**Introductory discussions about a Pacific Coast Meeting of the**

**Environmental Evaluators Network**

**Conference Call Notes**

**2/22/13**

1. Welcome and quick agenda confirmation
2. Introductions –Name, organization/role and what interests you about the idea of a Pacific Coast EEN forum
	1. **Shawn Morford**– Rural Development Initiatives. Since the first EEN meeting in Washington DC in 2006, thought that we needed to have a similar meeting that dealt more specifically with west coast topics.
	2. **Matt Keene** – US Environmental Protection Agency. Excited to see regional EEN events focused on regional context specific issues in environmental evaluation.
	3. **Beverly Parsons** – Insites. 2014 President of the American Evaluation Association. Involved with EEN for a few years now and work with Matt on another NSF grant related to systems-oriented evaluation. Want the environmental and sustainability to be a part of evaluation community.
	4. **Shad Keene** – National Weather Service (NOAA). Need more emphasis on understanding the effectiveness of the products and services that we offer – how do people use them and how do they influence behavior?
	5. **Richard Gelb** – King County, WA. Performance Measures manager for local government. Work with spatial analysis and equity/social justice at interface of rural and urban communities.
	6. **Ken Vance Borland** – College of forestry at Oregon State University. Spatial analyst and social network analysis. Director of Conservation Planning Institute. Interested in how evaluation can improve social network analysis and how SNA can be used in evaluation.
	7. **V Neimanis** – Environment Canada. Involved with EEN from the beginning; I’ll take any chance I get to promote its value.
	8. **Lena Etuk** – Oregon State University Extension Service, Rural Studies Program. Not involved in biological aspects of “environment” necessarily but its relationship in development and sustainability. Involved in sustainability indicator work in rural communities.
	9. **Kirsten Evans** – The Nature Conservancy. Building capacity in our own organization for evaluation.
	10. **Chris Parry** – CA Coastal Commission – director of public education. Working with environmental education evaluation.
	11. **Kim Damm** – SKDKnickerbocker Involved in communications and interested in helping with communications and marketing of EEN and this event.
3. Background of Environmental Evaluators Network (EEN) and EEN Pacific Coast forum idea
	1. Matt – EEN began in 2006 as partnership between EPA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as a once a year meeting in Washington DC. Today EEN gatherings convene in many different locations (including Canada) with the purpose of advancing the field of environmental evaluation through more systematic and collective learning. Many other government agencies, non-profits, consulting firms and academic institutions have joined this list of EEN supporters and sponsors. In addition to meetings, EEN participants collaborate to publish articles, host a website ([www.environmentalevaluators.net](http://www.environmentalevaluators.net)), host a twitter feed and Linkedin group with 1500 members. EEN has a loose connection with the American Evaluation Association, but not a formal connection.
	2. Shawn – Attended the first EEN meeting in 2006. Always wondered about hosting an informal gathering of EEN on the west coast. Mentioned this idea at AEA in 2012. Originally, thinking of this as a very informal gathering. As talking more about it with more people, there are many people from many different arenas that want to discuss specific issues across many different topics. So here we are on this first call to start discussions about content, theme, locations, format, who might be the host organization, and just generally open up the conversation. We come to you with lots of questions.

1. Desired/suggested outcomes of a forum and core content (sessions, subjects) for Pacific Coast EEN forum- your thoughts (“Round robin” – all)
	1. **Shawn** – I see it as a gathering of professionals to get exposed to various case studies… who is doing what. Challenges, methods used. Unique evaluation issues especially re: marine topics. My interest is human dimensions- where rural development intersects as well as community indicators. Hope to develop a community of evaluation-minded program managers and professional evaluators. Cheap and fun.. my preference is to be able to wear my fleece and hiking boots. Away from the computer. Want to keep it small for first year.
	2. **Matt** – Progress toward understanding how to and formalizing the network to improve its utility to EEN participants and improve learning opportunities – the EEN purpose. Want to explore use of social network analysis as means to inform structure and content of event and use event to improve the richness of SNA.
	3. **Beverly** – Must connect enviro orgs to evaluation community. Want to focus on evaluation approaches that get to systemic issues so we can actually make change. I want to connect EEN to OPEN (Oregon Program Evaluators Network, part of the American Evaluation Association). Finally, must connect Bainbridge graduate institute because they are looking at things from systems orientation in enviro sector.
	4. **Shad** – two things: budget and beginners. How to do evaluation in a tight budget situation. And Evaluation for beginners. Where do we start? I’ve never done and how do beginners get started doing it?
	5. **Richard**
		1. Topics – equity and social justice. Trying to understand equity of services in rural work. I need to know what’s out there in this regard. Also, rural urban interface and understanding agriculture and food prod and conservation and stewardship where there is the interplay between communities and environment. Eval can help us to understand and improve that interface and our initiatives that exist there.
		2. Evaluation Process considerations - We always struggle with “low touch learning”. We want to bake evaluation into the things (programs) that we do more often. Also we need to use spatial data more to understand how actions lead to outcomes.
	6. **Ken**– How might I enhance my Social Network Analysis (SNA) through evaluation to attempt to assess how people’s change in behavior and governance and environment and relate those to changes in types of connectivity that people have. I want to do a hands-on exercise of mapping the network of EEN Pacific Coast and have conversations with professionals about this process.
	7. **V** – having organized 3 EEN sessions in Canada, I know you must have some drawing cards. - speakers or some draw to entice people to come. You hope to bring some people in that can make a difference in advancing environmental evaluation. Canada EEN is limping a bit now – because we didn’t understand at the outset that you need some consistency of an organization at the beginning that can cover the work and cost of logistics and catering etc. If EEN persistence is of interest, need an org to keep it going over time. Must make the event about what people want to talk about.
	8. **Lena** – Want to learn about environmental changes that have been enacted. Look at the triple bottom line. I’m coming at this from the sustainability perspective. We are looking for strategies that local communities can use to get to the sustainability targets that we have. Want to see practical uses of evaluation in rural development.
	9. **Kirsten** – I must build capacity of our programs for evaluation. Improve our relationships with other organizations doing evaluation and the evaluation world. I’m not as interested in the ecological metrics- lots of people doing that. Our need is that our programs wanting to know about social impacts, natural resource governance and policy outcomes. If I can learn about bringing systems theory to organizations, big benefit.
	10. **Chris** – My primary interest is in environmental education and hope it’s represented at the EEN Forum. Capacity building for small organizations struggling with budgets and how they can do evaluation. EEN Pacific Coast appeals to me because it may be a smaller gathering. I think there MUST be plenty of time built in for informal networking. I’m interested in the cross fertilization that can happen at such a meeting. For example, I hear an interest in measuring human dimension and enviro education is about the human dimension.
	11. **Kim**– I want to see more about how to communicate about evaluation and EEN to stakeholders. Want to know more about how to get young professionals and recent grads into environmental evaluation. How to get the evaluation skill set. How to leverage more evaluation through grant funding. I’m also interested in the policy discussion – that is, how to get evaluation built in as part of the appropriations process for environmental policies
2. **Target audiences?** – We will follow up this call with a short questionnaire asking about who you think priority target audiences should be for a Pacific Coast EEN gathering.
3. **Hosting organization(s)/fiscal agent** – We need a group to become host/fiscal agent if this is to move forward. The Oregon Program Evaluator’s Network (OPEN), the state affiliate of the American Evaluation Association may be an option and US EPA is can kick in small funds but how it can be used is limited.
4. **Current assets** (human capital, funds etc. --what we have now towards making this happen) and **needs**
	1. **Assets**: Matt and Shawn’s time, some EPA $, some venue options explored, the EEN brand and infrastructure, interest from participants of today’s meeting.
	2. **Needs**: An organizing structure/committees and fiscal agent. Shawn had a conversation with OPEN president today. OPEN may be interested in being involved – possibly as a fiscal agent and coordinating entity. Shawn will continue to follow up with them.

Need to get volunteers to organize and serve on committees. Richard, Matt, Shawn, V, Kirsten Evans volunteered to help. The questionnaire next week will give the opportunity to answer “who else should be in this conversation?” and a few others questions about the event.

**Next steps**

1) Matt will send out follow-up Survey Monkey questions for more input –re: location, format, and open ended question for follow up thoughts. Please respond by March 1.

2) Notes from this meeting and Survey Monkey results will be made available to everyone.

3) Shawn and Matt will convene the next call with those who indicate a willingness to take the next step of creating a committee. Shawn will continue to communicate with OPEN about the idea of them being a fiscal agent and what that will mean for how it goes forward. Shawn will continue to look for venue options as we will need to book something right away to ensure we have a location for fall.