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## **Diving into eeBLUE: Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center Partners with Concilio to Offer Watershed STEM Education**

PHILADELPHIA, PA-- The Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center (FWWIC) is one of 29 environmental education organizations nationwide to be awarded a ***Watershed STEM Education Grant*** from North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of Education, to offer “The Future Watershed Steward Program” in partnership with the Council of Spanish-Speaking Organizations of Philadelphia (Concilio), a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center.

The Future Watershed Steward Program will engage high school youth from the Concilio community in an exploration of Philadelphia’s unique watershed and the issues involved in protecting our city’s shared water resources in a combination of classroom (in-person and virtual) and outdoor field experiences. Students will learn the power of STEM education in creating critical thinkers, and innovators, increasing science literacy while also building leadership and advocacy skills by participating in hands-on and minds-on learning activities while connecting with nature.

Students will monitor the growth and survival rates of juvenile freshwater mussels in a controlled grow-out site at the Discovery Center in Fairmount Park. The data collected will contribute to the current research efforts by aquatic scientists in the Freshwater Mussel Hatchery at FWWIC. In addition to data collection, students will be trained to complete a Rapid Habitat Assessment and Biotic Index for a local stream using modified USEPA protocols. Students will also design, plan and execute a stewardship action capstone project. The program will consist of professional development sessions for both Concilio and FWWIC staff, allowing

staff and environmental educators to learn from each other and share teaching methods, content knowledge and best practices for engaging high school youth. The program is scheduled to begin this fall 2020 with field work planned for the summer of 2021.

"It is so exciting to launch this unique opportunity and work together with NOAA and the Department of Education to support educators and 21st CCLC sites. Combining our strengths is a force multiplier in both creating equitable STEM opportunities for students across the country, and strengthening EE programs. Together, we can help build a more equitable and sustainable future," says T'Noya Thompson, Environmental Education Specialist at NAAEE and Program Manager for the grant. "These programs will enrich communities around the country, and ultimately cultivate a sense of stewardship within everyone involved."

"I can't wait to meet the Concilio staff and the cohort of high school students, and embark on this adventure together, says **Stacey Heffernan**, Environmental Education Planner for the Fairmount Water Works. "I am looking forward to seeing the students gain knowledge skills and confidence to make a difference in their communities!"

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About NAAEE: For almost five decades, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has served as the professional association, champion, and backbone organization for the field of environmental education (EE), working with EE professionals across United States, Canada, and Mexico, as well as globally, to advance environmental literacy and civic engagement. NAAEE is the only national membership organization dedicated to strengthening EE and increasing the visibility and effectiveness of the field. With more than 20,000 members and supporters, including affiliations with 56 state and provincial EE organizations and members in more than 30 countries, NAAEE's work aims to provide the field with professional development, access to learning networks and collaborative partnerships, tools and resources to promote effective practice, and leadership and capacity building. NAAEE is also involved in a number of field-building activities and signature programs, including the Natural Start Alliance to advance environmental education in early childhood and the Global Environmental Education Partnership—a global network dedicated to building capacity at the country level (see [thegeep.org](http://thegeep.org)). For more information on NAAEE, visit <https://naaee.org>.

About NOAA: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is an agency that enriches life through science. From daily weather forecasts, severe storm warnings, and climate monitoring to fisheries management, coastal restoration and supporting marine commerce, NOAA's products and services support economic vitality and affect more than one-third of America's gross domestic product. NOAA's dedicated scientists use cutting-edge research and high-tech instrumentation to provide citizens, planners, emergency managers, and other decision-makers with reliable information they need when they need it.

About eeBLUE:



NAAEE is building partnerships that support the mutual Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) education goals of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of Education through an exciting collaboration called [eeBLUE](#). eeBLUE is a \$5 million, five-year partnership agreement between NOAA and NAAEE to help create a more environmentally literate society that has the knowledge, skills, and motivation to conserve our natural resources and build more resilient communities across the country. It will also strengthen professional networks, support high-quality STEM education, and provide education and outreach for educators and other audiences. To learn more and follow our partners' eeBLUE journey, please visit our [Watershed STEM Education Grants webpage](#) and follow NAAEE on Facebook and Twitter @TheNAAEE.

About the U.S. Department of Education's [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) (21st CCLC) Program: This program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children. The 21st CCLC program is the largest out-of-school program in the nation, serving over 1.5 million students in all 50 states. The 21st CCLC sites provide academic enrichment opportunities during out-of-school time for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.

About the Fairmount Water Works: For more than 200 years, the Fairmount Water Works has told the story of our connection with water. It operated as a pumping station from 1815 to 1909, an aquarium from 1911 to 1962, as the Kelly Natatorium until 1972, and today serves as Philadelphia Water's public education destination, housing an award-winning urban environmental education center. The mission of Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center is to foster stewardship of our shared resources by encouraging informed decisions about the use of land and water. We educate citizens about Philadelphia's urban watershed, its past, present and future, and collaborate with partners to instill an appreciation for the connections between daily life and the natural environment. Located on the Schuylkill River at 640 Waterworks Drive, off scenic Kelly Drive in Philadelphia, the FWW is recognized as The Delaware River Basin's Official Watershed Education Center and Gateway Center for the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area, featuring innovative, landmark exhibitions and serving as a living laboratory for urban watershed sustainability projects. For more about the Fairmount Water Works, visit [www.fairmountwaterworks.org](http://www.fairmountwaterworks.org).

About Concilio: The Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations of Philadelphia (Concilio) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) founded in 1962. Concilio is a recognized leader in providing an array of social services, ensuring that educational, health, adoption, foster care and cultural opportunities are made available to our community. Concilio's mission is to cultivate the strength and resilience in children and families, improve the quality of life in our community, and maintain our community's heritage, history and culture. Concilio is a non-profit human service organization that provides a network of family support services to over 11,000 vulnerable Philadelphians each year. Concilio's programs include services such as Foster Care and Adoptions, after school and summer programming for Elementary, Middle and High school youth, Parenting Education, and Victim Services. Concilio is also an arts and cultural convener for the city's most significant and historic events, which attracts over 30,000 people annually. For more information on Concilio visit [www.elconcilio.net](http://www.elconcilio.net).