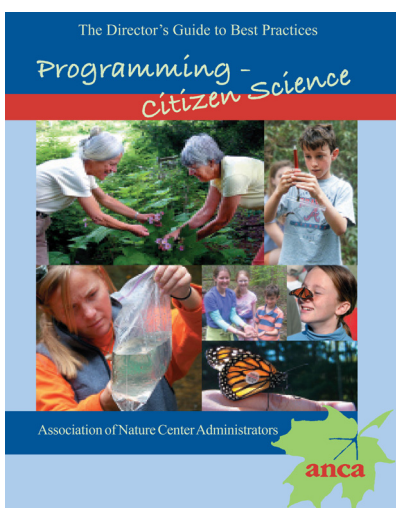
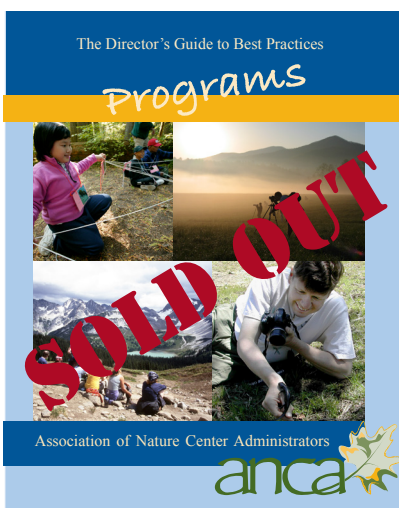
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