

MacKenzie Environmental Education Center

Poynette, Wisconsin

“Experience the Best in Outdoor Education”



Day Field Trip Planning Guide



Welcome

Welcome to the MacKenzie Environmental Education Center's (MEEC) Education program! Whether this is your first trip to the MEEC or one of many, the experience is rewarding – one that you and your group will long remember. Our day field trips operate on a self-guided basis so the quality of your outdoor experience will depend, in part, on careful planning. This booklet represents the accumulation of ideas and suggestions found useful by those who have used our facility over the years.

The success of your trip will depend on your careful review of the contents of this guide and successful planning between your staff and the staff at the MacKenzie Center. If you have any questions after you have read the information, please contact us at (608) 635-8105.

Mission

To provide environmental educational opportunities for youth and adults so that they may appreciate and understand Wisconsin's natural resources, their problems, protection and management; and that they have the knowledge and skills to act as environmentally aware, responsible and committed Wisconsin citizens.

History

The MacKenzie Environmental Education Center has a long history, beginning in the 1930's, when Harley MacKenzie purchased this land under his authority as Director of the Wisconsin Conservation Department: know today as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The 500-acre property was all part of the State Fur and Game Farm, which raised fur-bearing animals for their pelts and game birds, including the ring-neck pheasant for hunting.

In the 1960's as the Conservation movement grew, the property was split so that one-half remained the State Game Farm focusing on raising ring neck pheasants and the other half for Environmental and Conservation Education. The 250 acres we know as the MacKenzie Center was named in memory of Harley MacKenzie in 1971. The resident center dormitories and the main lodge building were built in 1975. The captive wildlife exhibit came to be as a result of individuals bringing sick and injured animals to the game farm in the 1930's and 40's. Once in captivity they became an attraction for visitors and now provide an excellent opportunity for the DNR to teach people about native animals. The animals, once housed along the road between the DNR Customer Service Center and the Conservation Museum, were moved to their current location in the late 1980's. The wildlife exhibit continues to provide a home for animals that are injured, orphaned, or born in captivity. All wildlife would have little, or no, chance of survival if released into the wild.

Our Partnership

MEEC was originally built and operated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. When the agency announced its plans to eliminate the staff positions and funding for the facility, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF) (affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation), assumed management responsibilities for the education program, the wildlife exhibit, and the grounds to ensure youth and other visitors would still have the opportunity to enjoy and learn at this facility. A 10-year partnership agreement became effective on July 1, 2006.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources owns MEEC and currently supports three full-time positions at the center. It is responsible for maintaining the infrastructure such as the water wells, septic and heating systems, and major building repairs. The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation operates the MEEC and has hired two staff educators and a development director. The educators are responsible for conservation education and outreach programs. The development director focuses on fundraising efforts. The Friends of the MacKenzie Center, a local group of volunteers, provide funding support for MEEC's activities; provides leadership and volunteers for the MEEC's maple syrup program; maintains exhibits and trails; conducts nature hikes; monitors bluebird boxes; and pitches in on other projects as well.

Facilities

Located on a 250-acre property near rural Poynette in Columbia County, the Center is readily accessible to people in south-central Wisconsin. Many of the trails and exhibits are handicap accessible.

Features include:

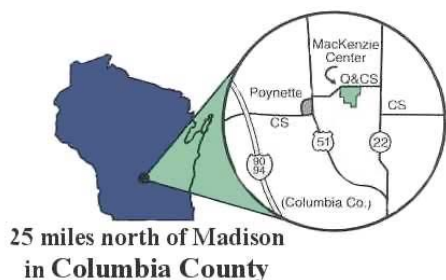
- A wildlife exhibit that houses live animals native to Wisconsin, including bison, bobcat, deer, lynx, mountain lions, a wolf, and many raptors including a bald eagle. All of the animals in the exhibit were injured, orphaned, or raised in captivity and cannot be released into the wild.
- An arboretum that includes more than 100 species of trees.
- Five themed nature trails that wind through 150 acres of forested land.
- A nature study pond.
- Prairies in various stages of restoration.
- An observation tower from which one can view the grounds and the surrounding countryside.
- A large picnic area with a pavilion and restrooms.
- An original log cabin converted into a logging history museum
- A restored sawmill along with an ancient white pine log.
- A maple syrup demonstration exhibit.
- The conservation museum houses many exhibits including a pair of, now extinct, passenger pigeons.
- A museum containing many oddities of nature and "alien" plant and animal species.

The property also includes a spacious lodge building complete with a commercial kitchen that can accommodate 160 people and two dormitories that can sleep 80 people. This facility is available to schools and other organized groups wishing to focus one, or more, days on studying or learning more about environmental issues. Staff educators are available to assist the groups in the lodge. Information and reservation information is available by calling 608-635-8105 Monday through Friday from 8am until 4:00 pm.

Property Hours of operation: The grounds are open daily from dawn until dusk. The wildlife exhibit and museums are open daily, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, from the first Saturday in May through the last Sunday in October. They are open Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm from November 1 to April 30 (except for the holidays.)

Directions

The Center is located just 2 miles north of Madison, WI on County Road CS & Q.
From Highway I90/94 take exit #115 (Country Road CS/Poynette/Lake Wisconsin exit). McDonald's, BP gas and Subway are just off this exit. Follow County Road CS east (left toward McDonald's), continue east three miles through the village of Poynette. Follow signs for the MacKenzie Center across business Hwy 51 and continue another 2 miles east. The entrance to MEEC will be on your right (watch for the large sign). The main parking lot for buses and autos will be on your right about ¼ mile into the facility.



Reservations

Reservations for school groups or other organizations should be made at least four weeks prior to your visit but are also made on a first-come, first-served basis. However, the reservation is not confirmed until the reservation form and deposit have been received in our office. Bear in mind that the demand for our facility is increasing along with the growth of our education offerings. To protect your dates, it is important that all forms and fees are sent in a timely manner. Reservation forms can be faxed, e-mailed, or sent regular mail. To inquire about available dates and to receive registration forms, call 608-635-8105. Fax reservations any time to 608-635-2743. Email reservations to mackenziecenter@wisconsin.gov.

Group Size and Supervision

We require one adult for every 10 students. Dividing your group into smaller groups before arrival will avoid confusion and delays once on property. Groups are required to provide supervision at all times for their students.

MacKenzie Policies

Upon arrival to MEEC please check in at the DNR Customer Service Center or an alternate location communicated to you by a MEEC staff member; at that time you can pick up any additional teaching information that you may have requested prior to your visit.

RESPECT is our primary rule. In following this rule, please respect...

1. The MEEC environment and property...
 - a. Stay on the trails
 - b. Pick up trash and encourage others not to litter
 - c. Please respect all critters around camp...this is their home. This includes the animals in the Wildlife Exhibit.
 - d. Take care of the buildings, plants, trees, and property...NO graffiti!
 - e. Listen when others are talking, just like at school.
 - f. Encourage others to participate...no "put-downs"
 - g. Stay out of buildings unless supervised, or given permission by an adult.
 - h. Dress appropriately for the activities; most of your time will be spent outdoors.
 - i. Stay with your group and chaperone.

Miscellaneous

1. All groups **MUST** provide their own transportation to and from the Center
2. An adult member of the group is responsible for first aid to students and/or accompanying them to the doctor or hospital. No ill or injured student will be left unattended with a MacKenzie Center staff.
3. School or group staff must be with their group at ALL times.
4. All vehicles must be left in a designated parking lot (NO buses will be allowed in roadway or near our main lodge). Exceptions to vehicle use would apply to physically challenged individuals only.
5. Collecting plants or animals is prohibited unless permission is obtained from the MacKenzie staff.
6. Smoking is prohibited in all of the buildings
7. Alcoholic beverages are not allowed
8. Pets are not allowed on the trail system or in any exhibit. Designated pet areas are located near the main parking lot, picnic area, and south trail parking lot.
9. Areas that are off limits:
 - a. Private property that borders the Center.
 - b. Locked office areas.
 - c. Wildlife exhibit before 8:00 a.m. or after 4:00 p.m. (At other times **ONLY** with MEEC supervision.)
 - d. The space immediately between the animal pen and viewing fence.
 - e. Any other area marked as "restricted" or "staff use only".

Group Check In/Out procedures

Check-in: The check-in time and location is established during the reservation process. Check in can be anytime after 8 am weekdays. Please call our office at 608-635-8105 if there is an unexpected delay in your arrival time. Groups can park in the North (upper) parking lot, picnic area or South parking lot near the trail heads. It is not safe to drive buses into the parking area by the office as the roadway is narrow and many students and other visitors may be present. Field trip fees are due at check in time.

Check-out: The property closes at dusk. If you checked out teaching supplies (i.e. pond study equipment) please return them prior to 4pm at the location communicated to you by a MEEC staff member. If you have no supplies to return, no check-out required.

Trash/Recyclables

The number of containers for trash and recyclables is limited. Please take any waste you generate back with you. This helps keep our operational costs (and user fees) to a minimum and helps teach your students about being good stewards of the land. Thank You!

Picnic Area

There is a picnic area with toilets and shelter. This is a great place to enjoy your lunch. It is ½ mile from the exhibit area. To save time, you may want to use your bus service to and from this area.

Remember; please take your trash and recyclables back with you.

Rest Rooms

Rest rooms with flush toilets are located at the DNR Customer Service Center and picnic area. Portable restrooms are available and located in the Wildlife Exhibit and near the log cabin. *Please note that the picnic area and portable toilets are unavailable during the winter months.

Drinking Water

Drinking water is available year round in the DNR Customer Service Center. During spring through fall months, it is also available in the picnic area. However, we encourage you to pack water bottles with your group.

Guided tours of the Wildlife Exhibit or help with Pond Study or Compass Skills may be scheduled for your group at an additional cost of \$1.00 per student; chaperones free. **This request must be made at least 4 weeks prior to your visit or at the time the reservation is made. Availability is based on staff & volunteer schedules.**

Wildlife Exhibit

The wildlife exhibit features live animals native to Wisconsin, including bison, bobcat, deer, mountain lions, a wolf, and many raptors including a bald eagle. All of the animals in the exhibit were injured, orphaned, or raised in captivity and cannot be released into the wild. By observing and studying these animals, we hope you will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of all wild creatures. Please treat them with respect. **Remember is it not legal to possess a wild animal without the proper permit from the state and/or federal government.*

Pond Study

The MacKenzie Center grounds include a nature study pond. You can use this area to acquaint yourself and your students to a natural pond community and introduce them to the wide varieties of life found there. Explore the connections among pond community members. A lesson plan and materials are available to help aid you with this self-instructed lesson and should be requested during the registration process at least four weeks prior to your visit. Pond study meets the WI State Curriculum Standards and is best suited for grades 5-7.

Basic Compass Skills

The MacKenzie Center grounds include three basic compass skill courses within our Arboretum. You can use this area to acquaint yourself and your students with how to use a compass and navigate your way thru one or all three of the courses. Courses are themed for added educational value. A lesson plan and materials (compasses) are available to help aid you with this self-instructed lesson and should be requested during the registration process at least four weeks prior to your visit. Basic Compass Skill lesson meets the WI State Curriculum Standards and is best suited for grades 5-7.

Fee Schedule

Please inquire with MEEC staff for current fee schedule as program fees are set each fiscal year and are subject to change.

All program fees are the responsibility of the visiting group. Many groups obtain funds from their local PTA, fundraisers, from their school district and/or from charges to participants. Many combinations of these sources are possible. Scholarships from the Friends of the MacKenzie Center are also available at the discretion of their board of directors. Please ask MEEC staff for an application if interested. Our staff is also willing to do presentation to local service clubs to assist you in your fundraising.

Contact us

MacKenzie Environmental Education Center
W7303 County Road CS & Q
Poynette, WI 53955-9690
Phone: 608-635-8105
Fax: 608-635-2743
Web: <http://www.wiwf.org/education/MEEC.php>
Email: mackenziecenter@wisconsin.gov

Deposit

Groups must deposit \$10.00 reservation fee to confirm their reservation and hold their date on the calendar. Balance of program fees are due prior to or at the time of check in.

Cancellations and Refunds

A full refund of your deposit will be made upon written notice **60 days** in advance of your scheduled visit. Cancellation after 30 days notice of your scheduled visit; deposits will not be refunded. (Special consideration may be given under certain weather conditions or for other reasons beyond your control)

Teacher/Leader Check List

The learning experience at MEEC will be enhanced if students/visitors are prepared. This checklist will help you in your prep work.

- Emphasize that the MEEC is an educational facility, coming here is a part of your school program. As in school, rules are necessary.
- Wear clothing suitable for the outdoors.
- Students need to be familiar with the following:
 - Animals have special diets – no feeding the animals
 - Please do not shout or howl at the animals. It disturbs the animals and other visitors.
 - Students must stay in a group under the supervision of an adult. No free roaming. At least one adult per 10 students.
 - Please, no collecting or picking flowers
 - Stay on the trails....poison ivy is present in many areas!
- Divide students into groups with assigned adults prior to arrival to save time at MEEC
- Be prepared: cell phone, water bottles, insect repellent, etc.
- Bring pencils, clipboards, notebooks (if necessary)
- Bring lunches (no food is available from the Center)
 - Soda/juice/water vending machine is available and located outside the DNR Customer Service Center
- Radios, boom boxes, roller blades, etc are not allowed.
- The neighboring game farm (pheasant area) is a restricted area and not open to the public.

Sample Schedule for Day Field Trips

8:30 AM	Arrive at the MacKenzie Center Bus parks in Upper Parking Lot Check In (1 adult representing group) Bathroom Break (just outside DNR Customer Service office) Break Kids into smaller groups with Chaperones
9:00 AM	Begin Rotations * Group 1 Museums (Conservation, Aliens and Logging) Group 2 Wildlife Exhibit and climb Fire Tower Group 3 Trails on the South End of the property or Pond Study
10:30 AM	Rotate
12:00 PM	Lunch
12:30 PM	Rotate
2:00 PM	Meet back at the bus and depart MEEC

*Smaller groups can rotate thru all the activities as one group. Large Groups (100+) can break the rotations up into smaller chunks and begin in different spots as to not overlap, giving the kids the best opportunity for learning.

Please note that rotations for larger groups are critical when requested a MEEC staff member help with guided tours of the wildlife exhibit. Smaller groups insure a good learning environment for all students.