

The American Chestnut Foundation

Education Subcommittee Brief

October 2018

Education Subcommittee Members:

Barbara Tormoehlen (Chair), Carolyn Keiffer, Lois Breault-Melican, John Dougherty, Yvonne Federowicz, Doug Gillis, Rex Mann, Kathy Marmet, Dennis Melican, Fred Paillet, Robert Sypolt, John Wenderoth, Tim Womick, Samantha Bowers (Liaison and Recorder).

TACF Staff on Subcommittee Task Teams:

Samantha Bowers, Kendra Collins, Sara Fitzsimmons, Betsy Gamber.

VA Chapter 4H Project Video Game Summary and broader curriculum:

This is the introduction to the game: *In this game, you will pick chestnut trees to breed with each other. Then new tree will have a school grade (A through F) for American characteristics, and a school grade for resistance to blight. Remember, blight resistance comes from the Chinese chestnut tree, while American characteristics come from the American chestnut tree. When you get an A in American characteristics and an A in blight resistance, you are done. The quicker you do this, the better your score.*

The video, itself would cost about \$3,000 to produce, at approximately 100 hours of development time. The VA Chapter is looking for sponsors, and possible alternate options for producing this video.

Per Warren Laws, VP Education, VA Chapter: Initially, the game would be **part of a 4H project for middle school children...**described in a pamphlet for Virginia 4Hers [that] would include a brief description of what happened to the chestnut.

- It would also include a **short story (fiction)** about a family living in the Blue Ridge Mountains in 1930. The story is a discussion between a 12 year old boy and his 10 year old sister. They are discussing the impact of the blight on their family's welfare. This has been written by Helen Williamson who writes children's books.
- There is also included a "**Chestnut Survival Game**" (board game). Each player receives eight chestnuts. A die is thrown, and a game piece is moved a number of rectangles. If a game piece lands on a "negative" rectangle (deer eats leaves), the player must give up a chestnut. If the game piece lands on a "positive" rectangle (good weather), the player does not have to give up any chestnuts. We have used this game at public events.
- For the VA 4Hers we plan to provide **growing kits**. (pollinated chestnuts, zippy bags, peat moss, plastic pots etc. Finally, there is a FAQs section. These are to give adult leaders information about the chestnuts.

I hope to put the pamphlet in PDF form on our website (VATACF). I also hope to put the video game on our website so anyone with an internet connection could play. We may have it on a flash drive also. Once on the internet any middle school teacher could use both the pamphlet and the video game for teaching.

Task Teams in a Nutshell (Burr) – See detailed information below, by task

1. **Webpage:** The education content of the archived information is being reviewed at this time. Samantha is working with Carolyn Keiffer and Yvonne Federowicz on this task and hope to have the majority of the files reviewed in the near future. *Grant funds have been redirected from an existing grant in the amount of \$10,000 to address the website and learning box revision.*

2. **Chapter Reporting:** Betsy and several folks from the task force are working on this front to ensure that online chapter reporting of educational accomplishment is consistent across the chapters and with the same components
3. **Student Education Program:** The youth education subcommittee members met by conference call to discuss developing and capturing youth educational program efforts.
4. **Learning Box Revision:** The Learning Box effort has been divided in two components - information content and artifacts of the BOX. We will be conducting a phone survey within the month of those who currently hold a box, and are looking at alternatives in development of the box, moving forward. The content effort will be longer term, involves the webpage task force. Content experts are Samantha Bowers, Sara Fitzsimmons, and Kendra Collins.

More Detailed information by Task Team:

Webpage:

- The task force will conduct an initial review, then ask each of the four RSCs (Sara, Kendra, Tom and Ben) to review and provide input to Samantha, Yvonne, and Carolyn.
- Will need to determine if we are committed to a snapshot in time or maintaining the education webpage as a living site, with updates and additions as needed.
- Many of the links are not necessarily TACF material. It would be helpful to have year produced, who authored, comment on inadequacies.
- **ACTION: Samantha, Yvonne, and Carolyn will review and critique the spreadsheet documents identifying whether a file should be updated or simply archived.**
- **ACTION: Following review, the task force will identify categories and headings for the webpage. The education webpage will maintain the same format as the other TACF webpages on the recently revamped website. This is KEY.**
- The task force will NOT address actual page content until the higher level has been identified and the current information reviewed.
- BE SIMPLE and intuitive – resources for teachers, resources for growers, resources for members, resources for learning box, etc. Don't get overly complicated. If too much, people don't see it. Carolyn: Not a webpage designer, but if gets complicated quickly, then not useful. Need to be more straightforward.

Chapter Reporting:

Development of Online Reporting Tools and Training:

- **Step 1:** TACF staff will research the various methods and programs related to online reporting and develop a test product(s). Task Force members will be asked to test these products and provide feedback to staff. TACF staff will then incorporate any changes into the chosen and completed tool.
- **Step 2:** On behalf of the Education Task Force, staff will email and provide this “test” reporting tool to all chapter leadership and ask them or their designee to join a scheduled conference call to discuss the product and the importance of activity reporting in general. A structured plan going forward in terms of a reporting timeline will be very important. A formal agenda will be discussed before the call.
- **Step 3:** The new reporting tool will be launched in early fall with the goal of securing this information in time for the 2018 Annual Report.
- **Step 4:** In January, 2019, staff will update the Education Task Force on how many chapters utilized the new reporting tool, outcomes and next steps.

Student Education Programming:

There are two basic components to teaching youth about the American chestnut—one is formal education in classrooms and the other is informal education outside the classroom. A combination of in-classroom teaching and outdoors hands-on involvement is a good mix for teaching youth about nature and the environment. Visual and tactile components of learning can be experienced in the classroom through the planting of seeds, visiting an orchard, or helping establish a conservation orchard and otherwise experiencing the American chestnut reinforce learning.

TACF and State Chapters need to be involved with educators and help educate the educators about the American chestnut. ***Consistency of messaging is stressed in the Strategic Plan.*** The task force needs to think strategically about how to get teachers interested in teaching about the American chestnut. We need to find champions among teachers and those involved with educators. Incorporating a new program within a school system is a challenge.

- **Task: Identify Specific Goals by Age Group:** How should we as a task force break out age groups for educational efforts? School curricula (formal education) and interpretive efforts (informal education) might be broken out by age group differently. Targeting the audience and age group you are addressing is critical. Younger kids might be the focus in park settings to teach them an appreciation for nature. In schools, education can be directed towards specific age groups.
- **Task: What materials are needed for educational programs, how will they be distributed, and what costs are involved, who bears the expense:** Learning boxes are a great resource. Contents of the box are under review. Updating of materials is being discussed. Defer this discussion until the learning boxes have been revised.

Learning Box Revision:

Components of the Learning Box:

ACTION: There are TWO components of the Learning Box: 1) the BOX itself, which Tim and Barb will work on; 2) the Web Content, with Samantha, Kendra and Sara serving as the CONTENT Experts and Barb serving as the Project manager. In the near future, Barb will draft a project list and timeline, for input and revision from the content experts.

- 1. Core Component of the Learning BOX:** The CORE consists of the hands-on artifacts. The description is secondary and on line. All else (including the curriculum) is ancillary – fact sheets in the binder, etc. Then we TIER to the webpage. SO, it's critical that we get the learning box, itself, right. Tim expressed that simple doesn't necessarily accomplish a lot. We need an ADVOCATE whenever the learning box is distributed – someone needs to be a champion of the box. It needs to be PRESENTED, conveying the specialness of the box.
- 2. Design of the Learning Box material and the full Education webpage:** Sara said she wants to help, but doesn't have the capacity to lead at this time. If someone were to help organize, then she could definitely help. The most difficult thing to do is DESIGN – telling people what we want it to look like requires much work up front. On our end (beyond the consultant) we need to organize our written materials and photos, requiring much prework.

ACTION: SURVEY: We discussed the PHONE survey of current Learning Box holders that Tim and Barb will conduct. Samantha shared a draft survey that Tommie Waters had developed in 2017, but it was not sent out. Tim and Barb will move forward on this in the next month or so.