

Lake Education Assistance Program (LEAP)

In June 1995, a historic environmental milestone was achieved when the Illinois state legislature passed the **Conservation 2000** program, authorizing funding to implement the **Illinois Lake Management Program Act (ILMPA)**. Originally passed by the legislature in 1989, ILMPA established four comprehensive objectives: 1) public education, 2) technical assistance, 3) monitoring and research and 4) financial incentives for local lake management implementation. The **Lake Education Assistance Program (LEAP)** is one portion of the education initiative offered by the Illinois EPA under this program.

The program provides funding up to \$500 for schools and other not for profit organizations for lake/lake watershed educational activities. Two application periods are available each year with the first ending on September 30 and the second on January 31. Only one application per school or organization can be awarded each application period. However, schools and organizations are encouraged to submit a new application for each period with the possibility of receiving a grant with each application. Funding is in the form of reimbursement. When the LEAP recipient has purchased all materials and equipment necessary to complete the proposed project, the receipts are sent to Illinois EPA for reimbursement up to the amount awarded.

A final report including photographs, videos, artwork and/or written work by participants is required. All reports and receipts must be submitted to the Illinois EPA no later than June 30 of the year the award was made. Any expenditures submitted after the deadline will become the responsibility of the applicant.

LEAP funds are available to all school children whether they attend public or private schools, and for grades from kindergarten through graduate school. Not-for-profit organizations may include lake associations, Scouting groups, parks, communities, etc.

Ms. Linda Rohling, speaking for teachers from Carbondale New School, wrote, "Thank you for making these funds available. These students learned so much about ponds, ecosystems, scientific investigation and equipment. It made a big impact on all of them. The opportunity to use this equipment will be appreciated by teachers, students and parents for a long time."

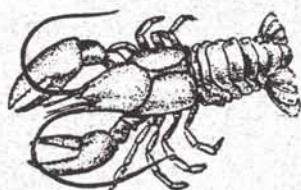
Fund

Some previous uses of these funds include, but are not limited, to the following. (You are encouraged to use your imagination):

- Any written and/or audio-visual materials pertaining to lakes/ponds and their watersheds, for example books for the school library.
- The purchase of equipment such as nets, thermometers, Secchi Disks, water sampling kits, microscopes, aquariums, etc.;
- The cost of buses/drivers for field trips to a lake or pond;
- To pay the salary of a substitute teacher while the class is on a field trip related to your project;
- To help fund attendance at a lake related workshop, conference or seminar;
- For the development, printing, purchasing, and distribution of lake related brochures and publications; and
- Developing film for LEAP reports.

Funds may not be used for:

- The purchase of food while on a field trip or attending a workshop, conference or seminar;
- The purchase of trophies, hats, shirts or any other such souvenirs at or for a lake related event; and
- The purchase of video cameras or related equipment.



Crayfish

Ms. Elaine Link from Carlinville High School wrote, "Thank you for granting our request for Lake Education Assistance Program funds to purchase the GIS site license. I was so excited to see the letter of approval in my mailbox today. The LEAP program encourages educators to try new approaches, and it helps us provide students with direct environmental experiences. I am very anxious to get the GIS training and implement GIS technology in my classes. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

Projects

A majority of the LEAP projects for schools and Scout groups often involve a trip to a nearby lake or pond where students may identify aquatic plants and animals. Analysis of water samples may be another project activity. Younger groups have drawn pictures or written stories and poems of what they observed while on their trip. For schools not fortunate enough to be able to travel to a lake or pond, LEAP funds have been used to help purchase artificial ponds and aquariums for the school yard and classroom. Providing lake/pond related books and videos for the school library has also been funded.

Studying rivers and streams are not funded under LEAP guidelines unless the study is in conjunction with a project including a lake or pond, i.e. a comparison study of a stream that may flow into or out of the lake or pond being studied.

Not-for-profit groups such as lake associations and communities may want to use LEAP funds to produce lake brochures and/or newsletters to educate residents concerning lake issues.

The following is a summary of the LEAP program over the first nine application and grant cycles.

Application Period	Fiscal Year	# Requests	\$ Amount of Requests	# Requests Funded	\$ Requests Funded
September 1996	97	68	\$16,260	44	\$10,451
January 1997	97	127	\$37,816	84	\$22,135
September 1997	98	87	\$49,948	47	\$23,664
January 1998	98	90	\$40,181	52	\$23,358
September 1998	99	62	\$28,664	47	\$22,562
January 1999	99	63	\$28,544	51	\$22,700
September 1999	00	61	\$28,870	54	\$24,693
January 2000	00	75	\$37,121	56	\$25,630
September 2000	01	72	\$35,938	51	\$25,589
Total	97-01	705	\$303,342	486	\$200,782

Project WET

Project WET is a national nonprofit water education program for educators of young people, grades K-12. Project WET is a collection of innovative, water-related activities that are hands-on, easy to use and fun! WET's activities promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills and help provide young people with the knowledge and experience they will need to make prudent decisions regarding water resources. A goal of Project WET is to facilitate and promote awareness, appreciation, knowledge and stewardship of water resources plus the development and dissemination of class-ready teaching aids through the establishment of Project WET programs.

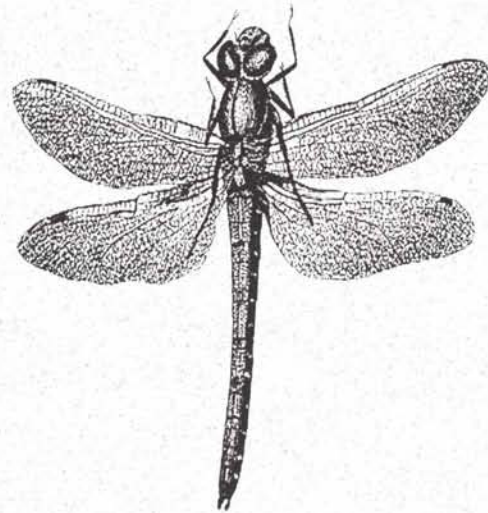
The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has joined forces with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Illinois' sponsor of Project WET, to promote the use of Project WET throughout Illinois. Since 1997, with LEAP funding, Illinois EPA annually purchases approximately 500 Project WET activity guides that are distributed by IDNR to teachers and non-formal educators attending Project WET workshops. This is a savings of \$10 for each educator. By providing these guides free of charge, more educators are able to attend the workshops, and more students learn about the local and global importance of our water resources.

Illinois Lake Management Association

Each year one or two schools exhibiting exceptional projects are invited to be presenters at the annual Illinois Lake Management Association (ILMA) conference. The classes have varied from 4th grade to high school, with presentations ranging from a five act play written by the students and starring "Lake Man," to a lake related version of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire," and finally to some very serious in-depth lake research projects. After the presentations are complete, the students often attend other conference presentations. The classes are also invited to visit the conference exhibit hall where they learn about new lake products, collect "freebies" from each booth and eat all the cookies and donuts they can hold, just like their adult counterparts! During lunch the students are encouraged to split up and sit and talk with lake professionals. This is where lake education really takes place....for young and old! Transportation and lunch costs for the schools are paid for by LEAP.

For more information about Project WET contact the Project WET Statewide Coordinator:
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Springfield, Illinois
217/785-1256

For more information about the Lake Education Assistance Program visit our web page at www.epa.state.il.us or contact the LEAP Coordinator: Steve Kolsto
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
1021 North Grand Avenue East
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276
217/782-3362



Dragonfly



Lake Notes . . . is a series of publications produced by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency about issues confronting Illinois' lake resources. The objectives of these publications is to provide lake and watershed residents with a greater understanding of environmental cause-and-effect relationships, and actions we all can take to protect our lakes.

This Lake Notes publication was prepared by Steve Kolsto of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Springfield, Illinois.

For more information about other publications in this series and to request copies, please contact: Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, DWPC-Lake and Watershed Unit, P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, Illinois, 62794-9276; 217/782-3362.

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