



Hands on the Land

A National Network of Field Classrooms Linking Students, Teachers, and Parents to their Public Lands and Waterways

Featured Site

National Historic Trails Interpretive Center

As part of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center (NHTIC) opened August 9, 2002. The facility features seven interactive exhibit areas educating visitors about the Oregon, Mormon, California and Pony Express national historic trails as well as Plains Native American culture and mountain men, trappers, explorers and missionaries who traveled the area during the early 1800s.

In May 2007, 5th grade students from Oregon Trail Elementary helped plant three newly-created on-site butterfly gardens as part of National Pollinator Week (which was officially recognized in June). Nearly 50 students helped NHTIC staff mulch, dig, plant, and water the 100 flowers, grasses and other plants designated for the gardens. Two of these areas were created along the sidewalk which brings visitors to the NHTIC's entrance; the third garden was created near the parking lot, also in sight of visitors approaching the facility. Milkweed, prairie coneflower, bee balm, Mexican hat, Indian rice grass, and many other plants encompass these gardens. The plants took root during the summer months and continued to blossom and grow, creating splashes of vivid color on the sandy NHTIC landscape. These and other native plants on-site will receive interpretive signage in the future, further educating visitors about the plants and this project.



5th grade students from Oregon Trail Elementary conduct ecological observations at the Bessemer Bend Historic Site.



Teachers Janet Wragge (seated, left) and Paula Sorenson (kneeling, right) help their students plant butterfly gardens at the NHTIC in May.

This fall, teachers from Oregon Trail Elementary plan to take their students to Bessemer Bend Historic Site, designated as Wyoming's first HOL project in 2004. 5th grade teachers Janet Wragge and Paula Sorenson use the area to integrate the teaching of history and science. The site is the last crossing of the North Platte River, marking one of several river crossing sites used by emigrants during the 1800s. Bessemer Bend is maintained by the Bureau of Land Management, Casper Field Office. The teachers enhance their students understanding of American history and incorporate the site's natural landscape while teaching about botany and ecology.

In the five years since the NHTIC opened, the facility has become an important educational venue for Wyoming classrooms. Additionally, the NHTIC's Hands on the Land projects help integrate history and science in special, hands-on and creative ways. Together, the programs inspire youth to appreciate history and the environment.



Flowers from the May planting brighten the NHTIC's landscape with color during the summer.

"Thank you for the memorable experiences I had at Keystone Science School. I enjoyed learning about how rounds, facets, and melt-freeze crust are formed in snow layers. I had so much fun graphing the data at the end!" -Glory, Fairplay, Colorado

Web Corner

Utilizing the Program Provider Resource

Interested in learning more about evaluating your site's resources, partnering with local schools, grant writing, or service learning opportunities? Visit Hands on the Land's Program Provider page. There, you will find several links and resources that can enhance your site's programs. Included on this page are several links to training programs and organizations that can provide essential professional development as well as programming support. A section on Grant Writing lists links to several websites designed to make raising money a little easier. The Program Provider page is also where you'll find the HOL Publicity Kit and How-to Manual. To visit this page, click on the Program Provider's link from the HOL homepage.

Please contact HOL Webmaster Dave Zelenka or HOL Program Director, Ellen Reid at ereid@keystone.org with any suggestions or questions.

Upcoming Events

Association of Outdoor Recreation & Education (AORE)

21st Annual Conference

Asheville, North Carolina

November 1-3, 2007

AORE's purpose is to provide opportunities for professionals and students in the field of outdoor recreation and education for: exchanging information; addressing issues common to not-for-profit outdoor recreation and education programs; and promoting the preservation of the natural environment. While there are many reasons to attend the AORE Annual Conference, professional presentations represent the foundation of the Association. It is through various lectures, discussions, round tables, and skill sessions that members acquire exposure and resources to further develop themselves and the programs they represent. To register for the conference, or for additional information, visit: <http://63.74.112.76/2007/eventsite/>.



National Association for Interpretation (NAI)

2007 National Workshop

Wichita, Kansas

November 6-10, 2007

In November, NAI's annual workshop brings together more than 1,000 interpreters to train, network, share ideas, and enjoy a different part of the country. Learn from and network with interpreters around the country through interactive sessions, the exhibit hall and various off-site workshops. Keynote speakers, James Loewen, an author, historian, and sociologist and singer/songwriter Erica Wheeler are not to be missed. For more information, visit the website at: <http://www.interpnet.com/workshop/index.shtml>.

North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)

2007 Conference

Virginia Beach, Virginia

November 14-17, 2007

With over 20 concurrent sessions focusing on seven learning strands, this year's NAAEE conference is sure to be an excellent learning and networking opportunity. Strands include: Community & Conservation Education, Environmental Justice & Cultural History, Fundraising & Leadership Development, Marine Education, Service Learning, Sustainability Education, Technology & EE. To register for the conference or for additional information, visit: <http://www.naaee.org/conference>.