

Bringing the Amazon Rainforest Home A Collaboration with the ACEER Foundation

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“Conservation is sometimes perceived as stopping everything cold, as holding whooping cranes in higher esteem than people. It is up to science to spread the understanding that the choice is not between wild places or people, it is between a rich or an impoverished existence for Man.”

– Thomas Lovejoy, Ph.D., United Nations Foundation, ACEER Board Member

“We should change the narrative from one of fear and despair. Despite the bad [climate] news, people are still very optimistic. Optimism in this case is essential, because hope beats fear every time.”

– Hilary Tam, Strategy Director, Futerra (global change agency)

Background

The Amazon rainforest has been selected as the crucible for this seminar because it is home to 1/3 of all life forms on Earth; is the largest intact ecosystem on the planet; and is a living classroom and laboratory. It is also the “lungs of the Earth” and a living pharmacy. It has many lessons to teach us about interconnectedness, adaptation, resilience, and what happens to global systems when carrying capacity is exceeded. While the Amazon rainforest will serve as the content origin for the learning materials, by “Bringing the Amazon Rainforest Home”, the lessons of the rainforest will unfold to reveal their local relevance in Delaware classrooms. This seminar will inspire participants to develop innovative didactic and experiential education lessons for K-12 teachers so they may successfully meet state mandated Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Seminar participants will work closely with the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research (ACEER). The ACEER Foundation has been a dynamic force for rainforest conservation for over 29 years. We know that rainforest destruction and climate change are leading to mass extinctions of plants and animals. We also know that cultural extinction is occurring as well and native Amazonian peoples are struggling for their very existence. Our vision extends beyond just the local populations we serve in Peru. We feel we must take the lessons the Amazon offers for how to live sustainably and bring it home to schools and communities across the globe. The next generation of conservation leaders will come not only from Amazonia, but from every region of the world.

As a part of our Bringing the Amazon Rainforest Home initiative, we are working with teachers in Peru and the United States to develop curricula that not only meets the robust standards of the United States education system, but also fosters mutual understanding between cultures and allows teachers and students to engage directly with ACEER’s network of professionals working in the Amazon rainforest.

This project has been partially funded by the Longwood Foundation. This funding will enable equipment purchases and additional support from a network of professionals. Virtual planned sessions will allow teachers to engage with scientists, artists, designers, storytellers, indigenous leaders, educators and conservationists working in the Amazon rainforest. Participants will understand the challenges of Amazonian conservation and work with ACEER staff and affiliates to develop engaging learning modules for their own classroom and beyond. Guest speakers from around the globe will supplement weekly workshop-style activities and readings. The intention is that teachers will gain a greater respect for large intact ecosystems like the Amazon rainforest. They will be empowered and better prepared to further their students’ informal and formal education, pushing them to become citizens that are culturally aware and motivated to restore the health of our natural environment.

To enhance our seminar discussions, a number of speakers are tentatively scheduled to provide a 10-minute TED Talk style lecture with Q&A to follow to maximize the Fellows’ exposure to people working in the Amazon. **Seminars one through five** will include speakers including:

- Dr. Nora Bynum, Director of Education, ACEER Foundation; Duke University; Organization for Tropical Studies
- Sarah DuPont, President, Amazon Aid Foundation
- Dr. Thomas Lovejoy, United Nations Foundation
- Olivia Newton-John and her husband John Easterling, ACEER Board Members
- Raquel Condori - Co-Owner Nature Explorers Peru
- Dr. Paola Moreno-Roman - Stanford University, Director of Strategic Partnerships at Foldscope Instruments, Inc. Portable paper low cost microscopes and Citizen Science Applications
- Dr. Brian Griffiths - Executive Director, ACEER Foundation; Postdoctoral Fellow, George Mason University Camera trapping techniques and Citizen Science Applications
- Tara Muenz - Assistant Director of Education, Stroud Water Resource Center, Leaf Pack Network® Administrator Water Quality, Stream Ecology and Citizen Science Applications

Seminars 6 – 10

Remaining sessions will be crafted in response and in collaboration with the Fellows based on their interests and needs in the classroom. Participants will have the opportunity to work directly with ACEER artists and designers to create ready-to-use curriculum units in their own classroom. ACEER scientists, conservationists and storytellers stationed in the Amazon Rainforest will be available to supply teachers with images, videos and data for you to use as examples and to reinforce learning modules and content.

Who should enroll in this DTI seminar?

Teachers interested in:

- The Amazon Rainforest
- Citizen Science Applications
- Universal Conservation Practices
- Low Cost Hands-on Classroom Techniques and Equipment
- Working with Paid Professionals to Create High Impact Learning Modules and Materials
- Using an Interdisciplinary Approach to Learning
- Next Generation Science Standards
- Working with a cohort of teachers in the same grade level

Optional Summer Institute 2021

If public health concerns subside, interested Fellows will be eligible to participate in a week-long summer institute in the Amazon rainforest in Peru. This opportunity will provide teachers an immersive firsthand experience and give them the opportunity to work with a cohort of teachers from Delaware and Peru and experts in the field as their guides. **This is not a requirement for participation in the Seminar, it is simply an added opportunity.**