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Education in the Environment: A Hands-on Student Research and Outdoor Learning Experience: Quarterly Progress Report, Period Ending August 31, 2004

Environmental Education Strategy for Nevada

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QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Period Ending August 31, 2004

Cooperative Agreement Number H8R07010001

Task Agreement Number J8R07040005

Education in the Environment: A Hands-on Student Research
and Outdoor Learning Experience

Team Collaboration

In the first three months of this agreement, UNLV has met with the Outside Las Vegas Environmental Education Committee to establish the duties of and create detailed job announcements for the project managers for the Environmental Education Strategy and for the Forever Earth/WOW Program. Although the university had planned to meet with the committee at its June meeting, that meeting was cancelled due to summer scheduling conflicts among the committee members. Subsequently, Dr. Peg Rees and Nancy Flagg met with the committee on July 14, 2004. The committee was brought up-to-date on goals and deliverables of the task agreement, UNLV's role in fulfilling the agreement, and provided with draft position announcements for review and comment. On July 27, 2004, Dr. Peg Rees met with the Interagency Environmental Education Team to review UNLV's role in the Education in the Environment Conservation Initiative and to secure final agreement on the wording and requirements for both project manager position announcements.

Hiring

The advertisements for both project manager positions were disseminated in numerous print and Web outlets during the week of August 6, 2004. The initial review of applications began August 30, 2004. Kay Rohde, Chief of Interpretation, Lake Mead NRA, is serving as the interagency team representative on the university search committees for both positions, and the first meeting of each search committee has been set for early September 2004.

In the interim, Dr. Jennell Miller was hired as an interim project manager for the Forever Earth/WOW program through December 31, 2004. Dr. Miller has been critically involved in the development of this program prior to the execution of the task agreement and was, therefore, in a position to begin some of the initial groundwork that could be accomplished prior to the hiring of a permanent project

manager. A scope of work was developed for Dr. Miller to accomplish during this six-month period, focused on completing tasks that must be in place prior to any events being scheduled. These include:

- Drafting a cooperative agreement between the university and Forever Resorts for the operation and use of the vessel
- Assisting with the identifying potential captains of the vessel
- Drafting the Standard Operations Procedures document, and
- Developing a scheduling protocol.

Curriculum

In July 2004 the Public Lands Initiative distributed an internal university announcement seeking interested faculty members with whom it could contract to write coordinated curricula across several SNPLMA task agreements, including the Oliver Ranch Science School (now titled the Red Rock Desert Learning Center), Forever Earth, WOW on the Water programs, and Environmental Education Strategy. By having one person develop interrelated curricula for these various programs – rather than having multiple people develop separate curricula – the university will best meet the core educational goals of the conservation initiatives throughout Southern Nevada in an integrated fashion. With respect to the Education in the Environment task agreements, the curriculum coordinator will be expected to work closely with the project managers for the Environmental Education Strategy and the Forever Earth/WOW programs, as well as with the interagency environmental education team and other constituent groups, to finalize the curricula necessary for those programs. The credentials and references of two finalists are currently under consideration by the Public Lands Initiative management, and a faculty member is expected to be added to the Public Lands Initiative staff by September 1, 2004.

Website / Public Relations

The university solicited proposals to local professional organizations in June 2004 seeking an individual or firm to provide public relations/marketing services for various SNPLMA initiatives, including the Education in the Environment Conservation Initiative. Currently, the search has been narrowed to two finalists, who were interviewed on August 26, 2004. The university anticipates finalizing a contract for these services by early September.

A full-time Web Communications Specialist was hired by the university on August 1, 2004, to produce websites for the Education in the Environment programs. The Web Specialist is working closely with Dr. Miller and, eventually, with the permanent project managers and the curriculum coordinator, to develop an initial website that will be refined and updated as each program develops. Dr. Miller has already developed a draft organizational framework for a Forever Earth site that includes information for students, teachers, researchers and general vessel information.

FOREVER EARTH

Forever Earth Cooperative Agreement

On August 5, 2004, university representatives and Dr. Miller met with key management staff from Forever Resorts to introduce the goals and deliverables of the Education in the Environment Conservation Initiative relative to Forever Earth, including the role of the university, and to negotiate basic components of a cooperative agreement between Forever Resorts and the university. This agreement will govern the ownership, use, and operation of the Forever Earth vessel. For this meeting, Dr. Miller provided a Powerpoint presentation, which highlighted the pilot projects carried out on the vessel during the previous year in a collaboration between Forever Resorts and the National Park Foundation/Outside Las Vegas Foundation Partnership. Since the August 5 meeting, a draft cooperative agreement has been prepared by Dr. Miller and is currently under review by staff attorneys and risk management specialists. This agreement is critical to the commencement of the program and must be carefully drafted to adequately address the interests of both parties. A major component of the agreement centers on the insurance coverage required for the use and operation of the vessel. Previously, liability coverage fell to the participants, who were often not able to meet the requirement and, therefore, were unable to participate in Forever Earth programs. Nancy Flagg and Dr. Miller facilitated discussions for the creation of a new, mutually agreeable insurance strategy between risk management specialists of both parties. On August 20, 2004, the insurance broker for Forever Resorts and the risk manager for the University System came to an agreement about the insurance obligations of both parties. The University System is now drafting the insurance sections of the agreement. Upon revision, Dr. Miller will present the draft agreement to Forever Resorts for its attorneys, staff, and brokers to review. Should there be no other major issues to resolve, we anticipate that the cooperative agreement could be executed by mid- to late-September.

Forever Earth Boat Operator

Dr. Miller has been working on examining the issues related to identifying a boat operator. This question is crucial to the determination of insurance coverage. Initial discussions have been held with William K. Dickinson, Superintendent, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, as to whether it would be appropriate to use a boat operator identified from with the Volunteers in Parks program of the National Park Service, as these operators have successfully completed boat-operator training required by the National Park Service. Should that not prove feasible, Dr. Miller will pursue other avenues for identifying a local pool of qualified operators and deckhands with whom the university might contract for Forever Earth activities. Dr. Miller has already begun such discussions with persons knowledgeable about boating organizations at Lake Mead. Dr. Miller will work with Forever Resorts staff and others to assess the necessary duties of the Forever Earth vessel operator and draft a position description based upon the discussion.

Forever Earth Standard Operating Procedures

Dr. Miller has completed an initial draft of the Standard Operating Procedures document that will govern the use of Forever Earth. The current draft is 37 pages, not including additional materials that have been prepared, such as an application form, waiver form, a package of basic information for participating groups, etc. In the preparation of this document, Dr. Miller has held discussions with numerous Lake Mead National Recreation Area staff members to ensure that federal and park-specific regulations are upheld within various topic areas (e.g., required permits, diving operations, etc.). These materials are currently undergoing extensive review by university risk management staff to ensure that the contents adequately address all necessary issues. We anticipate providing feedback to Dr. Miller in early September, after which time the draft will be shared with Forever Resorts to ensure that its interests are properly addressed, as well. As with the cooperative agreement, a final agreement on the standard operating procedures is likely by the end of September.

As the written documents for the operation of Forever Earth are finalized and the project manager and curriculum coordinator are hired, we expect to make significant progress on this project in the next reporting cycle.

WONDERFUL OUTDOOR WORLD ON THE WATER

Organizational Meetings

An initial meeting to discuss the development of a WOW on the Water Program in Nevada occurred on April 19, 2004, while the Round 4 SNPLMA nomination was under consideration. Attendees at this meeting included Derrick Crandall, President of the American Recreation Coalition (ARC); Alan O'Neill, Executive Director of the Outside Las Vegas Foundation; Dr. Miller, and three staff members from Clark County Parks and Community Services. The discussion centered upon potential programmatic components, the schedule for a typical WOW event, and the need for a coordinating committee.

Following the approval of the Round 4 nomination, university representatives and Dr. Miller met with Alan O'Neill and Bobbie Antonich on June 25, 2004, to continue discussion about the goals of the WOW on the Water program and the university's role in coordinating the project. On August 18, 2004, a second meeting with Mr. Crandall was held to more specifically discuss the logistics of commencing the Southern Nevada WOW on the Water program. This meeting was attended by Mr. Crandall, Alan O'Neill, Dr. Miller, and Nancy Flagg. Mr. Crandall provided background on the national context for the program as well as invaluable information about the lessons learned in the WOW programs currently operating in other cities. The conversation addressed the broad goals of the program and how those goals might be met through programming, sponsors, and community partnerships. The participants also discussed the procedures for securing formal sponsorship of the

Southern Nevada WOW on the Water Program from the national WOW executive committee.

Curriculum

The American Recreation Coalition recently produced a draft manual for WOW on the Water programs, which contains several proposed curriculum modules that were developed by the national office. Mr. Crandall encouraged Nevada to experiment with its programming and age groups in this initial year. The ARC manual will be provided to the curriculum coordinator as a starting point in the development of WOW curricula for the Nevada program, but it is likely that we will expand upon it and create new curriculum modules in other areas – such as exercise and environmental education, tailored to the local environment – that are not currently addressed in the national curriculum.

Fund-Raising

In these initial months of the project, the Outside Las Vegas Foundation (OLVF) and Dr. Miller have secured a \$7,500 grant from the Nevada Community Foundation to provide funding for six Forever Earth educational field trips for at-risk youth during the next year. In addition, OLVF has been nominated to apply for a \$3,000 grant from Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI), a sporting equipment retailer, to support the WOW on the Water program. Alan O'Neill and Dr. Miller have prepared and submitted a proposal to REI, requesting funds in the form of a pre-paid credit card/gift card in the amount of \$3,000 for the purchase of REI-brand merchandise to be used in WOW on the Water events. Additional potential donors will be sought to provide further support for the Southern Nevada WOW Program.

With the hiring of a curriculum coordinator and a permanent project manager, we expect to make additional progress on the basic components of the WOW on the Water program in the next reporting cycle.