

# ANNUAL REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2017

Congressionally chartered in 1990 as a 501c3 nonprofit complement to the EPA.

Charged with advancing environmental literacy nationwide.

NEEF is non-partisan and non-advocacy.



## OUR PURPOSE

To secure a safer and healthier world for ourselves, our children, and for generations to come.

## OUR VISION

By 2022, 300 million Americans actively use environmental knowledge to ensure the wellbeing of the earth and its people.

## OUR MISSION

Make the environment ever-present in the daily lives of Americans by delivering practical, accessible information they can use through the sources they know and trust.

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on our past year, we are both humbled and energized by your commitment and ongoing support to NEEF and our vision that: *By 2022, 300 million Americans actively use environmental knowledge to ensure the wellbeing of the earth and its people.* We could not have achieved our past fiscal year's accomplishments detailed in these pages without you.

Whether you are a federal partner, a local public lands friends group, a corporate sponsor, a private donor, foundation, or another financial supporter, we are pleased you share our purpose: *To secure a safer and healthier world for ourselves, our children, and for generations to come.* We are honored to have you on the NEEF "team."

It is always rewarding to take the time to look back on our past year's work and be reminded that embarking in 2012 on our audacious vision for 2022 was the right thing to do. By committing to engaging the bulk of the US population in environmental education, NEEF transformed how it does its work.

With your help, NEEF is leveraging the latest research on how to best engage people and expand environmental conversations. Moving beyond those who already see themselves as "green," we are meeting people where they are—whether that's a sporting arena, an aquarium, or their favorite local park—connecting them with their environment, and helping them understand their role as stewards of the environment.

Indeed, our public engagement campaigns are broad, aimed at reaching new audiences who can best use environmental knowledge to better their lives by saving money, improving their health, and ensuring the welfare of the earth and its people. In this report you will see our programs also go deep, organized around these four areas:

- Connecting people to nature and public lands;
- Engaging people every day in environmental conversations;
- Advancing the field of environmental education through grants, research, and sharing best practices; and,
- Preparing the next generation with the skills that they need to solve our most critical problems.

Whether partnering with the NBA to mobilize sports fans to be more efficient in how they use energy or connecting teachers and their students to environmental learning opportunities on our country's largest outdoor classroom—our public lands, NEEF is fulfilling its unique 1990 congressional charter to advance environmental literacy nationwide as a complement to the EPA and other federal agencies.

As you read highlights of our accomplishments from the past year, enjoy knowing what you have made possible. Thank you!

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane W. Wood".

Diane W. Wood  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carlos Alcazar".

Carlos Alcazar  
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# NEEF FY 2017

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

With generous support from individual donations, foundation grants, and corporate sponsorships, NEEF is reaching Americans where the environment intersects their daily lives. During our 2017 Fiscal Year (October 1, 2016, through September 30, 2017), your support fueled progress in each of NEEF's four core areas of work.

## CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE

By opening a doorway to nature, NEEF is working to show Americans how much each of us needs a connection with nature: how it sustains our lives, benefits our health, and enriches our souls. With your help, NEEF is helping people make connections between nature and how they live their lives.

- September 23, 2017, marked the 24<sup>th</sup> year of **National Public Lands Day**. Made possible by the ongoing sponsorship of Toyota Motor North America along with support from seven federal agencies, this annual event is the country's largest day of service for our public lands. Nearly 170,000 enthusiastic volunteers came together at more than 2,100 sites from coast to coast to give back to public lands. Activities including trail maintenance, planting, trash pick-up, and more added up to **\$16.7 million worth of service**. The day also featured hikes, bike rides, festivals, paddling excursions, and other fun activities.





Credit: Chad Chase Photography

- NEEF continued to expand the ***Hands on the Land*** (HOL) network of field classrooms, which now totals 234 sites stretching from Alaska to Florida that are connecting students to nearby public lands for place-based, hands-on learning. In 2017, NEEF distributed more than \$90,000 in mini-grants to HOL members that helped to cover **critical needs such as student transportation and supplies like binoculars**, telescopes, and weather gauges. Partners in Resource Education (PRE), a collaboration of five federal agencies, is the principal HOL sponsor. Additionally, many schools, public lands, and other private sector partners contribute to HOL. The program features a website where users can share information and learn about their local ecosystems, creative teaching strategies, and more.

***"Education is the cornerstone of a healthy society and environmental education is core to ensuring that people and nature thrive together. When kids gain the environmental know-how they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world, we'll see smarter decisions, stronger communities, and daily actions that improve their wellbeing and our planet."***

— Jason Morris, Senior Program Officer, Pisces Foundation

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## ENGAGING PEOPLE EVERY DAY

NEEF's programs are centered on a "learning by doing" model and seek to involve individuals in a variety of actions that, taken collectively, will have a tremendous, positive impact on the environment. Our goal is that as people learn about their relationship to the environment, they will increase their environmental engagement.

### Welcome to the NBA Green Energy All-Star Team!

Now that you're part of the team, you'll receive tips throughout the week on how you can save energy and money at home. Complete at least 3 of 6 energy saving actions, and you'll be entered into a drawing for a pair of NBA/WNBA regular season tickets. Visit [green.nba.com/all-star-energy](http://green.nba.com/all-star-energy) for details and terms and conditions. Message and data rates apply. Text HELP for help. Text STOP to end.

- Using the latest research on behavior change, NEEF partnered with the National Basketball Association to develop and pilot an innovative engagement campaign that used text messaging to help sports fans reduce their energy consumption by taking simple steps like unplugging their electronics. The campaign reached more than 10 million Americans. We estimate this effort resulted in a **reduction of more than 593 tons of greenhouse gas** emissions, while participants collectively saved around \$106,000 in annual energy costs. Feedback from surveyed participants included:
  - "They were very useful tips. I thought they helped me and taught me how to go green!"
  - "Great idea with the text messages and the basketball theme...Hopefully the program continues in the future."
  - "Great initiative! Thanks for being an awesome example."
  - "Cool way of using tech."
- NEEF worked with the National Aquarium in Baltimore to launch a pilot program offering aquarium visitors simple tips for taking environmental action—like, "skip the straw"—while enjoying their view of the ocean environment. It is estimated that more than 8 million metric tons of plastic waste enters oceans each year. Our engagement campaign model provided simple steps that anyone can take to help reduce their use of single-use plastic and learn why it matters.



- This year, our self-published **NEEF Weekly** more than doubled its reach to 1,400+ subscribers across the United States, providing useful tips for being more environmentally savvy. Each issue provided practical information, encouraging readers to take action to protect their health and the environment—from helping families identify and control pediatric asthma triggers to offering critical advice for staying safe in the sun and being prepared for hurricanes, wildfires, winter storms, and other extreme weather events.

# ADVANCING THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Through a strong, growing network of partners, NEEF is expanding the field of environmental education and making the environment ever-present in the daily lives of Americans.

- Your support over this past year enabled NEEF to provide nearly \$600,000 in grants and awards. These funds helped local public lands friends groups build their organizational capacity to make parks, wildlife refuges, local and city parks, and other public lands, places for communities to connect with nature, families to enjoy time together, and individuals to recreate and reenergize. Also in 2017—and in honor of the National Park Service (NPS) Centennial—NEEF, with funding from The Kendeda Fund, launched the **Centennial and Beyond** grant program. This unique program built on our existing grantmaking efforts to better engage local communities with lesser known NPS units right in their own neighborhoods.



*“Working with NEEF to engage our employees in a day of service inspired our people. From pulling invasive species to planting trees, Spectrum Brands employees worked alongside local community organizations to bring our CSR goals to life and showcased the impact we can have on the communities where we are headquartered.”*

– Daniel Hutter, DVP, Chief Sustainability Officer, Spectrum Brands, Inc.

- The more than 123.7 million private sector employees in the US represent great potential to make a positive impact on the environment. To assess the scope of this opportunity, NEEF worked with employers to explore how engaging employees in sustainability efforts can benefit companies—and their employees. In collaboration with Buzzword we **developed and piloted a sustainability engagement index (SEI) and an employee engagement index (EEI) to map which elements of sustainability drive employee engagement**. Initial findings point to a positive relationship between sustainability engagement and employee engagement, and suggest that job purposing—linking an organization’s mission and an employee’s job responsibilities to societal impact—matters. The pilot is a promising first step in creating a business case for engaging employees in sustainability initiatives.

- With support from the Centers for Disease Control, NEEF continued its ***Pediatric Asthma Initiative***, which aims to help caregivers better manage children’s asthma. To expand its reach, NEEF is building partnerships with organizations like the National Association of School Nurses, who can help **connect parents and guardians with the latest in asthma control information** which can reduce costs to families and trips to urgent and emergency care facilities.

***“We are proud to support NEEF and its efforts to advance environmental literacy nationwide. NEEF bridges the gap between environmental knowledge and environmental action and helps more people understand the role that the environment plays in our everyday lives.”***

— S. Decker Anstrom and Sherron Hiemstra

## PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

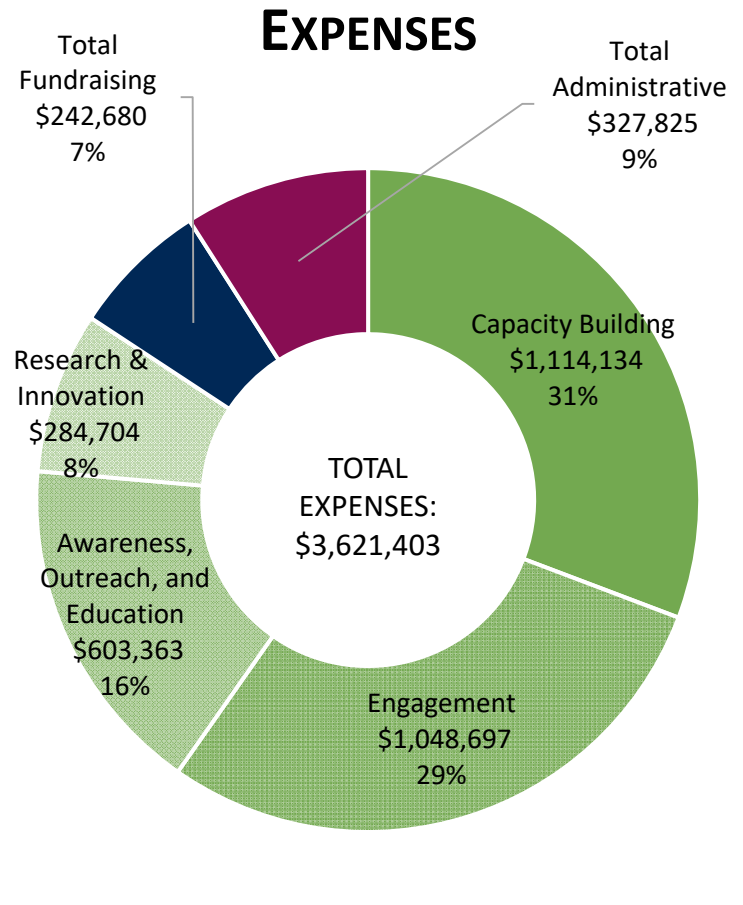
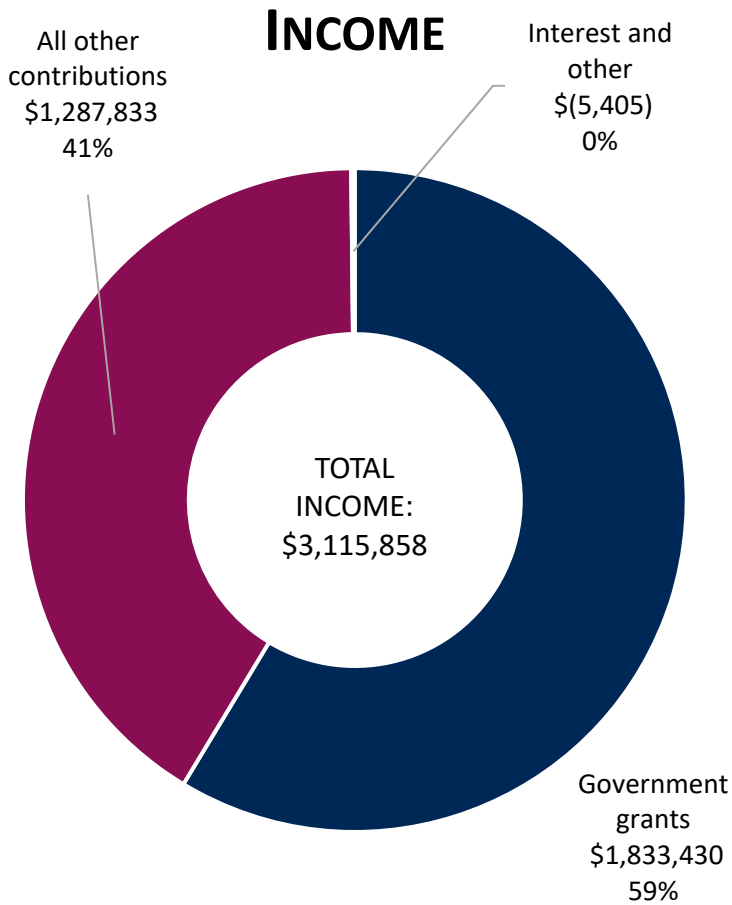
NEEF is focused on securing a safer and healthier world for ourselves, our children, and for generations to come. This means reaching young people through many different channels and ensuring they have the resources and encouragement they need to understand how they connect with the natural world around them.

- In April, NEEF joined educators and students of all ages to celebrate the 13<sup>th</sup> annual ***National Environmental Education Week*** (EE Week). Made possible through the support of Samsung Electronics America, Inc., which shares NEEF’s commitment to environmental education and stewardship, EE Week promoted the benefits of environmental education and its relevance to learners young and old alike. More than **400,000 people celebrated EE Week at more than 3,000 events** in every state, DC, Puerto Rico, and Guam.
- Nickelodeon joined NEEF to name five middle school students from Washington state as the first cohort of ***Get Dirty! Ambassadors***. The team is conducting an environmental learning expedition to study ocean acidification in partnership with the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Ultimately, the project will increase student understanding of how changing ocean chemistry impacts their culture and natural resources. Through the Get Dirty! Challenge, Nickelodeon and NEEF are working to **inspire kids across the country to become ambassadors of the environment** in their own communities and promote environmental stewardship among their peers.



Expedition  
TOOLKIT

# FINANCIALS



TOTAL END OF YEAR NET ASSETS: \$3,400,529

TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES: \$3,050,898



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George Basile  
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Thank you to our donors, partners, and friends for advancing NEEF's vision:

***By 2022, 300 million Americans actively use environmental knowledge to ensure the wellbeing of the earth and its people.***



4301 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 160  
Washington, DC 20008  
202-833-2933 [NEEFusa.org](http://NEEFusa.org)