

critical thinking, develop problem-solving skills, and instill confidence in students. Experiences should not be limited to tours, museum visits, simulations, demonstrations, or "nature" walks but should encourage the student to assist, share, communicate, and connect directly with the outdoors. Experiences can include the following kinds of activities: (1) Investigative or experimental design activities where students or groups of students use equipment, take measurements, and make observations for the purpose of making interpretations and reaching conclusions; (2) Project-oriented experiences, such as restoration, monitoring, and protection projects, that are problem solving in nature and involve many investigative skills; and (3) Social, economic, historical, and archaeological questions, problems, and issues that are directly related to Rhode Island or Connecticut peoples and cultures. These experiences should involve fieldwork, data collection, and analysis.

3. *"Meaningful" outdoor experiences are part of a sustained activity:* Experiences should consist of more than just the outdoor experience. Though an outdoor experience itself may occur as one specific event, occurring in 1 day, the total duration leading up to and following the experience should involve a significant investment of instructional time. An experience should consist of three general parts, not necessarily occurring in this order- a preparation phase; an outdoor phase; and an analysis, reporting phase. Projects should provide teachers with the support, materials, resources, and information needed to conduct these three parts. The preparation phase should focus on a question, problem, or issue and involve students in discussions about it. The action phase should include one or more outdoor experiences sufficient to conduct the project, make the observations, or collect the data required. The reflection phase should refocus on the question, problem, or issue; analyze the conclusions reached; evaluate the results; and assess the activity and the learning.

4. *"Meaningful" outdoor experiences are an integral part of the instructional program:* Experiences should not be considered ancillary, peripheral, or enrichment only, but clearly part of what is occurring concurrently in the classroom. The outdoor experiences should be part of the division curriculum and be aligned with state learning standards (i.e., Connecticut or Rhode Island). Experiences should make

appropriate connections among subject areas and reflect an integrated approach to learning. Experiences should occur where and when they fit into the instructional sequence.

5. *Projects demonstrate partnerships:* Project proposals should include partners involving any of the eligible applicants. Partnerships refers to the forming of a collaborative working relationship between two or more organizations. The B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants to partner with schools and/or school systems. All partners should be actively involved in the project, not just supply equipment or curricula.

B. Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers

The B-WET Program seeks proposals for projects that provide K-through-12 teachers in Connecticut or Rhode Island opportunities for professional development in the area of environmental education. As the purveyors of education, teachers can ultimately make meaningful environmental education experiences for students by weaving together classroom and field activities within the context of their curriculum and of current critical issues that impact the environment. Systematic, long-term professional development opportunities will reinforce a teacher's ability to teach, inspire, and lead young people toward thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources. The B-WET Program is strongly committed to expanding the knowledge and participation of a diverse teacher population in marine and environmental education. This population may include, for example, disabled or minority teachers, or teachers who are from rural communities in Connecticut or Rhode Island.

Proposals submitted under this area should address the following elements and types of activities:

1. *Professional development courses follow the teaching of a "meaningful" outdoor experience and encourage the teacher to conduct an experience in his/her classroom:* Professional development courses for teachers should ultimately benefit the student. Projects should be structured so that the teacher learns how to conduct a "meaningful" outdoor experience in his/her classroom (see section II (A) for details on "meaningful" outdoor experiences). Projects should provide teachers with the background information, materials and resources needed to conduct an experience. Projects can include implementation

grants for teachers to carry out a "meaningful" outdoor experience in their classrooms.

2. *Projects involve external sharing and communication:* Projects should promote peer-to-peer sharing and emphasize the need for external sharing and communication. Projects should include a mechanism that encourages teachers to share their experiences with other teachers and with the environmental education community.

3. *Projects demonstrate partnerships:* Project proposals should include partners involving any of the eligible applicants. Partnerships refers to the forming of a collaborative working relationship between two or more organizations. The B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants to partner with schools and/or school systems. All partners should be actively involved in the project, not just supply equipment or curricula.

III. Funding

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that approximately \$250,000 will be made available for environmental education projects in Connecticut and Rhode Island in FY 2003. About \$125,000 will be for proposals that provide opportunities for students (K through 12) in Connecticut or Rhode Island to participate in a "Meaningful" Outdoor Experience. Of the amount available for this priority area, about \$75,000 will be awarded to eligible applicants in Connecticut and about \$50,000 will be awarded to eligible applicants in Rhode Island. About \$125,000 will be for proposals that provide opportunities for Professional Development in the area of Environmental Education for Teachers in Connecticut or Rhode Island. Of this amount, \$75,000 will be available to eligible applicants in Connecticut and \$50,000 will be available to eligible applicants in Rhode Island.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless