

# KEEN INSIDER

Newsletter of the Kittitas Environmental Education Network

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**We want to hear from you!**

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## KEEN to Develop "Sustainable Living" Curriculum

By Mark Benedict

This year's Board of Directors strategic planning meetings resulted in a new organizational goal for KEEN. That goal is to **"provide learning opportunities about the principles and practices of sustainable living."** The Board realizes that citizens are constantly receiving news about the plight of our planet and their local Kittitas County environment. People want to know what they can do to help solve our environmental problems.

The concept of "sustainable living" is based upon the scientific principles of sustainability, and sustainability is all about solving environmental & social problems.

What is sustainability? It is the most advanced framework for defining human impacts on our planet and identifying methods and practices to eliminate or reduce them over time to the point where human civilization will be able to continue without harming the Earth's living ecosystems.

Why is it important?

Human beings are completely dependent upon the natural physical and biological systems that provide us with clean water, food, clean air, energy, and other "ecosystem services". According to the Washington Biodiversity Council: "As our [Washington] population has soared and our economy prospered, our state's biodiversity heritage has become increasingly threatened – by growth, land conversion, invasive species, pollution, and most recently, climate change. Since statehood just under 120 years ago, we have lost 70% of our wetlands, 50% of our riparian habitat, 90% of old-growth forests, and 70% of shrub-steppe and arid grasslands. Consequently, the health of our lands and water systems are declining. Today, for example, the vitality of Puget Sound is threatened to the extent that we are contemplating spending billions of dollars to restore its health and productivity. "



Artwork by Brittany Faulkner 2005

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## Gladmar Research & Education Area

Gladmar Research and Education Area in Thorp (GREAT) is a project of Central Washington University, Cascade Land Conservancy, and Kittitas County to develop county land at Thorp into a natural science research and teaching laboratory. The area will be open for CWU students and staff and for all local public and private school students to use for long-term nature studies as well as field trips and interpretive education. The site is about a mile southeast of Thorp's Exit 101 along Interstate 90 and next to the John Wayne Pioneer Trail.

The former riverside county park was washed out by flooding in 1996. The flood action created a new river channel through the park and took out picnic tables, bathrooms and a parking lot. The new channel created a large island and pond not accessible from the new shoreline. Jill Arango, Kittitas County Conservation Director for the Cascade Land Conservancy, said it was apparent the park land could be used as a teaching site showing how biological processes change with changing conditions. "We'll be looking for grants to help pay for the improvements and significant support from local groups and the community," Arango said. "This area will be a real gem for the community, for local school students and CWU."

CWU, in exchange for nearly no lease payments, will undertake improvements including cleanup and installing footbridges, interpretive walking trails, a parking lot, signs, restrooms and other recreational amenities. The park plan involves work with Washington State Parks to develop expanded parking and restroom facilities in coordination with the John Wayne trail, which is part of State Park's Iron Horse Park trail system. The agreement calls for a board of advisors to oversee the carrying out of the agreement as well as development of the park, which will be named the Gladmar Research & Education Area, or GREAT.

Those interested in joining the advisory board are welcome to attend the next meeting on Friday, November 9<sup>th</sup> from 7:30 am to 9:00 am in Barge Hall on CWU's campus. Contact CLC at 962-1654 for more information.

## Nature of Night!

KEEN, in collaboration with the CWU Don and Verna Duncan Civic Engagement Center and the CWU Astronomy Club, is offering the community an opportunity to explore the wonders of the night through their annual *Nature of Night* event. This is a free educational event that is open to all area residents and visitors.

The lobby of Black Hall will host a large number of educational experiments and displays from a wide variety of local agencies and volunteer groups. This year's theme will focus on exploring night using our five senses.

### Event Details

**Date:** Saturday, Nov. 17th, 2007

**Time:** 10am-3pm

**Location:** Black Hall, CWU Ellensburg Campus.

See CWU's campus map get directions to Black Hall. Go to <http://www.cwu.edu/newmap.html>

Participants will have the opportunity to see a live owl, hear and identify the sounds of the night, learn how salmon smell, touch owl pellets, and even eat a self decorated cookie.

The STARLAB Bubble Planetarium is always the most popular feature of the day; thus, there will be eight shows offered again this year. CWU professor, Bruce Palmquist, will give participants a personalized guided tour through the nighttime sky. Elementary-aged children and their parents are encouraged to register for one of five early planetarium shows: 10am, 10:30am, 11am, 11:30am, and 12pm. Older children and adults are invited to attend one of the longer afternoon shows: 1pm, 2pm, or 3pm.

For more information on Nature of Night, and to pre-register for one of the Bubble Planetarium shows, email [keen@kittitasee.net](mailto:keen@kittitasee.net) or call the CWU Don and Verna Civic Engagement Center at 509-963-1643.

## “Sustainable Living” Curriculum continued from page 1...

What are sustainable practices? Sustainability is a holistic approach. Sustainable practices go beyond simple recycling, carpooling, or taking a reusable shopping bag to the store. They describe new ways of using resources and energy; how we conduct our activities in the ecosystems we live in or receive resources from; and how we relate to other people and cultures in terms of our personal behavior and our societal behavior. Sustainability addresses: material use (product selection & purchasing practices), landscaping practices (plant selection & irrigation), energy use (home heating & lighting), land use planning (protection for agricultural & habitat areas), travel habits (vehicle use, transit choices), size of living space, diet & food choices, financial management (investment choices), recycling & waste management choices, recreational choices, and personal reproductive choices (See Reuters article below).

KEEN plans to develop curriculum tools and present interactive learning opportunities that will help you **live more sustainably**. We would like to present public workshops on the subject but need your financial support to make this happen. If you are not already a KEEN supporter, please complete the enclosed membership form and mail it with your contribution today.

### References:

Origins and concept of sustainability developed by The Natural Step organization: [http://www.naturalstep.org/com/What\\_is\\_sustainability/](http://www.naturalstep.org/com/What_is_sustainability/)

Washington Biodiversity Council, Draft Biodiversity Conservation Strategy: <http://www.biodiversity.wa.gov/council/docs.html#draftstrategy>

China's One-Child Policy: <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSKUA07724020070830?pageNumber=1>



Artwork by Jennifer Meadows

## Strategic Planning Informs KEEN Goals

A facilitated meeting of KEEN community supporters last June 16th helped let the Board of Directors know what community members think KEEN's purpose should be and where our emphasis should be focused. During subsequent planning meetings, the Board revised KEEN's mission statement and goals (Go to <http://www.kittitasee.net/aboutkeen.html> to view new mission statement and goals). To achieve our goals during the next year the organization will:

- ◆ Continue Outdoor Learning opportunities (e.g. GISS, Nature of Night, hiking trips)
- ◆ Increase our web presence in order to better network with other agencies about upcoming events
- ◆ Update our database with new contact information in order to solidify our membership, volunteers, and others interested in the organization's goals
- ◆ Increase our funding base by developing our fundraising plan, applying for grants, increasing our membership, and seeking major gifts
- ◆ Continue to look at projects to improve Helen McCabe State Park

The Board of directors would like to send a heartfelt thank you to all the community members who attended the June visioning meeting and to our facilitator, Lorinda Anderson.

### *Volunteer With KEEN*

Besides supporting KEEN financially, there are many other ways to contribute. We are looking for individuals that are interested in maintaining regular positions and tasks throughout the organization. Last year KEEN was fortunate enough to have the assistance of a part-time outreach coordinator, but at this time KEEN does not have anyone on staff to help with day-to-day operations. This is a great opportunity to get involved at a board level position. KEEN's board is a working group of members who are committed to be the primary force that keeps the organization strong and vibrant. If you are interested in being involved, but think that filling a board position might be too much of a commitment at this time, there are a wide range of other volunteer opportunities available.

Volunteers are needed to do everything from event organizing to fundraising or even checking the mail and phone messages. If you would like to explore the many ways to contribute your time to KEEN, please contact us soon...we still need volunteers for our "Nature of Night" event on Saturday, November 17th (see page 2). Join us in making a difference by contacting us soon.

### Landscaping with Native Shrub-Steppe Plants

By Diedre Patina

Some may feel that it is a little late or a little early, depending on how you think of it, to talk about landscaping, but I on the other hand feel that this is a great time to be thinking of it. Just recently I have bought my own home and the outside needs a lot of work to build some curb appeal. I have been thinking about the types of plants that I want to use. I have a few conditions that I have put on the choice of plants I will be using. The first condition is that I want to water as little as possible, if at all. The second condition is that I want to provide some habitat for the native wildlife. Because of these two conditions I have pretty much eliminated any plants that are found at most nurseries and convenient stores. So I have a bit of a dilemma. I want flowering plants in my yard, but I can't find any at the stores that will meet my conditions. What I finally realized was that using native plants was going to be the best solution, but except where could I get them? I decided that I would collect seeds, germinate them, and then plant them in my yard.

Spring and summer are the best time to collect seeds for most of the shrub-steppe native plants, but there are some that can be collected in the fall. One that I decided upon is rabbit brush. Rabbit brush is one of the dominant bushes in the shrub-steppe which can be easily identified by the small yellow flowers that it displays in late summer and fall. This is a great plant to add some fall color to your yard. It provides cover for quail, and it is a great plant to attract native pollinators. October and November is prime time for collecting rabbit brush seeds. The seeds have a cottony look to them because of the pappus, hair like structures used for wind dispersal. Once you have collected the seeds and you are ready to germinate them there are a few tricks that you may want to consider.

First, most seeds need to have their seed coats scratched up a bit to allow water to penetrate into the seed. Second, most seeds need to go through a cold period with temperatures at or below freezing. Third, many seeds have a minimum amount of water that they need to receive before they will germinate. My suggestion for growing native plants is to scar the seeds using sand paper or put them in a jar with some sharp rocks and shake them around a bit. Put them in some starter trays with soil and put them outside exposing them to the natural elements. In the spring you should see some baby rabbit brush emerging that can be transplanted to your yard.

Do try some different methods to find out what works best, not much is known about germinating plants from the shrub-steppe area so it may be a challenge. Have fun collecting seeds and most importantly enjoy the beauty of the native shrub-steppe plants right in your own back yard.

*[Diedre Patina is completing her Masters Degree at CWU in Native Plant Biology]*

## A Model for Environmental Education: The Cle Elum-Roslyn School District

By Eric Wickwire

When it comes to environmental education in the Kittitas Valley the Cle Elum-Roslyn School District is leading the way. The district has taken many steps the last several years to make learning more relevant to students' lives through Project CAT, the Discover Institute, and now a district-wide unifying theme—"Stewardship of Place".

Project CAT was established in 2000-01 in conjunction with the Washington State Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (WSDFW) to monitor the impacts of local development on cougar habitat and behavior. Students, primarily eighth graders under the supervision of science teacher Trish Griswald, have been working with professionals in the field of wildlife biology to conduct real scientific research in the Upper County. Each year students help develop a research question pertaining to the cats and their habitat and then conduct community outreach, known as Cougarwise. Now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year, Project CAT has touched students of almost every grade level, some participating in cougar captures led by WSDFW's Ben Maletzke, where animals are collared so their patterns can be monitored. Other students have participated in public presentations at the Washington Science Teachers Association, WSU and as far away as Jackson, Wyoming and Florida. This November students will present at the Environmental Education Association of Washington Conference. I've both witnessed presentations and had one-on-one discussions with students directly involved in Project CAT and can attest to the depth of learning and inspiration the program has on students.

The Discover Institute, an integrated education model with subjects unified through hands-on learning focused on our local place, is in its third year of existence. Ninth grade science, social studies and technology classes are fused through common thinking skills, the "habits of mind", and major themes tied to land use and human impacts on the environment. Project based learning is emphasized. In the past, students of the Institute have documented archaeology at Lake Cle Elum and the No. 4 Mine Area in Roslyn, in addition to using the forested perimeter of our campus as an outdoor classroom to study forest ecology.

This year the Institute has an additional element. Under a special grant through Central Washington University called the Yakima WATERS Project, students will conduct real scientific research throughout our watershed using GIS (Geographic Information Systems) to document human land use over time and associated environmental impacts. Kris Proszek, a graduate student in Central's Resource Management program and KEEN Board Member, has a 20 hour per week commitment to Cle Elum-Roslyn School District, bringing this technology and its application to our students. Tying our curriculum to other schools throughout the watershed and to university professors and graduate students has been tremendously empowering for our kids. So far this year we've participated in two significant field outings, including a documentation of Roslyn, Washington as a cultural landscape and an investigation of human land use and stream ecology of the upper Yakima River Watershed.

The Discovery Institute and Project CAT are models that have inspired a larger, district-wide unifying theme "Stewardship of Place". We hope to provide connectivity between all subjects and grade levels by drawing them together around something most Upper County residents love, the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the area. We are working toward an annual celebration of learning where student inquiry projects at all levels will be drawn together at year's end to show off our stuff. Through an interdisciplinary path with student inquiry leading, and by tying learning to our local place and the issues critical to us today, the Cle Elum-Roslyn School District is truly a model for Environmental Education in the Kittitas County.

*[Eric Wickwire is a Cle Elum-Roslyn High School Teacher and KEEN Board Member]*

## KEEN Membership/Contact Information Form

KEEN's events & programs are free of charge & supported by membership fees and donations.  
KEEN is a 501c(3) non-profit organization; donations are tax deductible

### Annual Membership Choices (Membership is from May-May)

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Student \$10-20      \_\_\_ Group \$100+

\_\_\_ Individual \$15-25      \_\_\_ Supporting \$200+

\_\_\_ Family \$20-50      \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Total Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Circle One: Cash    Check (# \_\_\_\_\_)

I would be happy to volunteer in the following ways:

\_\_\_ Board Member

\_\_\_ Educational Events

\_\_\_ Office Help

\_\_\_ Other (grants, newsletter, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Please Note**

Please use this form to become a member of KEEN and/or update your contact information so that we can keep you updated about our upcoming events.

### Please Update My Contact Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

You can contact KEEN at:

Email: [keen@kittitasee.net](mailto:keen@kittitasee.net)

Phone: 509-962-1520

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*Thank you for Supporting KEEN!!!*