

NEWS & NOTES

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The Gray Family Foundation seeks to fulfill John and Betty Gray's faith in the human spirit. The Gray family acknowledges their responsibility to give back to the systems that nurture all of us: our culture, our natural environment and our communities.

Director's Notes

Last week, between meetings in Washington DC, I had an hour to browse through the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. In that hour, I learned something in the human origins exhibit that I didn't realize...that our species nearly went extinct 74,000 years ago with fewer than 10,000 adults of reproductive age living on the planet. Our species, *Homo sapiens*, is the last of the hominids, a branch of primates that included 12 other species. *Homo Erectus* went extinct 70,000 ago having been on the planet for nearly 2 million years. *Homo Neanderthalensis* fell 28,000 years ago. And then 17,000 years ago, *Homo Floresiensis*, our closest related species died out, leaving us alone to represent the hominid branch.

<http://humanorigins.si.edu/human-characteristics/change>.

What does it mean to have a species level perspective that spans tens of thousands (or millions) of years? I know it's difficult for me to think much beyond my lifetime, or the lifetime of my youngest nieces and nephews. So how do we imagine humanity 5,000 years from now? Or 50,000 years from now?

Such thought experiments give our brains room to contemplate scale and size. Putting our species' existence in a context lets us think about the world in new and different ways. It lets us find the connections between our species and other species. It makes us think about the past, the future we want to live in and the community we live in now. Is this how we want our world to be? Is this who we want to be? These thinking skills come from integrative disciplines like geography, art, and ecology; disciplines that combine math, history, reading, science, sociology, geology, biology, botany, and psychology. And, our species needs to be able to parse the complex decisions we face if we hope to be around in 300 years, let alone

5,000.

Mostly, we need to learn to be humble, because even though we are the last branch standing, we really haven't been around that long. In 1.8 million years, when our time on earth has surpassed homo erectus, perhaps we can start feeling more smug.



--Eric
Executive Director, Gray Family Foundation

Notable News

Plans Underway to Transition the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan

Starting this spring the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan (OELP) will officially become a program of the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension. An OSU leadership team will coordinate implementation of the plan in partnership with an advisory committee comprised of 10–12 members representing regional and programmatic diversity. The current OELP Task Force has developed a set of recommendations for the advisory committee membership and responsibilities. The advisory committee will be a working committee tasked with setting goals and prioritizing work plans, coordinating with state offices, facilitating communication, monitoring and reporting on progress, and identifying resources and fundraising strategies. Committee members will be considered from the following sectors using a transparent and inclusive application process:

- K–12 Formal Education – administrator and/or teacher
- Teacher educator – faculty from outside OSU
- Educational Research
- Extractive industry – natural resources
- Association of Zoos and Aquariums
- Environmental Education Association of Oregon
- Federal Agency
- State Agency
- Oregon Department of Education
- Sustainability Education
- Non–formal Education
- Outdoor School
- Content Literacy – Forest, Ocean, Climate
- Business
- Active/Healthy Lifestyles
- Tribal/Community of Color
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM)

Thank you to the current OELP implementation task force for their leadership. Through their leadership they have accomplished, correlating the OELP to state standards for learning, secured more than \$200K in-kind contributions for the NOCLI/OELP project with donations coming from more than 60 organizations, and begun building a statewide toolkit of resources aligned to grade-levels and the OELP.

- Larry Berrin (OR Dept of Forestry)
- Norie Dimeo-Ediger (Oregon Forest Resources Institute)
- Susan Sahnou (OSU Extension – Oregon Natural Resource Education Program)
- Bora Simmons (Nat'l Project for Excellence in EE)
- Lori Stole (Sustainable OR Schools Initiative)
- Rachael Bashor (OR Coast Aquarium)
- John Sheehan (Metro/OR Zoo),
- OR Parks & Rec Dept
- Traci Price (Gray Family Foundation/Environmental Education Association of Oregon)

The Gray Family Foundation is excited to have the Oregon Environmental Literacy Program enter this next stage in it's life cycle by transitioning to OSU extension, where their statewide network of professionals and the cross-departmental collaboration of their faculty can help this program gain greater awareness and adoption by Oregon's communities.



Make Your Voice Heard for Conservation Education!
The Oregon Conservation Education Coalition is sponsoring an Advocacy Day for everyone who thinks our Oregonians deserve high-quality, hands-on, outdoor education, including restoring Outdoor School for all. The Advocacy Day will be held on Monday, February 17th at the State Capitol in Salem, Oregon. Because of your interest in conservation, environmental, and sustainability education, we are asking you to join us in Salem to help educate the Legislature about the importance of conservation education. We will help arrange a meeting with your Senator and/or Representative on that day, and will provide you with talking points.

Please email us at your earliest convenience so that we may schedule a 15 minute appointment for you on February 17th.

Please feel free to call with any questions.

Thank you,
Oregon Conservation Education Coalition

coalition@friendsofoutdoorschool.org

PS: If you can't make it to Salem on February 17th for the Conservation Education Advocacy Day, then please send a letter to your Representative and Senator on how much you value conservation education and the need to restore Outdoor School for All Oregonians. A fact sheet and sample letter are attached. To find out who your representative and senator are, go to: <http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/FindYourLegislator/leg-districts.html>

Grant Cycle Updates

We just closed our February grant deadlines for two funding categories. In our Teacher Professional Development funding category, we received 25 applications. Our grants committee will meet to review these grants in April, and grant award checks will be mailed out in May.

In our Outdoor Exploration and Community Field Trips for 5th–8th grades funding category, we received 39 applications. This grant cycle will be unique in that applicants will be trained and participate in grant review, and make recommendations for award. This learning convening will take place in early March, with final decisions made by April, and grant award checks mailed out in May.

Next Cycle?

The RFP for our Overnight Residential Outdoor School Programs for 5th and 6th Grade has been released on our website. The application will open by March 1st. The deadline for proposals is May 5th, 2014.

GFF makes grants to schools, government agencies, and nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations. Please refer to our [website](#) for examples of recent successful projects and amounts granted.

Stay Connected

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