



Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association

# 2025 YEAR-IN-REVIEW



Praying mantis (credit: Evelyn Kubik)

# Board of Directors Statement

2025 was a year of change. Across the country, the ripple effect of this change was felt by hundreds of organizations and agencies in the EE world, directly affecting the services and roles that they have long provided. Connecticut was no different, and COEEA would like to acknowledge this impact on our many partners, friends, and community members. It has not been easy, but our community is adjusting to this new regulatory landscape with grit and determination, knowing that the work we do is important and can't wait. We salute and support you all as you stand your ground and fight for what's important in this world. We are stronger and more resilient when we stand together - and COEEA stands with you.

We experienced a few changes this year within our organization, as well. COEEA board member, Justin Kaput, assumed the role of president. As a Board, we evaluated our existing structures and priorities with a pragmatic eye on capacity. Programmatically, we decided that our conference, previously hosted in December, would be better suited to March of 2026, a less busy time for our membership and a great way to inspire Earth Day/Month activities.

While challenging, 2025 has had some silver linings. We want to highlight important steps forward such as Connecticut's mandate to teach climate change in our public schools. We are one of three states who have such a mandate in the country. Secondly, Connecticut is one of only a few states in the nation with social studies standards that include climate change and environmental literacy. These were hard won - and critical - victories. Connecticut is also launching its own Environmental Education Certification program in conjunction with the North American Association for Environmental Education, the goal of which is to train educators throughout the state to effectively carry out high quality EE programming.

Along with this meaningful progress, we acknowledge that gaps still exist. Connecticut's climate education mandate is unfunded, meaning that it does not allow for school systems, many of which are chronically underfunded, the time or resources to create high quality instruction around the most pressing topic of our time. Another ongoing problem is the lack of access to outdoor spaces within the K-12 education sphere. Conservation advocacy arises from values around stewardship and care cultivated in our youngest learners. Without direct access to nature now, how can we expect future voters to prioritize its protection later?



Locust Borer in the Sun (credit: Evelyn Kubik)

Public schools are uniquely poised to couple traditional learning to both the built and natural environment. In doing so, we can inspire a generation of children who know where they live, are valued within their community, have deep civic ties, and feel connected with and are compelled to protect the world we love and rely on. Who better to help advise and provide these connection points than the many nature centers, land trusts, aquariums, organizations, and experts that COEEA serves? We must demand more of our education system. Let's do it together.

Please know that we support you, our members, wholeheartedly. We are using our time, resources, and experience, to promote more inclusive, environmentally aware communities. As always, we invite you to join us on this journey. Come to our Conference, assist an action team, send a message to our listserv, or step up and join our board. We see you out there, and we are so happy that you're doing the work. Keep at it, and keep in touch.

**The COEEA Board of Directors**





COEEA is a network of classroom educators, naturalists, environmental educators, youth leaders, environmentalists, administrators, professors, and students across Connecticut.

Our mission is to engage, support and strengthen a collaborative network of environmentally-focused individuals and organizations to promote outdoor education and environmental literacy across Connecticut.

COEEA's vision is to sustain a growing network that:

- Increases awareness and value of environmental literacy and education for all ages, at the community and state levels
- Encourages collaboration in sharing best practices and resources to increase a more environmentally literate Connecticut
- Promotes equitable and inclusive access to environmental education

We serve our members by supporting professional development, providing networking opportunities, and promoting environmental education in Connecticut.



Tree Planting for Arbor Day  
(credit: Evelyn Kubik)



Hands on soil science!  
(credit: Nicole Freidenfelds)

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## Cash on Hand

- Beginning Balance (1/1/25): \$63,374
- Ending Balance (12/31/25): \$58,748



Cicada! (credit: Nicole Freidenfelds)

## Revenue

Organizational Membership Dues & Residuals from 2024 Conference	\$4,576
Sponsorships & Donations	\$3,333
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$7,909</b>

## Expenses

Mini-Grant Disbursements	\$6,500
Program Costs (e.g., Green LEAF Schools)	\$1,616
Insurance	\$550
Staff (part-time intern)	\$1,000
Residuals from 2024 Conference	\$350
Operations (services, subscriptions, board retreat)	\$2,542
Unspent (returned) Grant Funds from 2024	\$3,500
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$16,058</b>

## The Power of the NAAEE Affiliate Network

NAAEE's Affiliate Network includes more than fifty affiliates that:

- collaborate on policy issues, network-building, and resource-sharing
- facilitate learning opportunities such as webinars, workshops, and conferences

Our goal at COEEA is to foster a similar model for our Connecticut outdoor and environmental ed community! Throughout 2025 we continued working with our affiliate friends from the Northeast states toward a shared vision of regional collective action. Through collaborative relationships and deep community connections, our Northeast coalition is working together to foster and support long-lasting, high-impact environmental education for all!

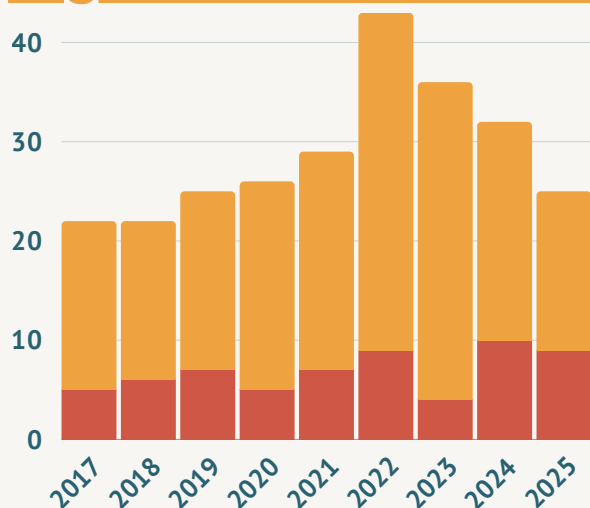
**naaee**  
Affiliate Network



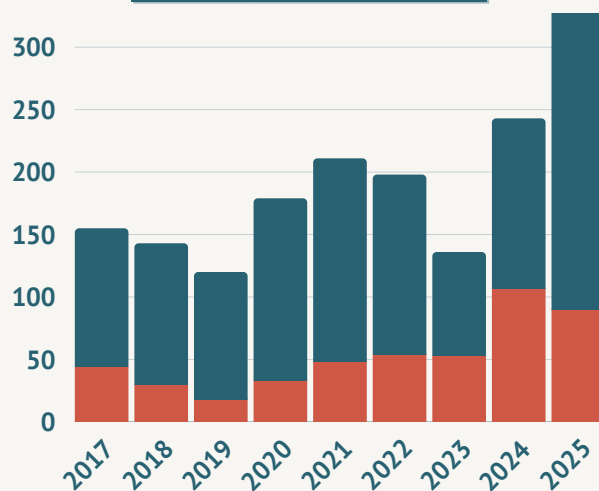
# MEMBERSHIP

The power of our Connecticut EE community comes from our COEEA members, and 2025 saw incredible growth in new members, with 81 new individual members and nine new organizations joining COEEA to advance environmental literacy and outdoor education in CT!

## Organizational Members



## Total Members



## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Exclusive discounts on COEEA's annual Conference and other events
- Access to COEEA Mini-Grants to support innovative environmental education projects
- Stay connected with the COEEA Listserv for the latest events, news, job postings, and more!
- Valuable networking opportunities with colleagues and organizations
- Professional development resources to grow your skills and advance your career in the field
- Free unlimited access to all Green Teacher publications, webinars, and teaching tools
- Discounts on educational materials and professional training from The Outdoor Learning Store

### Our valued Organizational members receive...

- Premium listing in COEEA's online directory, featuring your logo and a direct link to your organization's website
- Complimentary promotional table/display at the Annual COEEA Conference to showcase your programs and services
- Exclusive invitations to serve as a guide or host at regional in-person events, boosting your visibility and leadership

**naaee**  
Affiliate Network



**Green Teacher**  
Non-profit magazine, books and webinars



**Not a member yet? Join TODAY at [coeea.org/membership](https://coeea.org/membership)!**

# MINI-GRANTS

The COEEA Mini-Grants program serves as a direct investment in the innovative, grassroots environmental education work being done by our members across Connecticut. In 2025, we allocated a total of \$6,500 to fund projects that align with our core mission of fostering environmental literacy and promoting equity in our field. This program empowers educators and organizations to launch new initiatives, enhance existing programs, and reach new audiences.

## 2025 RECIPIENTS

### Advancing DEIJ in EE

Community First School — "Cultivating Community Through Environmental Education at Keney Park" (\$2,500)

Community First School will use Keney Park and its Nature Trail as an outdoor learning hub to deepen students' environmental knowledge, stewardship, and connection to local green spaces.



### Advancing DEIJ in EE

Earthplace — "Earthplace Nature Programs and Conservation Internship Program" (\$2,500)

Earthplace will provide stipends and training for college student interns to support seasonal nature programs and conservation initiatives that engage visiting school groups.

### Increasing Environmental Literacy

Rucum Woods Center — "Bosque Buddies- Forest Friends" (\$1,500)

Rucum Woods Center will pilot a bilingual "Bosque Buddies – Forest Friends" nature program introducing Spanish-speaking elementary students to forest ecology and environmental stewardship.



# CT GREEN LEAF SCHOOLS

Leading, Educating, Achieving, and Fostering  
healthy, green schools for all!

The CT Green LEAF Schools program remains a cornerstone of COEEA's work, serving as the primary catalyst for embedding sustainable practices and environmental literacy into K-12 schools. Students, school staff and community members become agents of change, transforming their campuses and curricula to foster a culture of environmental stewardship.

With support from the Greater New Haven Green Fund, we provided three New Haven schools with Spring Into Sustainability project mini-grants:

- Augusta Lewis Troup School
- Barnard Environmental Science & Technology School
- New Haven Academy



Teens before a forestry walk (credit: Shanelle Thevarajah)

## Congratulations to New Milford High School!

In June, we recognized New Milford High School with a banner for reaching Oak Tree status, the highest level of achievement in our CT Green LEAF Schools program.

Much of the school's success was driven by graduating seniors David Palmer and Connor Ring, who launched several sustainability projects with support from the Environmental Impact Club and Assistant Principal Anthony Blake.



This included planting more than 75 trees in town, restoring the school greenhouse, building 12 new garden beds, and implementing a composting system in the school cafeteria. Their efforts not only earned them statewide recognition but also created a lasting foundation for future students to build upon.

# GET INVOLVED

## *Did you know...*

You don't have to be a board member to help advance COEEA's mission.

We're always looking for folks to join our different Action Teams throughout the year!

**Awards  
Conference  
CT Green LEAF Schools  
Membership  
Mini-Grants**

Email [info@coeea.org](mailto:info@coeea.org) to learn more



Onwards We Go (credit: Evelyn Kubik)

# THANK YOU

We're grateful to all our members, volunteers, and grantors. You make it possible for COEEA to fulfill our mission!

**naaee**

North American Association  
for Environmental Education



**TOWN FAIR TIRE FOUNDATION, INC.**

## 2025 Board Members

Justin Kaput (President)

Jim Clifford

Maggie Cozens

Nicole Freidenfelds

Kimberly Hughes

Evelyn Kubik

Shanelle Thevarajah

Tim Thayer

COEEA's Board of Directors continued our ongoing leadership development efforts to strengthen the organization's capacity. We engaged in our annual Board retreat to welcome and onboard new members by building trust and community among our group, update procedures and governance policies, review opportunities and challenges, and make strategic decisions for the year ahead.

If you're curious about or interested in joining our dedicated team of volunteer board members, visit [coeea.org/about](https://coeea.org/about)



# 2025 Organizational Members



**TALCOTT MOUNTAIN**  
SCIENCE CENTER • ACADEMY • RESEARCH INSTITUTE



**Environmental Learning Centers of Connecticut, Inc.**  
BARNES NATURE CENTER • INDIAN ROCK NATURE PRESERVE



Clean Water. Healthy Habitats. Resilient Communities.  
**Connecticut River Conservancy**



**Nature's Classroom**



**MYSTIC AQUARIUM**  
PROTECT OUR OCEANS



**SIERRA CLUB**  
CONNECTICUT



**Audubon** | CONNECTICUT

**NORTHWest PARK**  
Windsor Connecticut

