



## Chapter 6- Commuter Crew: Environmental Education and Visitors at the Work Site

Providing a strong environmental education (EE) program is one of SCA's goals in running a Commuter Crew. Urban settings offer many opportunities to visit museums, interpretive centers and other facilities abound. Regardless of where your program is located, make environmental education an integral and daily part of your program. Encourage the students to look around them, to notice things, to question and to pursue their own interests.

In addition to the natural learning that inevitably occurs; Regional Coordinators have designated time, typically one day a week, to Environmental Education. Prepare in advance for this component of your program by setting goals for yourself outlining those subjects or issues you want to cover in preparation for this education opportunity.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DAYS (E2 DAYS)**

Environmental education days can comprise a vast array of subjects and topics. These topics can range from learning to identify plants and animals, discussing natural resource and other environmental issues, examining issues of environmental justice, to perfecting outdoor living skills. Regional Coordinators have pre organized many of these days prior to Crew Leaders arriving on site however there is room for suggestions. Work with your Regional Coordinators if you have a special skill set or idea for an E2 Day.

The methods you or others use to teach these subjects will range from informal discussions prompted by the "teachable moment," or EE games that illustrate relations in the natural world, to presentations by guest speakers. When possible, Crew Leaders to present a spectrum of ideas and opinions (not just their own!), and allow the students to reach their own conclusions from the wealth of facts presented.

You will quickly figure out that simply completing an SCA Commuter Crew is a major lesson in environmental education. Dealing with limited resources such as food, water, and energy; dealing directly with the waste that we create; simply seeing, perhaps for the first time, how much impact humans have directly on the land makes a point. If these are the only lessons that participants bring home with them, you have succeeded as an educator; but being out there on your program, you will find a rich bounty of opportunity to teach more. Always encourage students to think of ways they will apply their new knowledge and skills in their own lives and communities once the Crew experience is over.

### **Guest Speakers**

A significant option open to you for presenting educational information to your Crew is to invite outside speakers. Regional Coordinators have worked to schedule a wide variety of experiences for you and your Crew which may include guest speakers like: historians, biologists, resource management specialists or ecologists. Also ask your Regional Coordinator about any local "old timers" and conservation organizations that might lead to hooking up with guest speakers, other SCA folks, like Interns, Corps programs or Regional staff who may be able to visit your Crew. Plan the visit dates now while their schedules are relatively open.

Good speakers can be among the high points of a program. If the guests don't seem to have had much experience addressing groups of teenagers, suggest that a short, informal presentation with opportunity for questions and discussion would be most productive. It is completely appropriate to "steer" the presentation if needed to keep your Crew interested. You will be a good gauge of your Crew's interest level, if necessary change the conversation or format to keep your students involved. Your steering could mean the difference between a really enjoyable presentation, and the students dreading the next guest speaker.

The following is a short list of topics that your Regional Coordinator considers when scheduling guest speakers to visit your Crew. They may include:

- Different methods and philosophies for managing resources, particularly the difference between federal (public), private and municipal lands.
- Current environmental issues (air or water pollution, population growth, etc.), particularly emphasizing conservation practices the members can adopt at programs end.
- The type of conservation jobs that are available, both on a career basis and as summer jobs and how to apply for them.
- Particular attractions of the area and local history. Locals, old-timers, storytellers, and residents involved in logging, fishing, mining etc. are great visitors and give a broader perspective to the area the students are visiting.
- Natural history topics such as flower identifications, regional geology or wildlife management.

In addition, many Environmental Education Days involve visiting a location like an organic farm, green building, museum or other education location to learn about specialized topics. Finally, E2 Days are perfect opportunities for youth to learn outdoor skills like canoeing, hiking and rock climbing.

**Teachable Moments**

Whether you have guest speakers planned or not, you should take advantage of those inevitable "teachable moments" to reinforce ideas you want to communicate to your participants. Whether it is an unexpected detour or the life you discover under the log you thought was going to be a sill for your turnpike, it can be more powerful to let your environment lead the lesson. Be flexible and most of all, be ready.

**Discussion Topics**

Topics for both formal and informal educational discussions are almost infinite. The following list is not meant to be either complete, or to be viewed as a requirement for you to plow through. Rather, it is a compilation of various subjects discussed on SCA crews over the years. Use this as a resource, or provide it to your crew for their consideration. If you are short on ideas, it is a great place to start.

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| Animal Rights<br><br>Backcountry Use Permits | Spotted Owl, Bears, Wolves,<br>Pacific Yew, Old Growth, Salmon,<br>etc. |
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| Bear Management                          | Environmental Responsibility vs. Environmental Activism |
| Bio-regional Living                      | Environmental Racism                                    |
| Cities                                   | Environmental Wars                                      |
| -Environmental Alienation                | Erosion   |
| -Poor Conditions                         | Fire Fighting   |
| Conservation vs. Preservation            | Food Production   |
| Earth First                              | -Corporations   |
| Ecology                                  | -Packaging  |
| Endangered Species                       | -Cultural Rights vs. U.S. Law                           |
| Forestry                                 | -Religions  |
| -Effects of Deforestation                | -Alternative View of Resource Ownership                 |
| -Clear cutting versus Sustainable Yield. | Nature vs. Human Nature                                 |
| -Timber Management                       | Natural Systems   |
| Fire Ecology versus Fire Suppression     | -Cultural Systems                                       |
| Firefighting                             | Nuclear Power/Waste Disposal                            |
| Fossil Fuels                             | Oil Spills  |
| the Future                               | Old Growth Forests                                      |
| Gardening (Organic)                      | Outdoor Jobs  |
| Global Warming                           | Ozone Layer Depletion                                   |
| Grazing Rights                           | Park Development  |
| Greed vs. Altruism                       | Personal Accountability                                 |
| Homelessness                             | Pesticides  |
| Hunting                                  | Poachers  |
| Impact                                   | Pollution   |
| -Base Camp Impact                        | -Air, Water, U.S., Abroad, Outer Space                  |
| -Trail Work Impact                       | Private Use of Public Land                              |
| -Revegetation/Restoration                | Rain Forests  |
| Individual Freedom & Community Living    | Recycling   |
| -Responsibility to Society/Planet        |   |
| Introduced Species                       |   |
| -Native and Non-Native                   |   |

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| Land Management                               | Restoration Ecology                             |
| Local Environmental Issues                    | Sex   |
| Mass Transit                                  | Social Pressures                                |
| Materialism                                   | -Individual Behavior                            |
| Mining  | -Responsibility                                 |
| Multi-use Issues                              | SCA Funding, Sponsors, etc.                     |
| Native American                               | Television (Influence)                          |
| -Resource Use Rights (Fishing, Whaling, etc.) | Traditional Use of Resources                    |
| Volunteerism vs. Compulsory Service           | Vegetarianism                                   |
| War   | Wilderness                                      |
| Water Use/Water Rights                        | -Federal vs. Personal Definitions               |
| Wetlands                                      | Wildlife Protection                             |
| Welfare Farming                               | -Droughts                                       |
|   | -California                                     |
|   | -Farmers  |
|   | -Moving Water From One State/Country to Another |

There are additional educational resources found at the end of this Chapter.

## **VISITORS AND SPECIAL MATCHES**

In addition to Environmental Education Days that involve guest speakers, there are also pre-planned visits by financial supporters of Commuter Crews. Commuter Crews are largely supported through philanthropy or foundation support.

### **Site Visits by Program Funders**

Sometime during the program you will be visited by a SCA staff person who will be accompanied by a program funder(s). We will always attempt to give you advance notice of this occurrence. It is important to give the Crew Members a "pep" talk on the fact that visitors are coming to see what the Crew is working on. For the most part, these visits are very casual and informal and a chance for the Crew Members to show off their work to people who are very interested to learn about what they've been doing, how they are enjoying the program, etc.

### **Community or Funder Sponsored Events:**

Some programs include some sort of large scale service event that may include funders, community members and/or family.

### **Special Matches**

Towards the end of the program, you will help to facilitate Crew Members in writing thank you letters to various groups. Your Regional Coordinators will help to facilitate this process specific to your Crew however the following is a general list of letters that should be written by your Crew Members:

- Site Specific Thank You: Thank you to the Agency, Park or Partner where the work was completed.
- Large Corporate or Foundation Support Letter:
- Special Matches by Individual Donors:
- General Letters to SCA Supporters:

Thank you letters are a very important element of the program. We ask that Crew Leaders take time to explain this process to Crew Members and provide ample time for the Members to construct a meaningful letter. The follow list are helpful tips to facilitating successful letters from your Crew Members.

- Crew Members should try and explain what they enjoyed or learned as part of their Crew experience
- Steer the Crew Members away from talking about being paid for their experience. While this is a motivation for their participation it would be helpful for them to focus on other aspects of the program.
- Have the Members write their letters prior to their Recreation Trip – this will help to capture their experience working together instead of just camping, etc.
- When possible have youth write the thank you letters by hand or include a personal handwritten note (if using a computer). This helps to personalize the note. This may involve several rewrites to ensure legible handwriting and correct spelling.
- Please review all letters before submitting them to your Regional Coordinators or other SCA staff.

## RESOURCE LIST

The following resource list is, in part the result of two surveys sent to the SCA Crew Leaders over a couple of years. It is not complete by any means, but it may be helpful. It is in need of both updating and enhancement, and your feedback on this score would be entirely welcome. Many thanks to all whom contributed.

### Recommended Books

(note: the recommendations added this year (2007) are listed first, then an alphabetized list of recommendations follows)

Pollan, M. The Omnivore's Dilemma "The Omnivore's Dilemma," Pollan says, is the problem faced by any modern eater who contemplates the seemingly inexhaustible range of foods available. Pollan says, that Americans are too far divorced from where their foods actually come from. So he devised a plan to bring himself--and his readers--closer to the source. His quest includes three primary food chains: the industrial, as typified by corn; the organic, which he alternately labels the pastoral or the biological; and the most interesting, the hunter-gatherer.

Louv, R. The Last Child in the Woods. This book talks about "Nature deficit disorder." So what, it's not a real medical condition. Today's children have little or no direct contact with nature. This separation from the natural world has some dire side effects, including a diminished use of the senses, attention problems, and increased emotional and physical diseases.

Diamond, J. Guns, Germs and Steel. Diamond argues that the gaps in power and technology between human societies do not reflect cultural or racial differences, but rather originate in environmental differences powerfully amplified by various positive feedback loops. He also, most explicitly in the epilogue, argues that societies with food surpluses and high-to-moderate degrees of interaction with outsiders are more likely to encourage great people to realize their full potential and to adopt new inventions.

Kanter, S. Ordinary Wolves. This is a great novel written about modern Eskimo life by a white guy who lived it. Excellent piece of literature.

### Alphabetized section:

Abbey, E. The Monkey Wrench Gang. New York: Avon Books, 1976. This is a great environmental novel for high school ages and up. A story of direct, radical action in defense of wilderness. Abbey's style is both entertaining and inspiring. Also recommended is Abbey's Desert Solitaire: a Season in the Wilderness his memoirs from a summer in Arches National Park (see later bibliography).

Berry, W. What are People For? Essays. San Francisco, CA. North Point Press, 1990.

Berry's poetry beautifully articulates a healthy vision of the relationship between people and nature. His prose is well written and accessible to most audiences. He supplies fascinating possibilities about how we might live sustainably in our environment.

Birkby, R. Fieldbook: Boy Scouts of America. 3rd edition. BSA, 1984. This practical and relevant introductory level field guide covers a variety of topics: minimum impact camping, backcountry travel, orienteering, knots, etc. A great teacher.

Carter, F. The Education of Little Tree. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986, c1979. A story about a Cherokee boy growing up with nature in the depression era. The book forces the reader to consider the "rightness" of different cultures in an emotionally disturbing and yet satisfying account. This book's origins and its author have been quite controversial as of late, but they take nothing away from the content.

Cole, D. and Hampton, B. Soft Paths: How to Enjoy the Wilderness Without Harming It. Harrisburg, PA. Stackpole Books, 1988. Field book of low impact techniques for traveling and living in the wilderness. It will broaden perspectives on the impact of working and camping in the backcountry.

Cornell, J. Sharing Nature With Children and Sharing the Joy of Nature. Nevada City, CA: Crystal Clarity Publishers, 1979 & 1989 respectively. Cornell presents a wide variety of interesting ways to learn about nature, particularly with young people. Many games/activities are portrayed for simple and practical field applications. Great for group dynamics and environmental awareness ideas.

Daniel, J. et al. 1992 Earth Journal. 1991. Buzzworm Books. Boulder, CO. Very interesting "bite-size" material with simple and entertaining presentation. Inside, there is environmental trivia, listings of organizations which need volunteer assistance, news on global environmental happenings and much more.

Giorno, J. The Man Who Planted Trees. Chelsea, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1985. This tale portrays the life of a man who single-handedly reforests the hills around his community. A short, inspirational piece which exemplifies personal action and accountability. Great for reading aloud.

Graham, John Outdoor Leadership: Technique, Common Sense and Self-Confidence. 1997, Seattle, The Mountaineers. An excellent and accessible text on the subject of leadership, both in the outdoor arena, and in everyday life.

High Country News. 1970. Biweekly. High Country News Foundation. Paonia, CO. (PO Box 1090, Zip Code: 81428). This newspaper covers environmental issues in an informative and accessible manner. Articles pertain mostly to land management and natural resource topics in the West, but the ethic and awareness it promotes is valuable for any audience. Free sample issues are available.

LaBastille, A. Woodswoman. San Francisco, CA. Sierra Club Books, 1978. An autobiography about a woman who built a cabin and lived on a secluded lake in the Adirondack Mountains. It focuses on the first ten years LaBastille spent in the woods and presents a respect for nature which grows from the hardships of living without modern conveniences. Also suggested is LaBastille's Beyond Black Bear Lake which depicts her later experiences in the wild.

Leopold, A. [A Sand County Almanac: Illustrated](#). Tamarack Press; New York; distributed by Oxford University Press, 1977. These somewhat philosophical pieces provide a sense of our history, transgression and repentance with respect to the natural environment. Much of the book's appeal comes from its simplicity and accurate perceptions on the nature of humankind. The short chapters/essays make it good for reading aloud.

Levine, M. [The Environmental Address Book: How to Reach the Environment's Greatest Champions and Worst Offenders](#). New York: Perigree Books, 1991. This is a super source book that facilitates getting active. It is organized under a variety of topics such as "Bad Guys," "Good Guys," "Major Corporations," "Education," "Water," etc. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of specific organizations and those in charge are provided.

Lopez, B. [Giving Birth to Thunder, Sleeping With His Daughter: Coyote Builds North America](#). New York: Avon Books, 1990. Legends of North American Indians in the setting of a novel. Coyote is a legendary character from whom we all have much to learn about ourselves and the land we live on.

[Nature Field Guides](#). For each geographic region, there are nature field guides which identify and explain the ecology (flora, fauna, geology, human/natural history) for that area. Excellent for instilling an understanding and appreciation of one's natural surroundings.

Rifkin, J. [The Green Lifestyle Handbook: 1001 Ways You Can Heal the Earth](#). New York: Holt Publishing, 1990. A straight forward and functional source book. It supplies us with all sorts of ways in which we can positively impact our world through conservation and community. The book is structured in entertaining "quick bits" which makes it accessible to everyone.

SCA, Inc. [Lightly on the Land: The SCA Trail-Building and Maintenance Manual](#). Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1996. The pre-eminent book available on trail building and maintenance, and working with conservation work crews in the field.

Seuss, Dr. [The Lorax](#). New York: Random House, 1971. An allegory on the misuse of resources (especially forest) intended for younger children yet serving adults well. It is easily, and frequently, used as a play (which encourages "active" learning).

[Shopping for a Better World: 1991](#). Council on Economics Priority Staff. Ballantine, 1991. A checklist for environmentally and socially conscientious consumption. It explains the ramifications of our own buying habits and preferences. Gives ideas for practicing environmentalism in our daily lives.

[Student Environmental Action Guide: 25 Simple Things We Can Do](#). Student Environmental Action Coalition. Berkeley, CA. Earth Works Press, 1991. This informational source book includes facts, success stories, and prescriptions for action and social change. Topics include recycling, car pooling, internships, and reducing food waste. Geared towards college audience, it should prove to be inspiring for the high school audience.

Van Matre, S. [The Earth Speaks](#). The Institute for Earth Education. A compilation of poems, stories, essays, and quotations from Thoreau, Muir, Carson, etc. They are

impressive observations and feelings about nature. The selections can be used regularly for reading aloud.

Weiner, M. Earth Medicine - Earth Foods; Plant Remedies, Drugs, and Natural Foods of the North American Indians. New York: Macmillan, 1972. This is an excellent reference for living a "green" life. In this age of synthetic technologies, the wealth of truly natural history is quickly left behind. For everyone interested in learning of interesting uses for quite common plants.