**Sustainable Steps – Environmental Literacy Planning Grant Opportunity**

***Goal of Grant Opportuntiy***

The Mountain Institute, in partnership with WV Sustainable Schools, is pleased to announce a grant opportunity to three county school systems. The goal of the Sustainable Steps – Environmental Literacy Planning Grant is to provide funding for counties to

* develop, revise, or improve an existing environmental literacy plan; and
* receive training and assistance about the Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool (more information below).

***Funding Summary***

Grants of up to $2,000 will be awarded to three WV county school systems that are interested in developing environmental literacy projects or plans or have existing plans that could be revised or improved. Grant funds may be used for activities related to plan development or revision. Examples include, but are not restricted to, funding personnel, classroom/field supplies, and travel. Counties will need to budget funds for at least one person to attend the WV Science Teachers Association meeting in November 2015. Additionally, counties within the Chesapeake Bay watershed will receive special consideration.

***Background***

Across the nation, states are making significant progress in advancing our national educational goals by creating and implementing plans to enrich the curriculum with environmental education. These plans to integrate environmental education into the K–12 curriculum will give teachers and students new opportunities to take learning outside; explore their communities; analyze issues; learn about connections between our economy, society, and environment; support economic growth; and become engaged citizens.

Environmental literacy plans (ELP) lay out a roadmap to achieving environmental literacy. An environmentally literate person is someone who, both individually and together with others, makes informed decisions concerning the environment; is willing to act on these decisions to improve the wellbeing of other individuals, societies, and global environment; and participates in civic life. ELPs often include the formal education system in partnership, or with assistance from informal education and local agencies or organizations.

Regionally, ELPs have been promoted through the Chesapeake Bay Program, a unique regional partnership that has led and directed the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. The Chesapeake Bay Program partners include the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body; the Environmental Protection Agency, representing the federal government; and participating citizen advisory groups. West Virginia and other headwater states joined the Chesapeake Bay Program in 2002 under a written agreement to protect water quality.

On June 16, 2014, a new Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement was signed and one of the goals is Environmental Literacy.

*Environmental Literacy of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*

The future well-being of the Chesapeake Bay watershed will soon rest in the hands of its youngest citizens—more than three million students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Establishing strong, targeted environmental education programs now provides a vital foundation for these future watershed stewards.

Goal: Enable students in the region to graduate with the knowledge and skills to act responsibly to protect and restore their local watershed.

Student Outcome: Continually increase students’ age-appropriate understanding of the watershed through participation in teacher-supported, meaningful watershed educational experiences and rigorous, inquiry-based instruction, with a target of at least one meaningful watershed educational experience in elementary, middle and high school depending on available resources.

Sustainable Schools Outcome: Continually increase the number of schools in the region that reduce the impact of their buildings and grounds on their local watershed, environment and human health through best practices, including student-led protection and restoration projects.

Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome: Each participating Bay jurisdiction should develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental literacy for all students in the region that includes policies, practices and voluntary metrics that support the environmental literacy Goals and Outcomes of this Agreement.

The tool that the Chesapeake Bay Program will use to track progress towards these outcomes is the Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool (ELIT). The ELIT is an online survey designed to help school systems conduct a comprehensive self-assessment of their environmental education programs to inform continuous improvement efforts and to measure progress towards the above goal and outcomes. In addition, the data generated though the ELIT will help inform regional funding priorities to advance environmental education in schools in the mid-Atlantic region.

***Resources for Developing ELPs***

North American Association for Environmental Education

<http://www.naaee.net/framework>

Maryland Public Schools

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/environment/docs/CommonQualities_r1013.pdf>

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/environment/docs/ESEY2014.pdf>

Ann Arundel County ELP (This is an example of a comprehensive plan—new plans will not be expected to be this comprehensive.)

<http://annapolisgreen.com/pdf/EnvironmentalLitPlan.pdf>

\*\*Technical assistance from The Mountain Institute staff and other WV Sustainable Schools partners will be available to counties.

***Proposal Requirements***

Proposals must be submitted by county school systems and address environmental literacy at the county level. Applications received that do not have the superintendent’s signature will not be accepted.

Please prepare your proposal with the following sections (use the following as headings):

1. County
2. Superintendent’s contact information and signature
3. Project lead’s contact information and signature (if different from superintendent)
4. County’s website
5. Current efforts in environmental literacy or projects
6. Proposed activities to achieve funding opportunity goals
7. Budget

Please do not exceed four pages total for the proposal. Proposals are due by the close of business on May 22, 2015. Send proposals electronically to the email below.

If you have any questions about the proposal, allowable activities, sample ELPs, or other, please contact Vicki Fenwick-Judy at vfenwick@mountain.org.