

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GUIDE TO OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS FUNDED

SLIPPERY ROCK – The Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education, a statewide resource center administered by Slippery Rock University, was recently awarded a grant for \$15,000 by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The funds will be used to develop an online resource guide for outdoor learning sites, assisting teachers, schools and communities who would like to create an outdoor “classroom” for K-12 students.

When completed, the Outdoor Learning Site Resource Guide will feature links to the information, products and services needed to develop a wide range of outdoor classrooms in a school yard or community park. Other resources will include podcasts documenting exemplary outdoor learning sites that already exist in Pennsylvania and an online discussion board where interested teachers can share experiences from sites all over the state. The completed Guide will be housed on the PCEE website at www.pcee.org.

The project, proposed by PCEE Director Kathleen Paul, will attempt to help schools and communities that would like to have their children learn about nature while outdoors—but don’t know where to start. “We’ve seen a drastic decline in the amount of time that children spend exploring nature on a firsthand basis,” said Paul. “This online Guide will help educators and

communities turn their school yards and playgrounds into educational assets. The best place to learn about nature is IN nature!” The Guide is expected to go online by September 2010.

The grant is part of more than \$478,000 in environmental education investments to schools and environmental groups across the state announced yesterday by Governor Edward G. Rendell. Administered through the Department of Environmental Protection’s environmental education grant program, the money is used to increase environmental literacy among students and adults alike.

The Environmental Education Act of 1993 requires 5 percent of all fines and penalties collected annually by DEP to be set aside to stimulate environmental education in Pennsylvania. Including the grants announced today, DEP has awarded more than \$6 million in support of environmental education since 1995.

The Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education (PCEE) was created by Executive Order of the Governor in 1997 and established by statute in 2008 to “provide an avenue for increased participation by educators, local officials, citizen and non-profit groups, business and industry as partners in the implementation of quality environmental education on a state-wide basis.” Administered by the PA State System of Higher Education, PCEE is housed at Slippery Rock University.

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