

2025 Arkansas Environmental & Outdoor Education Conference

B Book Discussion **C** Concurrent Session **F** Field Tour **D** Food & Networking **W** Workshop

MARCH 7 • FRIDAY

PINNED 8:30am – 9:00am	On-site Check-in Check in at the AEEA table in the Doc Bryan Rotunda. Get your name tag, confirm your afternoon schedule, and get ready for the day!	Doc Bryan: Rotunda
PINNED 9:00am – 9:45am	Welcome & Keynote Address Start the conference with an inspiring keynote that explores the power of personal transformation as the foundation for creating positive shifts in the world. Learn how self-awareness and intentional action spark lasting impact. Discover how meaningful change begins within.	Doc Bryan: Lecture Hall
9:50am – 10:50am	C Bridging the Gap Between Source and Tap <i>Speakers: Stephanie Bolin, Ayla Grace, Meghan Post, Holly Wren</i> Water is a fundamental element for life, and land use practices can significantly influence both human health and the quality of freshwater sources. Exploring these complex issues with students becomes both engaging and relevant when incorporating real-world examples, especially local water quality data. Involving students in data collection offers an impactful learning experience and strengthens their understanding of a land ethic. This presentation will spotlight three organizations that are actively gathering water quality data and implementing best management practices to safeguard watershed health and potable water supplies. We will examine both digital and physical resources available to educators, enabling them to integrate these data and concepts into their curriculum. The resources introduced will bridge core disciplinary concepts with NGSS science and engineering practices, leveraging real-world data to enhance students' learning experiences. Target audience: Classroom teachers, 6 grade - higher education, Non-formal educators	Rothwell: Room 206
9:50am – 10:50am	C Improving educational outcomes of at-risk students through environmental education. <i>Speakers: Curtis J. Varnell, PhD, Dr. Bret Stone</i> ATU, in cooperation with the Janet Huckabee Nature Center and the Guy Fenter Education Service Cooperative, have developed and interventionalist program for Kids at Risk. Each of the representative school districts select a group of at-risk students whom they feel will most benefit from the experience. Those students attend the Students Assisting Teachers (SAT) program along with a teacher that has agreed to serve as the interventionalist for the students. Studies have shown that when kids feel a part of the school, have developed a cadre of friends, and have school support, educational performance improves along with student behavior. SAT provides that opportunity by providing students the joy of being "selected" to participate in the program and by participating in group bonding activities with teachers and other students. Target audience: Classroom teachers, 3-12 grade	Rothwell: Room 207
9:50am – 10:50am	C WILD Passport: A Progressive Wildcraft Curriculum for Child Led Learning <i>Speakers: Rachel Parker</i> This session presents on The WILD Passport Curriculum, a progressive wildcraft curriculum that engages children in hands-on learning through five essential categories: fire, flora and fauna, tools, shelter, and rope skills. We will explore how this curriculum can be used to cultivate child-led programming, allowing youth to take the reins in their outdoor education experience. Targeted toward administrators, educators, and program directors, this session will provide practical insights into fostering autonomy, critical thinking, and resilience in children. Attendees will leave with an understanding of how to structure activities that align with developmental stages, build confidence, and encourage teamwork. Additionally, we'll discuss how these skills can be integrated into a wide range of outdoor programs, from summer camps to classroom settings, promoting self-reliance and environmental stewardship. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-higher education, School administrators, Non-formal educators, Program directors	Rothwell: Room 211

PINNED 10:50am – 11:20am	D Morning Break with Exhibitors Visit with exhibitors to learn about resources around the state. Find some morning snacks in Room 208.	Rothwell: Room 212
11:20am – 12:20pm	C Discovering Nature's Classroom <i>Speakers: Missy Stubblefield, Sabrina Ketter, Emily Stubblefield</i> Presenters will showcase how environmental education is being implemented across Arkansas through community partnerships involving the Guy Fenter and Dawson Educational Cooperatives, Lake Ouachita State Park, and teachers from Charleston Public School. Participants discover innovative methods of connecting nature as an engaging educational platform while promoting the outdoors and discovering Arkansas's natural beauty. These workshops bring environmental education lessons to life by connecting concepts with the natural world. These hands-on experiences align with Arkansas Science Standards and provide students with direct engagement with Arkansas's natural resources. Workshop topics include: Arkansas's heritage and history, renewable energy, water quality, ecology, geology, fish identification, ornithology, dendrology, and offers a comprehensive approach to environmental education. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-12 grade, Non-formal educators	Rothwell: Room 211
11:20am – 12:20pm	C Emerging Core Competencies for Outdoor Recreation Professionals: Bridging Public and Private Sector Needs <i>Speakers: Dr. Michael Bradley</i> This session will provide an update on the development of new core competencies for outdoor recreation professionals, an initiative supported by major national and federal agencies. Over the next year, these competencies—spanning knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences—will guide workforce development across both public and private sectors. Key areas of focus include environmental stewardship, leadership, cultural competency, and program management. Attendees will gain insight into how these evolving standards will shape recruitment, training, and professional growth in outdoor recreation. Join us for an informative discussion on the future of the field and its impact on workforce readiness. Participants will understand the key core competencies being developed for outdoor recreation professionals and their role in workforce development. Participants will be able to identify how these competencies will impact recruitment, training, and professional growth in both the public and private sectors. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-higher education; Program administrators; Non-formal education	Rothwell: Room 206
11:20am – 12:20pm	C Sensory Kits - Tools for Success <i>Speakers: Cathi McMahan</i> An estimated 20% of the world's population is neurodivergent and often have conditions or preferences that make them stand out or appear different. In some cases these differences make it difficult to include ALL in recreational/educational programming. This session will focus on tips for inclusion that will potentially help reduce anxiety, frustration, and/or resulting behaviors and allow the individual to better focus on the activity at hand. Target audience: Classroom teachers, 6-higher education, Non-formal educators, Program directors	Rothwell: Room 207
12:20pm – 1:20pm	B Optional Dine & Discuss during lunch <i>Speakers: Sarah Elaine Lewis, Monica Woods</i> Grab your food and join facilitators Monica Woods and Sarah Lewis for an open-format book discussion. The main theme of the book is social psychology, with the hope that environmental educators will find it a useful tool for critical thinking in their fields and at this time in our history. The target audience is any environmental educator interested in this topic and how it relates to their professional and/or personal world. Participants will come away with insight, context and new perspectives of the world in which we are working to educate people about environmental systems. They will also take away connections with others with whom they can network and share ideas, further deepening community as environmental educators. Those interested in this session should read at least of Malcolm Gladwell's <i>Revenge of the Tipping Point</i> before the conference.	TBD
PINNED 12:20pm – 1:20pm	D Lunch	Rothwell: Room 138

1:30pm – 3:45pm	F	Tour Lake Dardanelle State Park Visitor Center and In-Seine Adventure <i>Speakers: Sasha Bowles</i> Lake Dardanelle State Park Visitor Center Join a Park Interpreter to explore the visitor center and get a look at some of the fish and turtle species that call Lake Dardanelle home. After exploring the center, we will get our feet wet and discover what all lives in the lake besides fish and turtles? We will seine for macro-invertebrates and see who is living in the lake. By identifying the macro-invertebrate population of the lake and counting your sample size, you can determine the health of the aquatic environment surrounding them. This activity can be modified for kindergarten to college age students. Come prepared to get wet and wear water shoes.	
1:30pm – 4:30pm	F	Forest Bathing Session <i>Speakers: Lori Carter</i> Forest Bathing is an immersive experience designed to help deepen the connection to your surroundings through your senses. Participants will be given various “invitations”, or prompts, to help facilitate this connection. During invitations we wander independently, then we come back together as a group between invitations. We then end with a tea gathering. This practice is designed to foster deep ways of “knowing” the earth. Instead of naming plants and animals we’re more concerned with who they are. The benefits of the practice include lower blood pressure, easier emotion regulation, and reduced stress among many others. Forest Bathing helps to connect humans to the land and each other. We protect what we love. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-higher education, School administrators, Non-formal educators, Program directors	TBD
1:30pm – 4:30pm	W	Nature’s Remedy: Research-Based Actions for Enhancing Well-Being in Environmental Educators <i>Speakers: Crystal Green-Braswell</i> Discover the transformative power of nature to support the well-being of environmental educators. This session explores research-based strategies that harness the natural environment to reduce stress, build resilience, and enhance mental and physical health. Participants will learn evidence-based practices such as mindfulness in nature, restorative outdoor activities and how to create a calming environment inside the educational space. Gain actionable tools and insights to rejuvenate personal well-being while fostering a healthier, more sustainable educational community. Whether you’re seeking renewal or strategies to support your team, this session equips you to thrive in harmony with the natural world.	Rothwell: Room 206
1:30pm – 4:30pm	W	The Art of Nature: The Basics of Nature Journaling <i>Speakers: Rob Beadel</i> Nature journaling is a fantastic way to get away from the everyday hustle, bustle, and rush; and practice patience, observational skills, and creative expression. It can be an opportunity to get out and experience the great outdoors. Keeping a nature journal is a great way to become acquainted, or get reacquainted, with our natural world. Journaling helps: • Improve your mood • Gain mental clarity • Unplug from technology • Boost memory • Reduce stress levels • Practice presence • Improve critical thinking and problem solving • Deepen appreciation for nature Participants will make their own field journal, use their senses to explore our environment, practice basic sketching techniques, and create a nature poem. No art skills needed! Materials, supplies, resources and door prizes will be provided. Target audience: Classroom teachers, 3-12 grade, Non-formal educators, Program directors	Rothwell: Room 211
PINNED 5:00pm – 7:00pm	D	Evening Social Drop by the Pasta Grill in downtown Russellville for casual social time with fellow conference attendees. Attendees will receive 1 drink ticket for an alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink and appetizers. We will also have a few special items in a basket raffle. Come with cash or credit cards! 319 W Main St, Russellville, AR 72801	Pasta Grill (319 W Main St, Russellville, AR 72801)
PINNED 6:00pm – 9:00pm	D	Art Walk Grab a buddy and enjoy a spring evening strolling around downtown Russellville with the quarterly Art Walk. Local stores and restaurants will be open late as well as artists booths on the sidewalk. A great way to unwind from the day.	Downtown Russellville

C Concurrent Session **F** Field Tour **D** Food & Networking **S** Show & Tell **W** Workshop

MARCH 8 • SATURDAY

PINNED **On-site Check-in** Rothwell: Room 138
 8:30am – 9:00am Check in at the AEEA table in the Doc Bryan Rotunda. Get your name tag, confirm your afternoon schedule, and get ready for the day!

PINNED **Welcome & AEEA Update** Rothwell: Room 138
 9:00am – 9:15am *Speakers: Sophia Stephenson*

9:25am – 10:25am **C 1. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission: Fostering Healthy Lifestyles and a Sustainable Future Through Outdoor Experiences 2. Let's Create a "GREEN" Classroom Environment** Rothwell: Room 211
Speakers: Kimberly Armstrong, Raven Harris, Heather Pitman

1. This session explores how the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission utilizes outdoor experiences to cultivate healthy lifestyles and foster a sustainable future for all Arkansans. Target audience: Educators, outdoor recreation professionals, and community leaders. Topic focus: Integrating outdoor education into curricula, promoting physical and mental well-being through nature-based activities, and developing environmental stewardship. NGSS alignment: Crosscutting concepts of systems and system models, stability and change, and patterns. Participants will gain: Practical strategies for incorporating outdoor learning into educational settings. Resources for accessing AGFC programs and educational materials. Understanding of the connection between human health and environmental health. Skills for developing and implementing community-based outdoor education initiatives.

Target Audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-higher education, School administrators, Non-formal educators

2. During this session, you will receive information about funding available to create outdoor learning environments and for recycling stations. I realize due to curriculum demands that the importance of environmental education is sometimes overlooked. There are also many environmental agencies that offer grants and classroom education programs throughout the year. There are ways to create a "GREEN" classroom. I will share my experiences and knowledge with you during this session. You will take away the names of agencies, grants, websites, and other resources I have used to create an environmental and outdoor classroom setting. Target audience: Pre-K through 8th grade.

9:25am – 10:25am **C Mindfulness and Nature: Why & How to Incorporate Them into Our Lives** Rothwell: Room 206
Speakers: Liz Hill

This Mindfulness and Nature session will begin with a slideshow presentation with background information, research evidence of the many wellness benefits of both mindfulness activities and exposure to and interaction with nature, as well as recommendations for including mindfulness and nature in schools, informal education settings, and ideally all people's daily lives! Following the slideshow, Liz Hill will lead participants through multiple hands-on mindfulness-based activities which are particularly suited to outdoor/natural environments. While Liz has primarily led these activities with elementary aged children, they are adaptable to any age group, and she has tried them in both formal and non-formal settings, thus this session has no specific target audience. Attendees will be inspired to integrate more mindfulness and nature into their lives. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-12 grade, Non-formal educators

9:25am – 10:25am **C Outdoor Education: Enhancing Learning Beyond Classroom Walls** Rothwell: Room 207
Speakers: Jackie Scott

Outdoor Education: Enhancing Learning Beyond Classroom Walls will cover a variety of topics. We will define what outdoor education is and is not. We will look at the variety of educational benefits of outdoor education. The session will cover a variety of ideas and best practices when incorporating outdoor activities to classrooms regardless of age. We will look out to align outdoor education with NGSS standards. The session will also cover a variety of resources for teachers that include other PD offerings, books on outdoor education, the Outside for 5 program, and other opportunities. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-12 grade, School administrators, Non-formal educators, Program directors

PINNED 10:25am – 10:55am	D Morning Break with Exhibitors Visit with exhibitors to learn about resources around the state. Find some morning snacks in Room 208.	Rothwell: Room 212
10:55am – 11:55am	C 1. Learning from recess: What the Green Schoolyard Study is finding about children & their physical activity 2. Place-Based Education: Synergizing Social-Emotional Well-being and Nature Connection <i>Speakers: Amber Kaufman, Donna Owen, Michael Thomsen</i> <p>1. Recess provides children with the opportunity for outdoor learning, socialization, and play. Physical activity during recess contributes to children's overall physical activity. An ongoing research study by UAMS in partnership with UA Fayetteville is producing new insights on greenspace and playground design to improve recess among K-5 students. The purpose of this panel session is share insights from this study. Specifically, conference participants will learn about the following: (1) Playground features conducive to physical activity during recess and differences by age and gender. (2) Whether recess experiences differ meaningfully for children who have obesity or severe obesity. (3) The impact of temperature and air quality on physical activity during recess. (4) Recess best practices for schools to improve recess experiences and promote physical activity. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-5 grade, Classroom educators, higher education, School administrators, Non-formal educators, Program directors</p> <p>2. This interactive presentation explores the synergy of a place-based pedagogy, emphasizing mindful social-affective nature pedagogy with culturally and linguistically diverse learners aged 5-75. The presentation will showcase new research, advancements in practice, and innovative ideas that demonstrate the powerful connection between health and nature, fostering audience conversation and exploration through concrete examples. Experience nature-based activities that nurture social-emotional growth while recognizing our interconnectedness with well-being and the sustainability of our planet. If you are an educator, environmental professional, or work with underserved communities and are passionate about place-based education, nature instruction, and integrating social-emotional mindfulness, we encourage your participation. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-higher education, School administrators, Non-formal educators, Program directors</p>	Rothwell: Room 206
10:55am – 11:55am	C Well Being with the Water <i>Speakers: Kristen Crawley, Suzanne Murphy</i> Those seeking to further your personal stewardship of your watershed or to inspire stewardship in others, we're here to give you "why"s and "how"s! Presenter Jane Hurley will draw connections between engagement in watershed stewardship and community wellbeing, such as benefits to education outcomes, mental health, and lifelong relationships to their environment. Presenters Kristen Crawley and Suzanne Murphy will then share activities and projects they have found effective in developing this connection to the watershed. Through the sharing of experiences in using visual art to explain water flow and connectivity, participants will learn how to engage new audiences. Classroom educators and non-formal educators will come away with resources and strategies to recreate these and more activities. Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-higher education, School administrators, Non-formal educators, Program directors	Rothwell: Room 207

<p>10:55am – 11:55am</p>	<p>S Show & Tell Informational Tables</p> <p><i>Speakers: Dr. Rita Littrell, Amanda Dessert, Sarah Elaine Lewis, Melissa Moore, Cathy Wissehr</i></p> <p>Interact with 4 different presenters at your own pace in this Show & Tell Session.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foraging in Arkansas: Individuals will have the opportunity to taste test a variety of recipes that highlight easily accessible and safe foraged foods and leave with valuable resources, including recipes and foraging guidelines, empowering them to integrate these natural ingredients into classroom lessons and programs, making environmental education both delicious and memorable! 2. Increasing Accessibility in Nature: Until recently, accessibility in outdoor spaces was mostly limited to short, paved trails. Today, adaptive equipment is becoming increasingly available and is changing the way in which we achieve accessibility in nature – for people of all disabilities. This session will provide information on the All-Terrain Wheelchair Program that is providing access to hiking trails in Arkansas for people with mobility limitations. 3. Building Professional Capacity: Have you wanted to increase your credentials as an environmental educator? This session will provide information and answer questions about AEEA's new online eeCredential Program. Attendees will learn about the program and courses offered to help expand their knowledge of EE and applications to their professional careers. 4. Creating a STEAM Night: One of the benefits of STEAM education is an expanded appreciation of environmental education because of the interdisciplinary approach to weaving science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics into experiences. Join us in the session as we describe the approach and learnings from initiating a STEAM Night at Leverett Elementary School in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Learn how to set it up, how to organize your partners, and how to mobilize families to come out for the event - connecting students and their families with environmental education. 5. Creating Awe in Arkansas Using Children's Literature 	<p>Rothwell: Room 211</p>
<p>PINNED 12:00pm – 1:15pm</p>	<p>D Awards Luncheon</p> <p>Recognize some of the outstanding educators who are bringing to life environmental and outdoor education around Arkansas.</p>	<p>Chambers West</p>
<p>1:20pm – 4:20pm</p>	<p>F Native Gardens and Meadows, Our Master Naturalists Experience</p> <p><i>Speakers: Larry S Price</i></p> <p>This session will have a classroom component and a field tour. The classroom session will focus on native plant gardens (smaller plots with individual plants in a structured format) and native plant meadows (larger, randomly planted wildflowers, often interspersed with native grasses) and Q & A. Participants will then carpool to Dardanelle Lock and Dam (Old Post Park-Russellville side of the Arkansas River, about 10 minutes drive). Arkansas Master Naturalists planted about 300 potted plants and broadcast more than 7 million seeds on the site in. Resources will include multiple native plant nurseries in our region and native plant seed sources. Participants will go through the steps of preparation and planting and discuss the biodiversity implications of native plants. Target audience: Classroom teachers, 3-5 grade, Classroom teachers, 6-8 grade, Classroom teachers, 9-12 grade, Non-formal educators</p>	<p>Rothwell: Room 207</p>

1:20pm – 4:20pm	<p>F Trail Safety Considerations for Outdoor Education & Tour of Pine Knob Mtn Bike Park TBA</p> <p><i>Speakers: Jay Post</i></p> <p>This session has two parts beginning with an indoor presentation on trail safety considerations for outdoor education. What are safety concerns when taking students on trails? We all want our outdoor education experiences to be safe. This session will examine ways educators can help keep your students safe and ready to head out onto the trail. What equipment can be useful? What knowledge can help the educators and students?</p> <p>For the second part of the session, participants will carpool to Pine Knob Mountain Bike Park. This park was built in collaboration with Russellville Recreation & Parks Dept and the River Valley Ozark Off-Road Cycling Club (RVOORC). Now ATU Tourism students have used this park as an outdoor classroom for trail management. How would you use similar spaces for your students? In the event of inclement weather the outdoor portion will be canceled.</p> <p>Target audience: Classroom teachers, PreK-higher education, School administrators, Non-formal educators, Program directors</p>
1:20pm – 4:20pm	<p>W Climate, Water, Resilience with Project WET workshop Rothwell: Room 206</p> <p><i>Speakers: Jane Hurley</i></p> <p>Climate change is a complex topic that can be intimidating to teach. However, understanding climate, including the ways it is changing and how that impacts the environment, is crucial to making informed decisions and building resilience. This training will introduce the Climate, Water, Resilience educator guidebook from Project WET which include 9 activities to incorporate climate change topics into your lesson plans or programs. This training is open to formal and non-formal educators and activities are created with Middle and High School age students in mind.</p> <p>Target audience: Classroom teachers, 6-8 grade; Classroom teachers, 9-12 grade; Non-formal educators</p>
1:20pm – 4:20pm	<p>W Mini Intro to Permaculture The Best Farming System to Feed the World Rothwell: Room 211</p> <p><i>Speakers: Stacey Russell</i></p> <p>This three-hour interactive workshop is a miniature introduction to permaculture. It will inspire health and eco-conscious Earth stewards to provide for their own needs, growing their own food in the most productive, sustainable way using permaculture methods. It will challenge the participants to move beyond main stream conservation theories to embrace permaculture concepts for the most sustainable, social, rewarding, and spiritual approach to feeding and providing habitat for humans and wildlife. This workshop will educate and prepare its attendees to create better physical and mental health, the highest land fertility possible, water conservation strategies, never-ending surplus of food for humans and animals, the most diverse wildlife habitat imaginable and restoration of our planet's life-support systems. It will be a life-changing experience for all who attend.</p> <p>Target audience: Classroom teachers, 9-higher education, Non-formal educators, Program directors, Conservationists, naturalists, lecturers, gardeners</p>