



## MEMORANDUM

To: Presidential Transition Team for Education  
Ian Bassin, Office of Public Liaison, Presidential Transition Team for Education

CC: Presidential Transition Team for Energy, Environment and Natural Resources

Fr: Heather White, Director of Education Advocacy, National Wildlife Federation (202) 657-3681, whiteh@nwf.org  
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Da: December 23, 2008

Re: Green Group Recommendations on **Environmental Education & Economic Stimulus**

On behalf of roughly 30 nonprofit conservation organizations known as the “Green Group,” please see the attached: 1) “Transition to Green” policy excerpt on Environmental Education; 2) a spreadsheet of green education, green schools, and green jobs stimulus projects (begins on page 5); 3) a fact sheet on the green recovery; and 4) congressional testimony from economist Dr. Robert Pollin that spending on educational services creates 23 jobs for every \$1 million spent. Here are our top line recommendations:

### **A. Environmental Education: The Cornerstone of Our New Green Economy**

A new green, clean energy economy is the key to economic revitalization. Yet, the transformation to a green economy will require a level of expertise, innovation, and cooperative effort unseen since the 1940s. This transition will involve an extensive job training and retraining effort on the part of business leaders, educators, and local, state, and federal policymakers. America’s workers, managers, and professionals at all levels in the private and public sector must understand the elements and benefits of a green economy. To produce an environmentally-literate workforce and citizenry, America will need to make major new investments in our local and national educational systems. Undoubtedly, education is one of the best investments that can be made for short-term and long-term, across-the-board economic growth<sup>1</sup>. Public investments in environmental education will more than pay for themselves, just as the Apollo education programs did in the 1960s and the GI Bill did in the 1940s.<sup>2</sup> Given the importance of environmental education to our future, our top three policy issues are:

1. **No Child Left Inside Act (NCLD)**- We urge the President to seek passage of the No Child Left Inside Act to create \$100 million in funding for state environmental literacy plans, educators training, and increased access to quality environmental education experiences for all young people, and host a White House Conference on Connecting Kids to Nature to promote formal and nonformal environmental education, environmental

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Robert Pollin, Professor of Economics and Co-Director, Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) University of Massachusetts-Amherst has demonstrated that **spending on education generates the largest number of jobs (23.1 per \$1 million dollars in spending) of any government spending.**

<sup>2</sup> According to the Subcommittee on Education and Health of the Joint Economic Committee, every dollar invested in the GI Bill generated \$6.90 in returns, and the total added value to national economic output was estimated to be nearly \$200 billion.



justice education, physical activity, and direct nature experiences as instrumental avenues to raising well-rounded, healthy children. This much-needed investment in young people and the environment will have an enormous pay-off in the future citizenry of our country.

2. **National Environmental Education Act (NEEA)**- We urge the President to support the reauthorization of the NEEA, which was passed in 1990 and provides the primary support for our nation's environmental education programming at all levels of society. This Act authorizes EPA to create the Office of Environmental Education and the National Environmental Education Foundation to support lifelong environmental education innovative formal and nonformal education initiative throughout the country. This legislation has helped build a more informed citizenry that has the skills and knowledge to respond to increasing environmental challenges--from the need for environmental regulation to address global warming to how to engage diverse audiences in conservation.
3. **Presidential Comprehensive Climate Change Education and Readiness Initiative**-- We urge the President to establish this initiative and associated legislation to equip our American workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge for a new green economy through major adjustments in K-12 education, school-to-work programs, higher education, professional re-education, and consumer and public education.

## **B. Green Stimulus Package : An Action Agenda for a Healthy, Just, and Sustainable Economy**

To get our economy back on track, we propose the following initiatives for the economic stimulus and recovery package:

1. The President should announce a **sweeping initiative to support education as a cornerstone of our new clean energy future**. This initiative should be part of an economic stimulus package with a focus on green jobs and green education to help Americans of all ages, all backgrounds, and all walks of life create, promote, and transition to the green economy.
2. The President should launch a **Series of White House Conferences on Creating Healthier, Greener Communities**. Conference themes, co-sponsored with key local and federal agencies, would focus on building a more equitable and green economy, promote social equity, and support service learning to engage youth in greening local communities.
3. **Support a National Goal of 100% of Renovation and New School Construction to meet "Green Schools" Standards by 2012**. Declare a Department of Education policy to support a national goal that 100 percent of newly constructed or rehabilitated schools (both k-12 and higher education) to become "Green Schools" to lower energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions, and provide opportunities for formal and non-formal environmental education.
4. **Support Legislation to direct 1% of climate change cap and trade revenues to education for a green economy**. This comprehensive education bill would advance education for a green economy through major adjustments to K-12 education, school-to-work programs, higher education, professional re-education, and consumer and public education. Related legislation that would significantly expand and improve environmental education in our public k-12 schools (the No Child Left Behind Act) and enhance public and private partnerships should also be supported.



**5. Establish a strong record of funding existing education programs** through the President's budget requests for the University Sustainability Program, environmental education programs at the Environmental Protection Agency, National Science Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Park Service, and the new Energy Efficiency Grants and Loans program at the Department of Energy.

**6. Make new Administration appointments:**

- a. Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of Education, Education for a Green Economy
- b. Senior Policy Advisor to the NOAA Administrator, Climate Change Education
- c. Environmental Education Advisor, Council of Environmental Quality
- d. Senior Policy Advisor to the Director of the US Peace Corps, Sustainability and Environmental Education

**7. Direct all federal resources agencies to develop and conduct “education for a green economy” and climate change literacy training** for all personnel to familiarize them with challenges, needs, and appropriate responses for each agency.

One of the most hopeful signs for the future is the rapidly developing consensus that investment in a clean, green economy is the best way to improve national security, create millions of jobs, restore U.S. economic leadership, and stop large scale climate disruption. It is time to reorient our nation's education system at all levels to support our new clean energy future and provide our citizens with hope for the future – hope for a strong economy, hope for a healthy planet, and hope for the next generation of leaders.