To direct the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to establish education and watershed programs which advance environmental literacy, including preparedness and adaptability for the likely impacts of climate change in coastal watershed regions.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

Mrs. CAPPS (for herself, Mr. EHLERS, and Mr. FARR) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To direct the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to establish education and watershed programs which advance environmental literacy, including preparedness and adaptability for the likely impacts of climate change in coastal watershed regions.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Regional Program and National Environmental Literacy Grant Program Act”.

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2  tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
3  
4  This Act may be cited as the “Bay-Watershed Edu-
5  cation and Training (B-WET) Regional Program and Na-
6  tional Environmental Literacy Grant Program Act”.

111TH CONGRESS  H. R. 3644
1ST SESSION
SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

(1) The United States faces major challenges, such as mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change, stewarding critical coastal and marine resources including fish and wildlife habitat while sustaining the commercial and recreational activities that depend on these resources, and improving resilience to natural disasters, that collectively threaten human health, economic development, environmental quality, and national security.

(2) Communities in coastal watersheds are particularly vulnerable to these increasingly urgent, interconnected, and complex challenges and need support for teacher professional development and experiential learning among students of all ages.

(3) These challenges can be met with the help of comprehensive programs specifically targeted to engage coastal watershed communities, school-children, and the general public to develop engaged and environmentally literate citizens who are better able to understand complex environmental issues, assess risk, evaluate proposed plans, and understand how individual decisions affect the environment at local, regional, national, and global scales.
(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to advance environmental literacy, develop public awareness and appreciation of the economic, social, and environmental benefits of coastal watersheds, and emphasize stewardship of critical coastal and marine resources, including an understanding of how climate change is impacting those resources, through the establishment of—

(1) a National Environmental Literacy Grant Program; and

(2) regional Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) programs.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(2) ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION.—The term “environmental education” means interdisciplinary formal and informal learning about the relevant interrelationships between dynamic environmental and human systems, and which results in increasing the learner’s capacity for decisionmaking and stewardship regarding natural and community resources.

(3) ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY.—The term “environmental literacy” means the capacity to per-
ceive and interpret the relative health of environmental systems and the interrelationships between natural and social systems and technology, and to assess options and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems.

(4) **Bay-watershed education.**—The term “bay-watershed education” means environmental education focused on watersheds, with an emphasis on stewardship of critical coastal and marine resources, including an understanding of how climate change is impacting those resources.

(5) **Eligible entity.**—The term “eligible entity” means a State agency, local agency, school district, institution of higher education, or for-profit or non-profit nongovernmental organization, consortium, or other entity that the Administrator finds has demonstrated expertise and experience in the development of the institutional, intellectual, or policy resources to help environmental education become more effective and widely practiced.

(6) **High leverage projects.**—The term “high leverage projects” means projects supported by grants authorized under this Act that use Federal, State and nongovernmental financial, technical, and other resources in such a manner that the po-
potential beneficial outcomes are highly magnified or enhanced.

(7) NATIONAL PROGRAM.—The term “National Program” means the National Environmental Literacy Grant Program established under section 4 of this Act.

(8) REGIONAL PROGRAM.—The term “Regional Program” means the regional Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program established under section 5 of this Act.

(9) STATE.—The term “State” means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, any other territory or possession of the United States, and any Indian tribe.

SEC. 4. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall establish a national competitive grant program under which the Administrator shall provide, subject to the availability of appropriations, financial assistance to—

(1) expand the adoption of coastal, ocean, and watershed environmental education within main-
stream formal and informal educational systems and
other appropriate media;

(2) build administrative and technical capacity
with coastal, ocean, and watershed communities and
stakeholder groups to enhance their effectiveness;

(3) encourage water-dependent and outdoor
recreation, experiential learning, and hands-on in-
volvement with coastal and watershed resources as a
method of promoting stewardship of those resources;
and

(4) develop and implement new approaches to
advance coastal, ocean, and watershed education and
environmental literacy at national, regional, and
local levels.

(b) PRIORITIES.—In awarding grants under this sec-
tion, the Administrator shall give priority consideration to
innovative, strategic, high-leverage projects that dem-
onstrate strong potential for being sustained in the future
by a grant recipient beyond the time period in which ac-
tivities are carried out with the grant.

(c) GUIDELINES.—No later than 180 days after the
date of enactment of this Act and after consultation with
appropriate stakeholders, the Administrator shall publish
in the Federal Register guidelines regarding the imple-
mentation of this grant program, including publication of
criteria for eligible entities, identification of national priorities, establishment of performance measures to evaluate program effectiveness, information regarding sources of non-Federal matching funds or in-kind contributions, and reporting requirements for grant award recipients.

(d) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS BY ADMINISTRATOR.—Of the amounts made available to implement this section—

(1) no less than 80 percent shall be used for competitive grants or cooperative agreements;

(2) no more than 10 percent may be used by the Administrator to implement the grant program; and

(3) no less than 10 percent of the annual funds appropriated for the program authorized under this section shall be used to fund contracts or cooperative agreements to conduct strategic planning, promote communications among grant recipients and within communities, coordinate grant activities to foster an integrated program, and oversee national evaluation efforts.

SEC. 5. BAY-WATERSHED EDUCATION AND TRAINING (B-WET) REGIONAL PROGRAMS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Administrator shall estab-
WET) Regional Program, which shall be operated and
carried out through regional program offices, as follows:

(1) The B-WET Mid-Atlantic Program Office,
which shall include the States of Pennsylvania, Dela-
ware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, New York,
New Jersey, as well as the District of Columbia.

(2) The B-WET California Program Office,
which shall include the State of California.

(3) The B-WET Pacific Islands Program Of-
office, which shall include the State of Hawaii, as well
as American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the
Northern Mariana Islands, and the territory of
Guam.

(4) The B-WET New England Program Office,
which shall include the States of Maine, New Hamp-
shire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and
Rhode Island.

(5) The B-WET Pacific Northwest Program
Office, which shall include the States of Washington,
Montana, Idaho, and Oregon.

(6) The B-WET Gulf Coast Program Office,
which shall include the States of Texas, Louisiana,
Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.

(7) The B-WET Southeast Program Office,
which shall include the States of Georgia, South
Carolina, and North Carolina, Florida, as well as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

(8) The B-WET Great Lakes Program Office, which shall include the States of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, and Ohio.

(9) The B-WET Alaska Program Office, which shall include the State of Alaska.

(10) The B-WET Colorado River and Upper Mississippi/Missouri Program Office, which shall include the States of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming.

(11) The B-WET Lower Mississippi River, which shall include the States of Kentucky, Kansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas.

(b) NEW AND MODIFIED REGIONAL PROGRAMS.—The Administrator may create and modify the Bay-Watershed Education Programs based on need, interest, and available resources.

(c) REGIONAL PROGRAM MANAGEMENT.—The Administrator shall appoint and select a Regional Program Manager for each regional program office, who shall reside in the region, be responsible for managing and administering the regional program, and demonstrate com-
petence and expertise in bay-watershed education and training.

(d) FUNCTIONS.—Each regional program office shall—

(1) administer the Bay-Watershed Education and Training Program in accordance with this Act;

(2) determine the most appropriate communities within the region to be served by the Bay-Watershed Education and Training Program;

(3) encourage water-dependent and outdoor recreation, experiential learning experiences for students, and hands-on involvement with coastal and watershed resources as a method of promoting stewardship of those resources and complementing core classroom curriculum;

(4) support communication and collaboration among educators, natural resource planners and managers, and governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders;

(5) share and distribute information regarding educational plans, strategies, learning activities, and curricula to all stakeholders within its region;

(6) provide financial and technical assistance pursuant to the guidelines developed by the Administrator under this section; and
(7) perform any additional duties as necessary to carry out the functions of the program.

(c) PROGRAM GUIDELINES.—No later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act and after consultation with appropriate stakeholders, the Administrator shall publish in the Federal Register guidelines regarding the implementation of this program, including:

(1) CONTRACTS.—The Administrator shall create guidelines through which each regional program may enter into contracts to support projects to design, demonstrate, evaluate, or disseminate practices, methods, or techniques related to Bay-watershed education and training.

(2) GRANT MAKING AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—

(A) The Administrator shall create guidelines through which each regional program may provide financial assistance in the form of a grant or cooperative agreement to support projects which advance the goals and objectives of this bill, and which shall include criteria for eligible entities, identification of national priorities, establishment of performance measures to evaluate program effectiveness, and reporting requirements for grant award recipients.
(B) In making grants pursuant to this section, the regional programs shall give priority to those projects which will—

(i) promote bay-watershed education throughout the region;

(ii) advance strategic initiatives to incorporate bay-watershed education into formal and informal education systems;

(iii) build capacity within bay-watershed education communities and stakeholder groups for expanding and strengthening their work;

(iv) build bay-watershed education into professional development or training activities for educators; and

(v) broadly replicate existing, proven bay-watershed education programs.

(f) NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In awarding grants under this section, the Administrator may give priority consideration to projects in which the Federal share does not exceed 75 percent of the aggregate cost of such project.

(2) IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION.—The non-Federal share of the costs of any project supported by an
award of grant funding under this section may be
cash or the fair market value of services, equipment,
donations, or any other form of in-kind contribution.

(3) WAIVER OF REQUIREMENT.—The Adminis-
trator may grant a waiver of paragraph (1) for any
underserved community, for any community that has
an inability to draw on other sources of funding be-
cause of the small population or low income of the
community, or for any other person for any other
reason the Administrator considers appropriate and
consistent with the purposes of the program.

(g) REGIONAL PROGRAM COORDINATION.—Within
the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
the Office of Education shall work with Regional Program
Managers on the following regional B-WET functions:

(1) Strategic planning efforts.

(2) Integration and coordination of programs.

(3) Coordination of national evaluation efforts.

(4) Promotion of network wide communications.

(5) Selection of new Regional Program Man-
agers.

(6) Management, tracking, and oversight of the
B-WET program.
(h) **LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS BY ADMINISTRATOR.**—Of the amounts made available to implement this section—

(1) no less than 80 percent shall be used for implementation of regional program activities, including the award of grants; and

(2) no more than 20 percent may be used by the Administrator to implement the regional programs and regional program coordination.

**SEC. 6. BIENNIAL REPORT.**

Not later than December 31, 2011, and biennially thereafter, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the grant programs authorized under this Act. Each such report shall include a description of the eligible activities carried out with grants awarded under the Act during the previous two fiscal years, an assessment of the success and impact of such activities, and a description of the type of programs carried out with such grant, disaggregated by State.

**SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator to carry out this Act—

(1) $40,000,000 for fiscal year 2011;

(2) $45,000,000 for fiscal year 2012;

(3) $50,000,000 for fiscal year 2013;
(4) $50,000,000 for fiscal year 2014; and

(5) $50,000,000 for fiscal year 2015.

(b) ALLOCATION.—The amount authorized for each fiscal year under subsection (a) shall be divided equally to carry out sections 4 and section 5.