

The Nature Education Standing Committee 2018 Report

The Nature Education Standing Committee spent the majority of the year discussing where to focus our work to best support the MetroParks and how to best structure our meetings to utilize our time and efforts in the most efficient way. We had 2 new committee members join throughout 2018 after one member (who was president) was appointed to be a MetroPark's Commissioner and the other resigned.

The most frequent topics of discussion during our meetings were:

- staffing for education programs: \$9.15 starting pay and no naturalists/educators who are full-time without supervisor roles
- Programming that meets the needs of a wider range of demographics and abilities: increased programming for seniors, high schoolers, and people with disabilities
- More frequent educational programming that deals with local environmental issues: water quality, neighborhood wildlife, invasive species, etc (similar to the current prescribed burns going on at Lake Newport)
- Updating curriculum to Ohio Science standards for school programs and adding programs for 3rd grade through high school
- Requiring more specific, organized and accessible data from educational programs to better evaluate whether they are meeting the county's interests and the MetroParks' mission
- Getting feedback from public and school programs to see if the programming is successful and meaningful to the participants and schools.
- MetroParks taking the lead locally with environmental leadership in terms of environmental educational events, speakers and conferences

With all these topics and discussions points coming up multiple times throughout the year we've focused on 2 specific goals that our committee will work towards for the 2019 year:

Goal 1: Monitor and evaluate programs the park is offering, school and public alike, that deal with local environmental issues and give recommendations on how the MetroParks can increase environmental awareness and active stewardship of natural resources for park visitors and county residents.

Goal 2: Monitor and evaluate the demographics of the nature education participants and make recommendations where more opportunity exists. Additionally, pursue collaboration with organizations to give recommendations on partnerships that will increase and improve environmental literacy for program participants that reflect the demographics of the county.

Recommendation:

Our committee has one recommendation that would increase the potential for the MetroParks to improve and expand educational programming participation from school groups and the general public.

-The Nature Education Standing Committee recommends that the Commissioners have the MetroParks collect and maintain general information and feedback from participants in educational programs to gain a better understanding of the demographics of the people coming to educational programs is representative of Mahoning County.

Information that would be valuable to collect:

- attendance/demand: documenting successful and full programs
- feedback from participants and how that is utilized for planning future program
- zipcodes of participants
- age groups
- environmental content/impact
- Increased Environmental Literacy for participants