

April-May 2025, Bi-Monthly Education Report

Presented to the Board of Supervisors, Ocean County Soil Conservation District

May 15, 2025

Becky Laboy, M.Ed., Education Outreach Specialist

April-May 2025 Education & Outreach Activities, as per the Annual Plan of Operations:

In support of OCSCD's Annual Plan of Operations (APO), which includes in its vision *"to be recognized as a conservation leader"*, and includes in its mission *"to protect, restore and sustain fully functioning soil resources..."*, *"further natural resource stewardship through educational programs..."* and *"develop and nurture effective relationships... to sustain functioning ecosystem services..."*, the Education Department continues to champion the **Jersey-Friendly Yards** initiative in cooperation with Barnegat Bay Partnership, to effectuate OCSCD's vision and mission. In addition, the Education Department is supporting OCSCD technical staff on the **Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project**, is an active partner in the **New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative**, and offers support to the **South Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council** (SJRC&D). The Education Department continues to provide community outreach programs and statewide initiatives, as well as research and write grants to support OCSCD's overall mission.

(APO Item #1) IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 251 SOIL EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT & OTHER NATURAL RESOURCE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

1. (APO Item #1, Activity 14) Becky maintains the District Website. (See also, APO Item #3, Activity 1 and APO Item #5, Activity 1)

- Becky maintains and updates the District website with Chapter 251 SESC-related information, Education & Outreach information, and general updates.
- In addition, Lisa Mazzuca of [On Your Mark Website Design and Graphics](#) is under contract with the District to provide website support, as needed.

2. (APO Item #1, Activity 17 and Sub-Task)

- 2nd Sub-Task, #2, **SJRC&D, 319h Basin Retrofit Grant - Lakewood**: The Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project (LTSBRP) team is planning a Presentation & Bus Tour of the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project. The LTSBRP team will be sent invitations to select partners, municipalities, and public works leader and employees, asking them to join us on **Tuesday June 3, from 9:00am-12:00pm**, at the Lakewood Township Department of Public Works for a Presentation of our Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project, followed by a bus tour of 3 retrofitted basins: America Ave, First Energy Park, Sunset/Independence Court. Link to register for the [LTSBRP Presentation & Tour](#).

(APO Item #3) GENERAL OPERATIONS

1. (APO Item #3, Activity 1) Becky provides support and assistance to Christine Raabe, Jean Baluski and Mary Ellen Banfield to provide for the accountability of the District to the public, legislature and to NJDA-SSCC, by posting on the website, the following:

- [Financial Information](#)
- [Board meeting minutes, agendas and meeting notices, as required](#)
- [Public Notices](#)

2. (APO Item #3, Activity 3) Becky participates in various training opportunities to enhance overall abilities as a District employee, including: New Jersey State Active Shooter Response Training 2025, Annual Cybersecurity Awareness Training 2025, New Jersey State Domestic Violence Policy Training 2025, New Jersey State Policy Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace Training 2025, New Jersey State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace Written Policy 2025, and New Jersey State Workplace Violence: Recognize, Prevent and Report Training 2025.

- **Sub-Task:** Becky developed an Individual Professional Development Plan for 2025 and submitted it to Christine Raabe in March.

3. (APO Item #3, Activity 4) Becky serves on the SJRC&D Council, assisting Christine Raabe, as needed.

4. (APO Item #3, Activity 5) Becky serves as OCSCD representative member of the Barnegat Bay Partnership's Communication and Education Committee (CEC)

- Becky serves as the CEC Co-Chair for the current term. Becky is working with CEC Chair Joel Mott, NJ Pinelands Commission, and Nina Sassano, Associate Director of Outreach, BBP, on the goals and objectives of the CEC Communication & Education Plan.
- Becky attends bi-monthly meetings of the CEC and reports on OCSCD's education initiatives related to National Estuary Program activities and goals, such as those specified in BBP's [CCMP](#) and [Communication Plan](#). As CEC Co-Chair, Becky attends BBP Advisory Committee Meetings.
 - **Sub-Task:** The shared services agreement/subcontract between OCSCD and BBP in support of Jersey-Friendly Yards has been extended to June 30, 2025, in order to complete the many tasks outlined in the service agreement. (See APO Item #4, Activity 1.)

(APO Item #4) EDUCATION INITIATIVES – GRANT RELATED

1. (APO Item #4, Activity 1) Becky continues to seek and expand granted projects when opportunities arise.

Grant 1: Jersey-Friendly Yards School Certification 319 grant with BBP:

- This grant was completed in 2023.

Grant 2: Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Retrofit Project

OCSCD is partnering with South Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council (SJRC&D) represented by Eileen Miller, Team Habitat Coordinator, the Camden County Soil Conservation District represented by Craig McGee, Director, and Lakewood Township Department of Public Works, on a grant from the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection: *Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project*. The grant is funded by a Federal 319(h) Water Quality Restoration grant awarded by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to SJRC&D. Brittany Moore is the lead project coordinator on behalf of OCSCD and Becky Laboy is focusing primarily on the communications and education component. Jessica Pinto, Erosion Control Specialist, has also been attending meetings and is offering her time to support this project. As reported above, Lakewood Twp Stormwater Basin Retrofit team is planning a Program & Tour of the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Retrofit Project. The LTSBRP team will be sending out invitations to partners, municipalities, and public works leader and employees, to join us on Tuesday June 3, from 9:00am-12:00pm, at the Lakewood Township Department of Public Works for a PPT introduction to our Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project, followed by a bus tour of 3 retrofitted basins and one pollinator garden.

Subcontract: Jersey-Friendly Yards (subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership 2/12/24 – 6/30/25)

- Becky is devoting time towards the BBP/OCSCD subcontract, "Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Project". Tasks include: 1) develop and deliver age-appropriate lessons and activities on soil health and other JFY topics to participating students in at least 10 enrolled schools. Lessons and activities are designed to assist schools with meeting the requirements of the JFY School Certification Program. 2) Provide technical advice and support to at least 5 enrolled schools about the design and installation of JFY School Certification Program projects in their schoolyards; advise on issues related to soil health, plant selection, and wildlife habitat enhancement. OCSCD will provide a total of \$15,000 of billable services and \$15,000 of in-kind services to this project over the term of the subcontract.
 - Becky submitted Report #5 for the reporting quarter: January 1 – March 31, 2025.
 - Becky provided age-appropriate outreach programs to Central Regional High School, Pinelands Regional High School, South Toms River Elementary School, Toms River South High School, Jackson Liberty High School, and Nellie Bennett Elementary School.
 - Becky assisted BBP with facilitating a JFY Training Program for Volunteers, in an effort to expand our capacity for outreach programs. Six volunteers attended the Training.

2. (APO Item #4, Activity 2) Seeks Grants and Funding to support both on-going and new initiatives and programs:

Becky continues to research potential grants and opportunities that will support the District's Mission.

(APO Item #5) EDUCATION INITIATIVES

1. (APO Item #5, Activity 1) Becky maintains and enhances OCSCD's website to more effectively utilize and disseminate pertinent and educational resources and assist in fulfilling OCSCD Mission.

- Sub-Task: Becky maintains the communications database & mailing/contact list for E&O initiatives. Constant Contact is the tool used to disseminate newsletters/updates, announcements, etc.

Communications: Website, Newsletter, Blog, Social Media and Annual Report:

Becky has been using several OCSCD media communications platforms in an effort to engage a broader audience in support of the District's Mission. OCSCD staff have been regularly contributing articles for publication in OCSD's newsletter.

- OCSCD's [website](#)
- Constant Contact: Becky keeps an updated list of contacts in the District's Constant Contact database.
- [Newsletters](#) continue to be distributed monthly through our Constant Contact platform, typically on the first day of the month, to our audience of 1,648 contacts on our "General List". OCSCD's monthly newsletter has been officially named: **Conservation Conversation** and now includes "branding" through the use of the specific colors within OCSCD's logo. The content of each newsletter will focus on the District's 3 major goals: regulation, education and stewardship: **REGULATE, EDUCATE, ACTIVATE**. These changes to the Newsletter can be seen in the December 2024 issue, as well as in the 2024 Annual Report.
- In 2024 OCSCD published **12** monthly issues of our Newsletter to our list of 1,648 contacts signed-up on our "General List" to receive it.
 - [April Newsletter](#)
 - [May Newsletter](#)
- [Blog posts](#) on our website highlight the District's many projects, as well as our soil conservation message, and are linked in our newsletters and promoted through social media. Latest blogs articles:
 - [Christine Raabe: Champion of Environmental Education](#)
 - [Soil Science in Action: Kean University Student Highlights Vegetative Standards and the Power of native Plants](#)
 - [Digging into Soil Science: OCSCD Celebrates Earth Day with Whiting Elementary School](#)
- The [2024 Annual Report](#) has been published and is available on our website. This Report captures both the technical and educational accomplishments of 2024. Becky will be compiling the 2025 Annual Report; ready for publishing in January 2026.
- Newsletters, blogs and other soil conservation information are also distributed via the District's social media platforms by Becky and Kristin Adams via [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).
- For access to all our social media and project links, visit the "[Connect](#)" page on our website.

2. (APO Item #5, Activity 2) Becky maintains communications and networks with regional and statewide Conservation Education and Environmental Education partners, and is involved in several initiatives, including Barnegat Bay Roundtable Steering & Planning Committee, Barnegat Bay Partnership's Communication and Education Committee (CEC), Jersey-Friendly Yards and the New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative.

- Becky Laboy and Kristin Adams represent OCSCD for the [New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative \(NJBII\)](#) and attend the monthly online meetings with all NJBII partners and constituents. Our NJBII leader, Virginia Rettig, Edwin B. Forsythe NWR Manager, USFW, has taken early retirement. Angela Andersen, Long Beach Township Marine Field Station, will be stepping into Virginia's NJBII leadership role.
- Becky is representing OCSCD on the NJBII Communications Working Group ("Press Team"), who meets once a month. The Press Team is developing a "Big Wake, Big Mistake" campaign to educate the public about the detriments of wakes to our bay islands.
- Becky and Christine are offering their time to help facilitate this year's NJBII Retreat/Field Trip.

3. (APO Item #5, Activity 3) Poster Contest: The 2025 Conservation Poster Contest theme is “**Home is Where the Habitat Is**”. OCSCD has selected the Grand Champion Winner: Victoria Clayton, New Egypt. A Certificate and check for \$50 was mailed to Ms. Clayton. Her winning poster is available for viewing on OCSCD’s [Annual NJ Conservation Poster Contest webpage](#).

4. (APO Item #5, Activity 4) Promote the Distribution of Low Maintenance Landscaping Guides. Becky continues searching for grants to support funding to print additional LML Guides.

5. (APO Item #5, Activity 5) Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable: The 2025 Roundtable took place on **Wednesday, April 16, 3:00pm-8:00pm** at the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education. Our theme was: “**Caring for Our Precious Natural Resources: Considering Conservation, Climate and Community**”. This year we offered four 1-hour workshops and three 2-hour Field Experiences. Our Keynote Speakers were Julianna Cofinas, a recent Kean University graduate who presented her project on soils; and Nicholas Guerriero, a current Stockton University student who presented his research on shellfish. Becky has updated OCSCD’s website to showcase the 2025 event. Please visit our [BBEERT webpage](#) to view information and a Gallery of Photos of all past year’s [Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtables](#).

6. (APO Item #5, Activity 6) Internship & Volunteer Opportunities and Agreements: The Education Department does not have an intern at this time.

7. (APO Item #5, Activity 7) Becky offers a variety of Outreach Programs based on soil health & natural resources to various groups/organizations; at least 12 per year.

2025 E&O programs, workshops and events:

- **Jan 10:** Becky and Dr. Pollock exhibited at the Connected Leadership Conference at Ocean County College, under the direction of Dr. Christine McCoid, of Point Peasant Schools. **(150 of attendees)**
- **Jan 16:** Becky provided a Soils program to the Environmental Club at Central Regional High School (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(30 students)**
- **Jan 27:** Site visit to Toms River South High School (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract).
- **Feb 3:** Introduction to the JFY School Certification Program presented to Jackson Liberty High School; plus site visit (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(45 students)**
- **Feb 4:** Soils program provided to Pinelands Regional High School Period 1 (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(20 students)**
- **Feb 6:** Soils program provided to Pinelands Regional High School Period 11 (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(20 students)**
- **Feb 10:** Soils program provided to Toms River South Elementary School (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(25 students)**
- **Feb 26:** Training Workshop for JFY volunteers to assist with education in the classroom. **(6 participants)**
- **March 8:** Pinelands Short Course – “Exploring Soils of the Pines” indoor/outdoor program, Stockton University. **(30 participants)**
- **March 17:** Soils program at Toms River South High School (Garden Club). Dug a mini soil pit and explored the Downer soil. (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(6 students)**
- **March 31:** Soils program at Toms River South High School (Garden Club). Tested soil samples for NPK, pH. (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(6 students)**
- **April 1:** Soils program at Jackson Liberty High School, Environmental Club. Dug a mini soil pit and explored the Pits soil. (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(12 students)**
- **April 3:** Envirothon Training Day at the FREC. Assisted with the Wildlife Station. **(55 students)**
- **April 7:** Soils program at Nellie Bennett Elementary School for three 5th grade classes. Created Garden Designs. (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(60 students)**
- **April 8:** Soils program at Nellie Bennett Elementary School for two 5th grade classes. Created Garden Designs. (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(40 students)**

- **April 9:** Soils program at Jackson Liberty High School, Environmental Club. Soil NPK and pH tests. (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(30 students)**
- **April 10:** Soils program at Jackson Liberty High School, Environmental Club. Soil texture test. (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(30 students)**
- **April 16:** Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable! (See attached addendum.)
- **May 1:** Provided Soil program to all students, K-5, at Whiting Elementary School in celebration of Earth Day. **(250 students)**
- **May 6:** Provided soil program to two classes at Lacey Township High School. Soil texture test. **(38 students)**

8. (APO Item #5, Activity 8) Envirothon: The 2025 NJ Envirothon will take place on May 17 at the Burlington County Soil Conservation District grounds, in Columbus. The 2025 theme is: *Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change*. Becky is co-coordinating the Wildlife Station with Holly Reynolds from Freehold Soil Conservation District. Becky will be bringing two volunteers to assist, Anne Tokazewski and Amy Kane. Please visit the [NCF-Envirothon \(Nationals\)](#) website, [NJ Envirothon](#) website and [OCSCD's Envirothon webpage](#) for more information.

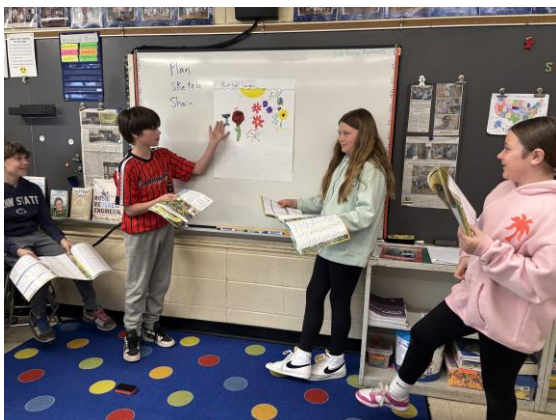
9. (APO Item #5, Activity 9) Track participants, evaluations, provide reports on E&O activities to District Director and Board: Becky maintains constant contact with District Director, Christine Raabe, and provides bi-monthly reports regarding all education activities to the OCSCD Board of Supervisors.

10. (APO Item #5, Activity 10) Jersey-Friendly Yards Outreach, Webinars, Conference:
(Please see APO Item #4, Activity 1, and Item #5, Activity 7.)

Students at **Jackson Liberty High School** determined the site for their Jersey-Friendly Garden, collected soil samples, tested their soil for nutrients and pH, and conducted a particle size analysis.



Students at **Nellie Bennett Elementary School** created and shared Garden Designs for their new Pollinator Garden, which will be planted in Fall, 2025.



Duffy Barrow, Naturalist at the Forest Resource Education Center, provided a Wildlife lesson to students participating in this year's **Envirothon Training**.



Third grade students at **Whiting Elementary School** crafted Soil Profiles during this year's Earth Day event.



Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable, Teachers engaged in Workshops and Field Experiences. Pictured below, teachers learn about carbon mitigation through games created by **NJ Sea Grant Consortium**.



Pictured below, teachers explore the grounds of the Lighthouse Center and use iNaturalist to take photos of nature, identify species and add to the global database. Program created and guided by **NJ School of Conservation**.

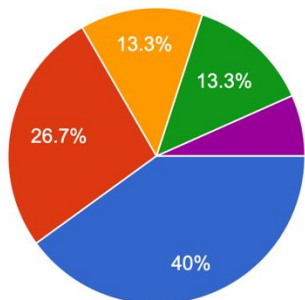


Pictured below, teachers explore the variety of soil series beneath our feet at the Lighthouse Center. Program created and guided by **Ocean County Soil Conservation District**.



28th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable, 2025 – Evaluations:

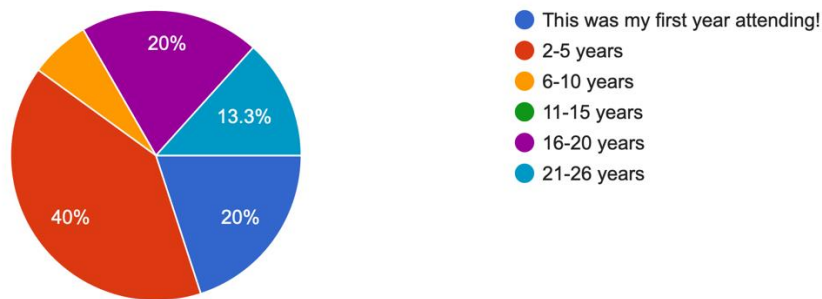
I attended the Environmental Educators Roundtable primarily as a
15 responses



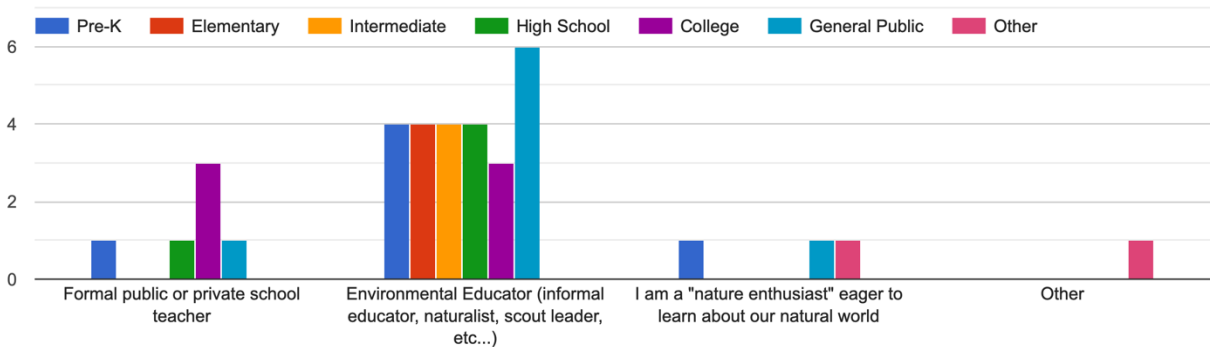
- Participant (teacher, educator, nature enthusiast)
- Exhibitor
- Presenter
- Staff, volunteer, intern
- Learn new ways to conserve.

How many years have you attended the Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable?

15 responses

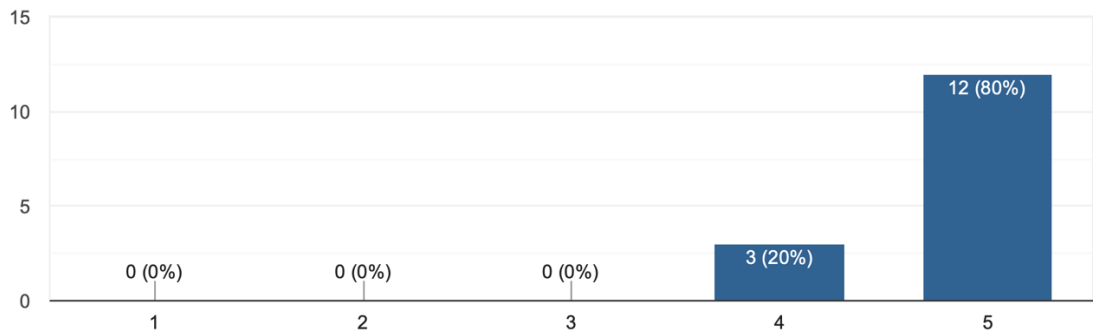


What best describes your role as an educator?



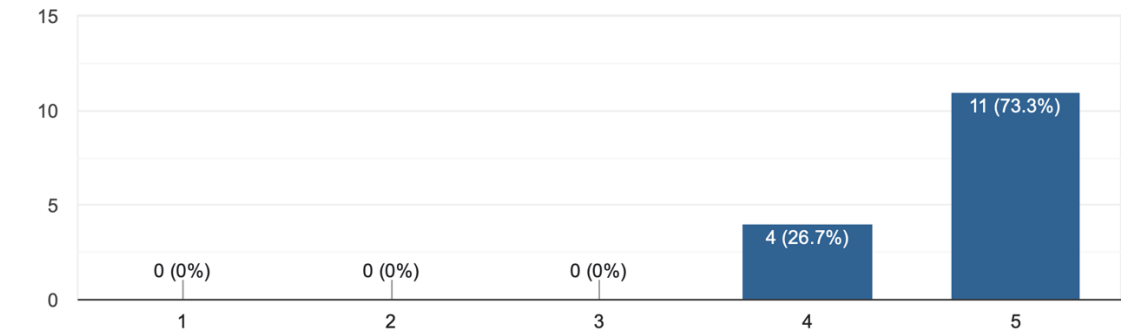
How satisfied were you with the event?

15 responses



How relevant or informative do you think the Environmental Educators Roundtable was for teachers, educators or nature enthusiasts?

15 responses

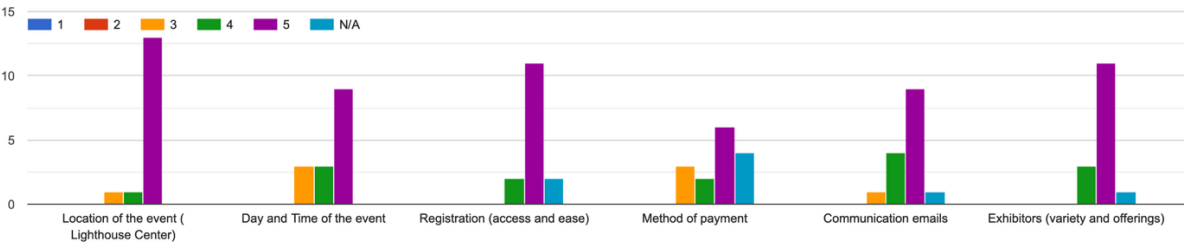


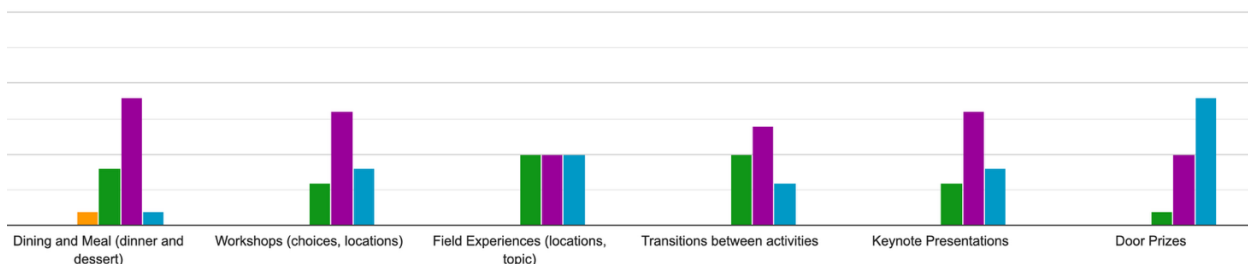
Please share one or

more key take-aways from this event?10 responses

I have discovered a new interest in astronomy
Wish there more attendees! Maybe setting the date and getting the word out earlier would help and more promotion. Maybe start a bit later for teachers further away. Otherwise it's an awesome event, great people, great workshops, great food! There is a lot an educator could walk away with.
I thought the variety of educators were very interesting and made it hard to choose just one
Making connections with other educators.
Sorry I had to leave early for family emergency - can't wait for BBEER 2026!
Good networking
I loved the maple syrup info & the student presentations.
Love the hands-on learning
Exhibitors very willing to offer additional help.
Red maples can be tapped for syrup!

How satisfied were you with the logistics?





Please share your feedback regarding logistics so we can improve for next year. 9 responses

Need to advertise event at beginning of school year and not in third quarter. Might considering moving to different locations within watershed.

Parking is at a premium, but other than that.

wish longer time for the exhibitor

planning was very smooth

Sorry I had to leave early for family emergency - can't wait for BBEER 2026!

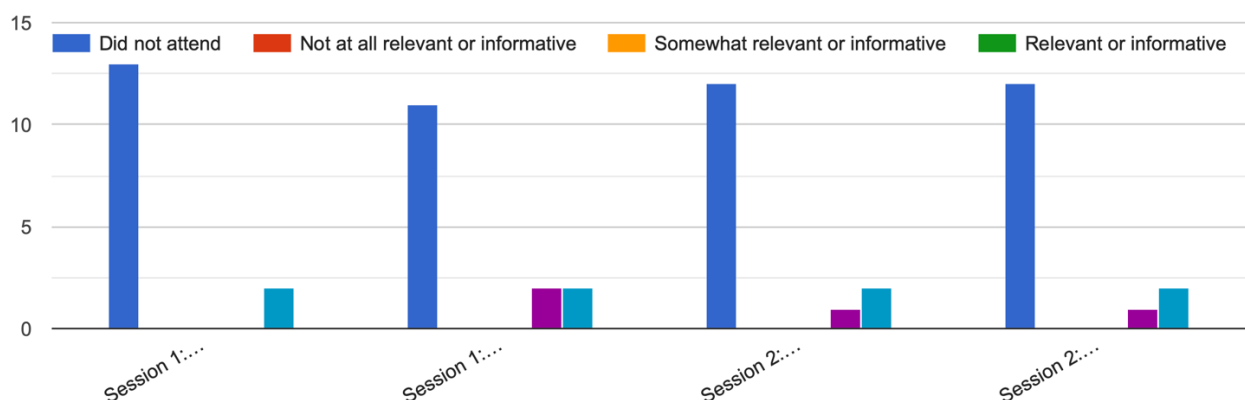
I come from north Jersey so I can't get there till 4:30, but it works because I'm glad it ends by around 8pm.

The food was tasty. There was no salad or broccoli left for those at the end of the line...approximately 10-12 people.

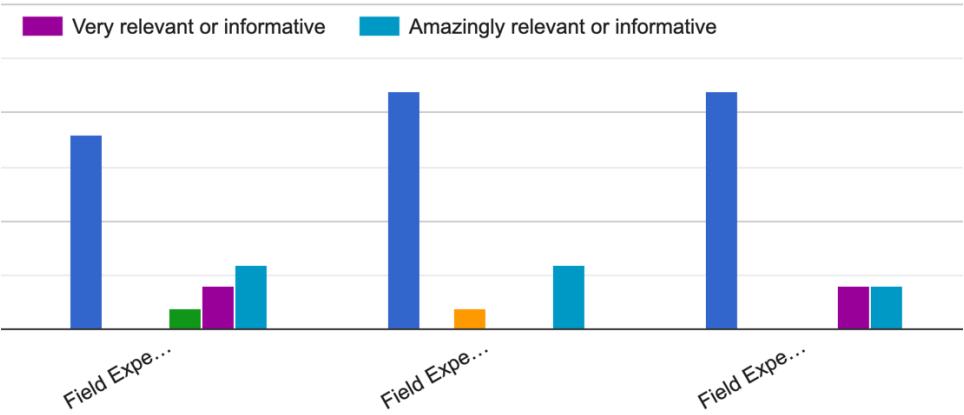
Well organized. I wouldn't change.

I like the venue. Traveling in the hallway at the beginning is always a bit challenging (log jam) and it gets challenging to hear when folks have conversations in the walkways outside the rooms where sessions are occurring. I think having someone who is working the venue making sure that doors get closed (if that is an option) would be helpful.

Which workshops or field experience did you attend and how relevant or informative was it to teachers, educ



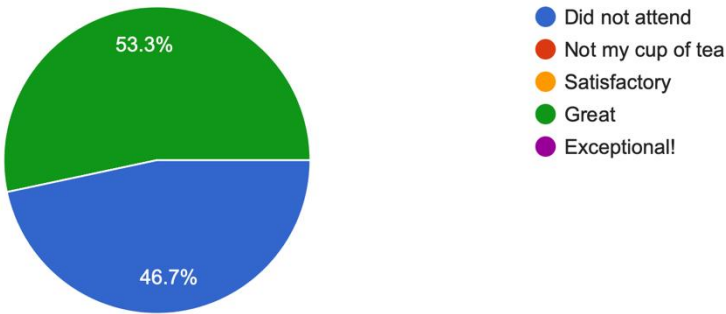
icators or nature enthusiasts?



Please provide additional comments regarding the relevancy or informative nature of the field trip or workshops you attended?6 responses

The presenter was very knowledgeable and engaging.
My Coast was a great experience.
Sorry I had to leave early for family emergency - can't wait for BBEER 2026!
I teach a lot about nature in a hands-on way & I learned about classifying different maple trees, which my young students can enjoy & understand.
Unfortunately I couldn't stay for my workshop. I was having knee pain.
I was really looking forward to learning about the Stockton Maple Syrup project. I was hoping to learn a bit more about the science of the project and spend more time outside or with hand's on activities as it was advertised as a field experience. We were told that we would learn to use refractometers (but didn't get to them) and talked a lot about the importance of taking children outside , but didn't really focus on any details of how the syrup is harvested and how something like this could be done at home, at a school or with a nature group.

Please rate the keynote presentations by Julianna Cofinas and Nick Guerriero
15 responses



Please provide additional comments regarding the keynote presentations by Julianna Cofinas and Nick

Guerriero.5 responses

Well done, I like to see young people being involved in the natural world

Sorry I had to leave early for family emergency - can't wait for BBEER 2026!

It's inspiring to see such intelligent & motivated young adults.

I had to leave.

I think there are benefits for both the students and the audience when current undergrads (or recent graduates) present. I was particularly impressed with Nick's presentation skills and understanding of his work.

Please provide any additional comments regarding the overall event, and/or suggestions for future

workshop or field trip content/topics we should offer. We value your ideas!7 responses

It has a good focus for the formal teaching environment.

Another nice year with good food and information

maybe some opportunity for further field trip

Sorry I had to leave early for family emergency - can't wait for BBEER 2026!

It was held during the Jewish holiday of Passover, which was fine since it was on an intermediate day, but it would have been nice to have matzoh. (Not a major issue.)

I hope to be able to participate next year.

I was recently thinking of Kiss the Ground and the year we watched that. I enjoyed hearing about recently released items for use in classes/programs/schools. I am not always good at finding items that are new, but I would appreciate if anyone enjoys tracking these things down and sharing either 1) recommended items or 2) HOW they search as a training. I am familiar with things like iNaturalist, PlantNet and MerlinBird ID for apps, but I am not familiar with a way to find good videos sharing up-to-date info on science (other than TedTalks)