

The Quivira Coalition
Farms & Ranches as Outdoor Schoolyards
Roundtable Discussion Summary
January 19, 2007

Facilitated by: Rosemary Romero

Goals of the session:

- Structured dialogue
- Sharing success stories
- Understand what other kinds of education opportunities have been conducted
- Discussion about potential projects

Introductions/Review Agenda and Expectations for the session: Rosemary introduced herself to the group and noted that the session was scheduled from 1:00 – 5:00 and reviewed the agenda with the group.

Overview of Richard Louv presentation and ideas about outdoor education: Courtney White, Executive Director of the Quivira Coalition thanked participants for their interest and participation in the forum. He noted that interest for the session had been developed at the previous conference. It was Quivira's intention to provide a space for discussion and the hopes that direction would be provided on what to do next.

1) Sharing success stories: The purpose of sharing success stories was to ground participants on the types of projects that students have taken part in – share the learnings – challenges – and connections to future projects.

- Will Barnes and Lee Lewin from the SF Girls School and SF Girls School students – their project focused on remediation issues in the Santa Fe River.
 - Removal of non-native species
 - Using natural products
 - Testing and monitoring
- Rich Schrader and students from the River Source Program
 - Project was focused in the Albuquerque Bosque
 - Monitoring
 - Coalition Building in New Mexico & Ecowiser, an on-line database of outdoor education curriculum, resources, and calendar of events
 - NM Outdoor Education Initiative (see outdoor.riversource.net)
- Dan Shaw an educator with a private school talked about the various types of programs that he had helped to develop and lead. He spoke of the importance of connecting students and the various opportunities that could be had if there was more collaboration.
 - Bosque School
 - Use simple activities to teach biodiversity, etc.

- Wildlife needs
- Develop publications, data
- Camino de Paz
 - Montessori School
 - Learning to raise animals
 - Learnings applied to the field
 - Harvesting crops to create connection to food
 - Utilizing grown food

2) Role of ranchers and potential projects: Tuda Libby Crews described how their ranch is committed to hosting an annual educational event. In 2003 they held a wild bird workshop for rural 4th and 5th grade students which taught about wild birds and ecosystems (with 60 students attending). Liability was a concern and they resolved it by using their home owner's policy, which included a rider. They have successfully hosted events with support from partnerships they have formed with various agencies and organizations. It takes a great deal of resources, both financial and human, to host rural events. Ute Creek Cattle Company believes ranchers can provide ideal settings for youth learning experiences.

- 3) Resources available** – presentations made by:
- Christy Tafoya – NM State Parks
 - Dana Vacker Strang, NM State Lands Office
 - Mike Casaus – Sierra Club

- 4) Questions for the Group to answer** – led by Rosemary Romero:

What kinds of projects would lend themselves to collaboration?

How can challenges be overcome?

Is there a role for Quivira? What is it?

What would it take for ranchers to participate in a program with students?

What can be done to overcome economic concerns?

Roles that could be filled by other agencies or organizations?

5) Role of Quivira: Participants felt that Quivira could provide a “one stop shopping” for either schools or farmers and ranchers trying to organize projects. The Eco-wiser website could be enhanced to include other information. Participants felt that it was important to connect urban and rural students in various settings.

- Quivira Ranch Network re: Case Studies
- Connecting websites

6) Other possible projects: Participants described various types of projects that could be helpful in connecting students to farms and ranches.

- Birds (Hawks?) Aloft needs project areas
- Earthworks is bridging urban/rural issues in the Galisteo Basin as well as water testing
- Partnerships could be formed with Land Trusts

- Patty Wasserman 505-250.4667
- 7) **Issues that could be addressed:**
 - addressing loss of agricultural lands in the North Valley
 - Distance to farms and ranches
 - Important to form partnerships with teachers beyond environmental to agriculture. One way to form a partnership with teachers would be offer teachers credit
 - Overcoming school politics
 - Getting ranchers involved will be critical. Incentives will need to be offered to offset costs. Colorado example uses land boards to reduce costs. Perhaps offering a summer program that utilizes students at a summer camp.
- 8) **Suggestions on how to overcome issues:**
 - Adopt a school with one school, one teacher utilize mini grants
 - Reconnecting traditional uses and reconnecting students to food, recreational uses and spiritual connections
 - Utilize Soil and Water Conservation District. They currently have an outdoor classroom program which includes 15 other agencies; agricultural days and conferences. The SWCD districts have money to cover transportation costs.
 - Important to match youth experience with a ranch partnership.
 - Connect with universities such as St. John's College or others who have older students
 - Utilize inner-disciplinary programs and go beyond science classes. Use art classes or others. Gardening classes for example would help to connect students to their food.
 - Montana has been successful in connecting students to ranching through mini grants, watershed tours for teachers and giving them teaching credit. One successful project utilized a diverse student population that included children from the Virgin Islands doing fence removal and aspen regeneration.
 - Utilize farmers markets to create internships.
 - Creating a 501 c 3 that specifically addresses student/rancher concerns such as insurance, etc.
- 9) **Other possibilities or examples**
 - Herbal programs to teach the use of native plants
 - AZ program utilizes monitoring on rangeland and habitat restoration. Contact jwilliamson@thephs200.com. 602.14.4325
 - AZ ranch connection with youth. Saguaro-juniper.com contact is Charlie Thomas
 - Wyoming program is called Agriculture I the classroom 307.777.6618, wyomingagclassroom.org
 - EEANM.org
 - UNM/NMSU (National Association of Environmental Studies)
 - A video can be used call 505-473-1004
 - Jane Goodall Program needs land projects. Contact bschmader@janegoodall.org; 505.988.1670
 - Sierra Club has a connecting farm – food and youth program. Children an nature network
 - Writers in electronic residence. Students and others can share their stories using writing software that has been developed. www.wier.ca
 - Create a summer art program on ranches similar to artist in residence program. This will leave a permanent mark. Contact Sunny Hill – Rainbow Ranch – 278.3197

10) Resources:

- Chris Nyman Weller
- North Valley Coalition
- Ditches & Trails
- Buildcommunity@comcast.net
- P.E.D – Liaison in connecting with schools – Donna Grein 827-6565. PED has a home page.

Next steps for Quivira:

- Quivira will create an atlas of the New Western Range
- Develop resource information

E-mail correspondence from participants:

▪ Hanna-Leigh Bull

Raising llamas and working in the schools have provided me the opportunities to bring large groups of children to Llama Deara Ranch (really a ranchito of 4 acres). I have developed curricula, liability forms, addressed insurance needs, and more. Being a marriage and family therapist, I have focused on the development of empathy in children as a foundation for reducing and releasing trauma from the lives of children and families in the Espanola Valley and environs. As such, the elementary school curriculum has two distinct components:

- 1) *Science/changing ecosystems/history*
- 2) *Empathy building: Interaction with the llamas and cooperative games*

Maybe I missed it: One point we didn't seem to directly address at the workshop is the inherent healing vortex that can unfold between farm animals and children. This connection is a fast track to the development of self-awareness, internal and external observation, and empathy. It serves the earth by helping children see how all living entities are connected and improves relationships among humans, which seems all important given the current crisis point.

I am happy to share experiences and pertinent files on a list serve if Quivira is planning a central depository for information that might interest people who want to bring children to their ranches.

Unfortunately, since the summer of 2006, I am no longer working as an employee in the schools, which greatly facilitated my ability to be awarded grants for this work. From the 1/18 workshop, I derived that transportation grants, at least, might be available from other sources.

As an employee, I was able to obtain government grants to do this work, as other teachers and counselors can do.

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