

A STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN MISSOURI:
A SURVEY OF PROJECT WET FACILITATORS'
UNDERSTANDINGS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The National Environmental Education Act of 1990 served as a federal mandate to encourage states to develop environmental education (EE) plans. Missouri's governor authorized the creation of an EE task force in 1993. The recommendations of the state EE task force included the participation of both the formal and nonformal sectors of education at all levels. Unfortunately, a state level EE coordinating council was never established and participation by the formal education sector, state and higher education systems, was never realized.

The lack of participation by the formal education system left the majority of the responsibility of creating an environmentally literate state to the nonformal sector. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is one of the state's nonformal, natural resource agencies involved with EE. The agency sponsors a national EE curriculum, Project WET (water education for teachers).

The DNR state coordinator for Project WET is responsible for providing workshops for individuals interested in obtaining the WET curriculum and trains Project WET facilitators (PWF) to assist in this effort. More than 300 PWF have been trained in Missouri and have provided workshops for over 7,000 Missouri educators. However, there has not been a formal assessment of PWF understandings about EE. PWF come from both formal and nonformal sectors of EE. Research has shown these two groups to be different (Knapp, 2001, Magill,

2002, & Simmons, 2002) because of their preparation and practice as educators.

Contrary to previous research on formal and nonformal educators, PWFs are a homogeneous group as evident by their mean scores on constructs of this study's survey.