

COCEEC Mini-Grant Report, 3/29/2007
Glacier National Park, Flathead National Forest, Glacier Institute

Summary of Grant Activities

As outlined in the grant, Glacier Institute, Flathead National Forest, and Glacier National Park worked together to plan a winter ecology staff training day. We talked to three educators in the valley who taught courses in winter ecology. Denny Olson was selected and our training date was held on January 3, 2007. Twelve people attended the staff training day (5 Glacier NP staff, 4 Flathead NF staff, and 3 Glacier Institute Staff). All of these people work with students who come to their sites for winter ecology programs (see photos below from Flathead National Forest).



Flathead National Forest Winter Ecology Program Photos

We also worked to set a date with Denny to do a similar training day for teachers, which was held on Feb. 10 in Glacier National Park. Flyers advertising the workshop were sent out in January to the Montana Northwest Curriculum Coop. The Director then distributed the flyers to all of the schools in the cooperative and she announced the workshop at the monthly Principal's meeting. The flyers were also emailed to everyone on the Flathead Community of Resource Educators mailing list and to COCEEC participants. The Education Specialist at Glacier National Park coordinated the announcement and the registration as well as arranging for PIR teacher credits. Ten people attended the teacher workshop including 6 Junior High School teachers, 1 kindergarten teacher, and 3 non-formal educators.



Winter Ecology Teacher Workshop, Feb. 10, 2007

Kudos from the Staff Training Day and Teacher Workshop

All staff agreed that the training day was very valuable in getting basic winter ecology concepts back under their belts and net-working with other naturalists. The tone of the day was informal with a lot of sharing of ideas. Although much of the information was a review for most of us, it was refreshing to hear it from another experienced educator (without having agency missions or agendas dwelt upon). Denny covered a lot of material that that our staffs needed to know about, so it relieved us from having to each prepare and present the information ourselves. The COCEEC grant gave us (program managers) the impetus to work together to plan this joint training day. All three organizations agree that it should become an annual event.

Reactions from the teacher workshop can be summed up with this teacher's comments:

I was thrilled to be a participant in the Winter Ecology Workshop presented by Denny Olson. The thing that stood out for me was the way the class was set up. For the first 1/2 of the day we were given valuable information and for the second 1/2 of the day we went outdoors to engage in what we had just learned. That is the most powerful way to teach and this was an excellent way for me to learn. The content I learned in the first 1/2 of the day was so relevant and applicable for me to adapt and use as a primary teacher. The second 1/2 of the day gave me the experience of how to help the students I work with go out in nature to discover life as it shows up in the winter. Besides all this the adults that attended this workshop were a delight to be with and very enthusiastic to be learning this content, as I was. So it was an ideal day of learning and camaraderie with other educators who are interested in this particular subject. It helps to network with other professionals in the valley. Thank you very much for offering this opportunity. And I'd love to see it continue in the future.

Criticisms from the Staff Training Day and Teacher Workshop

Denny's presentation on the staff training day was a review for most of the people who attended (because there just happened to be many experienced naturalists on our staffs this year). So suggestions for next year were to try to have not just one presenter, but a day of a variety of specialists –like an expert tracker, a wolverine or wolf biologist, a Native American storyteller, etc...

We didn't receive any negative comments from the teachers who attended the workshop. However, it was a smaller number of participants than we had hoped for. One of the teachers who did attend suggested that we need to announce these workshop opportunities on the teacher PIR network by the spring of each year. This is when all the teachers sign-up to show how they will meet their credit renewal requirements for the upcoming year.