

## Biographical Summary of David C. Engleson

Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame — Biography Prepared 2012  
Induction Ceremony - April 20, 2013

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### Nomination and Biographical Credits

Nominated for induction into the WCHF submitted in 2012 by:

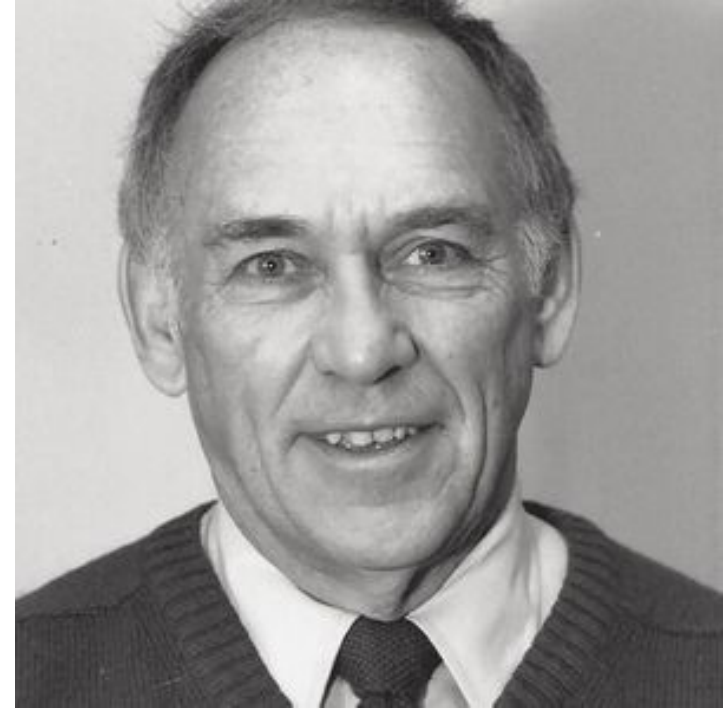
1. WAEE. The Wisconsin Association of Environmental Education and
2. WCEE. The Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (at UWSP)

Biographical Summary prepared July 2012 by:

Joe Passineau  
WAEE Representative on the WCHF Board of Directors and  
Professor Emeritus of Environmental Education  
UWSP College of Natural Resources

### Primary Sources for Biography:

1. Nomination Letter (submitted Feb. 5, 2012 by Joe Passineau; 2 pages)
2. Full Biography of David C. Engleson. Prepared by Joe Passineau in support of David's Nomination for Induction into the WCHF (15 pages, July 2012)
3. Autobiography prepared by David C. Engleson (7 pages; chronological without sectional headings; updated circa 2005)
4. Professional Resume prepared by David C. Engleson (4 pages; circa 1991)
5. Video Interview of David C. Engleson conducted by Dennis Yockers for the 2011 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WCEE Celebration, UWSP, ( Oct. 2010, 90 minutes).
6. About Environmental Education: A Wisconsin History 1928-2006. Compiled by David Engleson. (WAEE Website 2012. 5 pages).
7. Environmental Education in Wisconsin. 1974. Prepared by the Wisconsin Environmental Education Council. Includes the 1974 WI EE Plan, the proposed 1971 EE Act and the 1972 Executive Order No. 44. (22 pages).
8. Conversations with David Engleson, Michael Engleson, UWSP faculty, and other EE professionals.
9. Special Thanks to:
  - (a) Michael Engleson for forwarding his father's autobiography and for his assistance in preparing the "early years" and "family life" sections.
  - (a) Dennis Yockers for conducting and sharing the excellent interview with Dave, and
  - (b) Dave Engleson for, as usual, planning ahead and sharing his autobiography and interview. They were a biographer's treasure.



*David C. Engleson*

*Biographical Summary*

Prepared for  
Nomination for Induction into  
Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame

Induction Ceremony  
April 20, 2013

# Biographical Summary of David C. Engleson

## Nomination for Induction into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame - 2013

*This Biographical Summary was submitted by WAEE and WCEE in support of their nomination of David Engleson for induction into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame. A list of credits and sources is included at the end of this Summary.*

*Engleson will be inducted into the WCHF on Saturday, April 20, 2013.  
Biography prepared by Joe Passineau, WAEE Representative,; CNR, UWSP (July 2013)*

### Introduction

In recognition of his outstanding contributions and leadership to the fields of Conservation and Environmental Education, David C. Engleson has been nominated for induction into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame by two of the organizations which he helped to create, the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education and the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education. As a passionate and committed leader in this field, his influence has been felt by countless school children, teachers, citizens, industrial leaders, political leaders and governors. Those who know him best recognize him as "the father of EE in Wisconsin" and credit him with changing their lives while he also changed the world.

Throughout his professional career as a high school science and conservation teacher (1954 to 1967) and his 25 year tenure as the first EE Consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (1967 to 1991), he used his many talents, persistence, and gentle power of persuasion to advance the causes of conservation and education. His efforts helped to transform the earlier movements of Nature Study (early 1900s) and Conservation Education (championed in the 1940s by Fred Schmeckle and others already inducted into the WCHF) into the newer educational movement called Environmental Education (EE). EE sought to embrace the expanding science of ecology and advances in education to address the contemporary environmental and related social issues highlighted in the 1970s by Earth Day including the worldwide exploitation of resources, the deterioration of air and water quality, and the global impacts of pesticides, toxins, nuclear contamination and climate change.

### Early Life and Education

David C. Engleson was born in Beloit, Wisconsin on May 9, 1928. Raised for most of his life by his mother (his father died when he was quite young), he learned an appreciation for the outdoors early on. As a youngster, his uncle often took him to meetings of the local chapter of the Izaak Walton League, especially when movies on wildlife or other outdoor topics were scheduled to be shown. His uncle also took him fishing, especially on Lakes Mendota, Kegonsa, Winnebago and other lakes in Vilas County. These experiences stimulated his interest in conservation and the environment.

As an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin - Madison in 1948, Engleson was interested in majoring in Biological Aspects of Conservation. Because of the poor prospects for jobs in conservation, he was persuaded by Professor John Thompson to, instead, become a teacher. He graduated in 1954 with a major in Natural Science in the School of Education and took wildlife management courses from Joseph Hickey and A.W. Schorger. He never regretted his decision to go into education.

He completed his graduate studies while working as a science teacher in southern Wisconsin. In addition to receiving a Masters in Science Education from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) in 1959, he also studied a variety of science fields at Purdue University, the University of Minnesota, Michigan Tech, and Wayne State University.

### Family Life and Recreation (from Full Biography)

Dave also wrote poetry in his spare time, much of it in response to experiences he had while hiking, camping, fishing, and enjoying the great outdoors of Wisconsin. Those attending WAEE's Winter Workshop, in subzero January, also remember his dramatic recitation from memory of the evocative Robert Service poem, "The Cremation of Sam Magee". An avid camper, canoeist and hiker, he especially loved exploring the Sylvania Wilderness Area in Michigan, as well as the lakes and forests of Wisconsin's Northwoods. He also hiked much of the Ice Age Trail, and volunteered for many years with the Dane County Chapter of the Trail Alliance.

At home, he loved both vegetable and flower gardening and especially enjoys his backyard flowers while resting on a specially constructed Aldo Leopold bench, which he received as an honor from the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education.

He has shared much of his life with his wife, Peg, and with their children, Dick, Cathy, Chris and Mike. The family moved to Sun Prairie in 1970 from South Milwaukee after Dave took a job with the Department of Public Instruction. All of the Engleson children were raised with an appreciation for the environment and conservation. Dick, a house painter in Santa Fe, NM, enjoys exploring the southwest US, and Cathy, a physical therapist in Baraboo, spends many hours appreciating Devils Lake and other natural areas. Chris followed her father's lead into teaching, and is now an early childhood educator in Madison (she's also famous in the family for helping to assemble early copies of the WAEE newsletter). She enjoys camping and the outdoors as well.

His youngest son, Mike, selected conservation as a profession and currently is Membership and Communications Director for the statewide conservation organization Wisconsin Lakes. Having spent many summers camping, hiking and canoeing with his father and tagging along on trips to Trees for Tomorrow and environmental education workshops across the state, he turned to environmental work himself after receiving a degree in law from UW-Madison, volunteering and working with groups such as the Ice Park & Trail Foundation, 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin, and the River Alliance of Wisconsin. Dave's legacy continues in his family as his granddaughter Kallan, Mike's daughter, loves to canoe and kayak, and has gained a fascination for the outdoors through summer camps at a local nature center and spending time in nature with her parents.

his exemplary leadership and service as DPI EE Consultant; the Soil Conservation Society of America –Wisconsin Chapter's 1986 Award for Meritorious Service to Environmental Education; the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation's 2001 Leadership Award; and the 1991 Renew America Award recognizing Wisconsin as having the nation's most outstanding environmental education program. (Engleson submitted the award application and represented the state at the awards ceremony in Washington D.C.). See Full Biography for a List of Honors and Awards.

### His Legacy

Engleson's influence on Wisconsin's Conservation Legacy is truly impressive. As EE Consultant for the DPI for nearly three decades, he helped shape the policies of three governors, the state legislature, state agencies, and local school boards. He worked effectively within the DPI to bring EE to every school district, teacher, and child in the state through his efforts to update Administrative Rules for teacher training and certification and for curriculum planning for EE, his work in developing educational materials and in-service teacher workshops, and by writing the hallmark *DPI Guide to Curriculum Planning in EE* (which also advanced EE both nationally and internationally).

With his warm, gentle, engaging and enthusiastic personality, Engleson had a remarkable ability to bring people together, harness diverse talents, and build coalitions of support for EE and Conservation. With persistence and dedication, he perfected his "Can Do" philosophy by using the committee approach, organizing EE conferences, developing EE plans, creating and leading EE organizations, developing EE teacher training programs, drafting and lobbying for EE legislation, writing and editing newsletters, books, and journals articles, and promoting EE statewide, nationally and globally.

During the half century spanning 1950-2000, Engleson knew and/or worked, in one way or another, with just about everyone involved in Conservation and Education in Wisconsin. This knowledge proved equally useful as he helped shape conservation and education in Wisconsin and later as he advised the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame on which nominees were worthy of induction.

Engleson was one among a small vanguard nationally that transformed Conservation Education into Environmental Education and is known by professionals in the field as "the father of EE in Wisconsin". He worked with or followed in the footsteps of other great leaders in Wisconsin who used the tools of education and persuasion to champion the causes of conservation. As such, he continued along the path of other notable educators already inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame including John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Sigurd Olson, Fred Schmeckle, Gaylord Nelson, Pearl Pohl, Wilhelmine La Budde, Owen Gromme, Fran Hammerstrom, Cedric Vig, Leo Nickasch, and Wakelin McNeel,

He was equally comfortable with children, teachers, sportsman, environmentalists, politicians, and industrial leaders. He led and promoted the causes of many environmental education organizations including WAEE, CEA, and NAAEE and contributed greatly to such conservation organizations as the Ice Age Trail Foundation, Nature Conservancy, and the Sierra Club.

It is, however, as a lifetime educator that he has had his greatest impact. For nearly 40 years, he touched the lives of thousands of students, teachers, and aspiring environmental educators. This legacy was perhaps most evident when he received standing ovations for the highest awards from state and national EE organizations (WAEE and NAAEE) and from the WCEE during its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in 2011. Many in attendance clearly recognized him as "the father of EE in Wisconsin" and credited his leadership, inspiration and mentoring as reasons they, themselves, became teachers, environmental educators, and leaders within the profession.

### Professional Career: Science Teacher and DPI's first EE Consultant

Early in his professional career as a science teacher in southern Wisconsin (1954-1967), Engleson became especially interested in conservation and environmental education. In 1955 he started taking his students to Trees for Tomorrow, took summer teacher workshops there in 1957 and 1962, and was invited by Mully Taylor, Director of Trees for Tomorrow, to serve on the camp's Advisory Council. He continued to serve TFT in this capacity for more than 40 years.

In 1961 he became the Science Department Coordinator at the then new Franklin (WI) High School. His interests in Conservation Education led him to develop and team-teach a new conservation course with a member of the Social Studies department. It was required of all juniors, the only such *required* high school conservation course in Wisconsin. Engleson taught this course until he left Franklin in 1967.

In 1967, Engleson made a career change that would dramatically change him and, in turn, the state of Wisconsin. Based on his exemplary work as a science teacher/coordinator and his leadership in the Wisconsin Council for Conservation Education, he was appointed to become the first Science and Conservation/Environmental Education Consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, a position he held until his retirement in 1991. In this position he worked with every school district in Wisconsin helping them develop EE curriculum plans and educational materials, conducted in-service EE workshops for teachers, and developed new Administrative Rules for teacher training/certification in EE and for district curriculum planning in EE.

In 1985 he published the highly acclaimed *DPI Guide to Curriculum Planning in Environmental Education* (based on international recommendations in the 1977 UNESCO Tbilisi Declaration on EE). As the first of its kind, this Guide served as a model for EE Guides in other states and nations. The Guide, and its 1994 updated and expanded edition, became instant bestsellers with over 50,000 copies sold worldwide, was translated into several languages, and received the American Library Association Award.

### Leadership in Environmental Education

His most significant achievements as the DPI Consultant for EE were, however, related to his remarkable ability to bring people together, harness diverse talents, and build coalitions for EE and conservation. As illustrated in the following complete biography, he did this repeatedly for over 30 years by organizing conferences and workshops, creating and leading organizations, drafting and lobbying for legislation, developing EE Plans for Wisconsin, conducting EE teacher training programs, publishing newsletters, articles and books, and promoting EE statewide, nationally and globally.

In 1970 Engleson helped plan and coordinate the First Governor's Conference on EE sponsored by Governor Warren Knowles. This conference brought together diverse segments of Wisconsin including educators, civic and conservation organizations, government agencies, and business and industry. Recommendations of this conference formed the basis of the proposed 1971 Wisconsin EE Act which Engleson drafted. Newly elected Governor Patrick Lucey chose instead to implement the provisions of this Act by signing the 1972 Executive Order No. 44. This Order created the Wisconsin EE Council which was directed to create the first State Plan for EE, provide assistance to state and local agencies, coordinate EE activities, and distribute allocated funds. Engleson served as WEEC's first Executive Director and helped produce the 1974 Wisconsin State Plan for EE. Forty years later, this plan still stands as a comprehensive and challenging mandate for EE in Wisconsin by outlining key Needs and Priorities, important Sectors/Players, and the Roles/Strategies that each sector should focus on.

Over the next 40 years, Engleson and his EE colleagues, worked hard to implement, with remarkable success, the basic tenets of this plan. In an effort to ensure that the EE advances he championed during his career would continue into the next century, he helped draft and gain passage of the 1990 Wisconsin EE Act which created the Wisconsin EE Board (WEEB). WEEB was designed to institutionalize EE planning and coordination statewide and to provide a mechanism of grant funding for EE projects and programs.

The 1990 EE Act also created the Wisconsin EE Center at UWSP to provide statewide services to teachers through EE program development, an EE resource library, and outreach activities. Over the past 20 years, both WEEB and WCEE have been remarkably successful. Engleson served as the WEEB Executive Secretary until his retirement in 1991 and continues to advise and support the WCEE. At the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the WCEE in 2011, Engleson was honored with a standing ovation and recognized as “the father of EE in Wisconsin” by his friends and colleagues including WCEE Director Randy Champeau, UWSP EE Faculty (Rick Wilke, Dan Sivek, Dennis Yockers, Joe Passineau) and numerous teachers and statewide leaders in EE.

During the three decades Engleson served as EE Consultant for the DPI, he helped create and teach a great variety of EE teacher workshops and university courses including some based on his Guide to Curriculum Planning in EE. In 1972, he served as Associate Director of one of the first National Science Foundation (NSF) funded teacher training programs which was offered through the UW-Superior. In the 1980s and 1990s, he also collaborated with UW-Stevens Point in developing and teaching, as adjunct professor, a series of EE Courses for Teachers funded by NSF. Over the past 20 years, these UWSP initiatives have led to the esteemed Masters in EE for Teachers Degree at UWSP.

In 1977 Engleson brought the highly successful *Project Learning Tree* to Wisconsin and served as PLT State Director from 1977 to the mid 1980s, responsible for training facilitators, scheduling workshops, and distributing PLT materials. When *Project WILD* came into the state, he worked with DNR personnel to help coordinate and implement this program. In 1980 he also became the state director for *The Class Project*, a National Wildlife Federation program for middle school students.

### International Environmental Education Initiatives

In 1972 the United Nations sponsored its first major Conference on the Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, signaling a global awakening of environmental concern. Recognizing EE as a key solution, UNESCO, in turn, sponsored two international conferences which are still viewed as launching EE onto the global stage: the 1975 Belgrade Conference and the 1977 Tbilisi Conference.

In 1976 Engleson was invited to serve as a consultant to the UNESCO sponsored North American Regional Seminar of Environmental Education, which examined and reacted to the 1975 Belgrade Charter, a UNESCO document produced a year earlier. The group then developed recommendations for the Tbilisi Declaration, a UNESCO document produced in 1977 that became the basis for environmental education worldwide. In 1978, a United States Leadership Conference on Environmental Education recommended that state departments of education develop materials and programs based on the Tbilisi Declaration. Engleson brought together Wisconsin environmental educators to develop such a program, the first, and for a long time, the only such program in the nation. As noted above, in 1985 he published the highly acclaimed Guide to Curriculum Planning in Environmental Education (based on the Tbilisi Declaration).

### Leadership in Environmental Education and Conservation Organizations

**WAEE.** Throughout his professional career and for years into his retirement, Engleson contributed to various conservation and environmental education organizations. To advance EE statewide, Engleson led efforts to transform the Wisconsin Council for Conservation Education (WCCE) which began in 1962 into the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAEE), created in 1974. Through his guidance and leadership, WAEE is now recognized as the premier professional EE organization serving both formal and non-formal educators statewide. In addition to serving as WAEE Chair and Board Member (1964-74), he also served as Executive Secretary (1975-1987) and initiated the WAEE winter and spring workshops which continue to serve members and teachers. In 1975 he received WAEE's Aldo Leopold Award for Meritorious Service and in 1985 a Special Service Award in gratitude for 10 years as Executive Secretary. In 1991 WAEE also honored him during his retirement celebration at Devils Lake State Park.

In 2005, WAEE again recognized Dave's leadership, commitment and inspiration by creating the “David Engleson Award” to help recognize other leaders within the profession.

**CEA and NAAEE.** Engleson was also active in national EE organizations during the 1970s and 1980s. He was an active member of the Conservation Education Association (CEA), a national organization created by Fred Schmeeckle and other pioneers in the field. Engleson served as a member of the CEA Board of Directors for several terms, and in 1972 as the co-chair of its national conference in Lincoln, Nebraska. He became a life member of the organization in the mid-1970s. He joined the National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE) when it was formed in the early 1970s, presented at conferences and became a life member when CEA merged with NAAEE in the 1988. He also started the Council of State Environmental Education Consultants, a subsidiary of that group. In 1988, NAAEE recognized Engleson's exemplary leadership and service to EE when it presented him and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction with the NAAEE “Outstanding Institutional Environmental Education Award.” In 1991, NAAEE again honored him with the “Award for Outstanding Individual Service to Environmental Education.”

**State Conservation Organizations.** Engleson also served as a long-time advisor to two of Wisconsin's most esteemed educational centers. He was on the Advisory Board for Trees for Tomorrow from 1967 into the 1990s and on the Advisory Board of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College from 1975 until the 1990s. He was also a member of many other conservation and education organizations including the American Nature Study Society, Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers, Educators for Social Responsibility, Wisconsin Environmental Decade, Union of Concerned Scientists, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, and the Nature Conservancy.

**WCHF.** Engleson also served on the Board of Governors of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame (WCHF) for many years and in so doing helped the Conservation Hall of Fame select the “best of the best” for inclusion into the Wisconsin Conservation Story. The Board of Governors serves as an independent panel of scholars/historians which recommends nominees for induction to the WCHF Board (composed of representatives of the member organizations).

**IAPATF.** During retirement, he became very active in the Dane County Chapter of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, served on the IAPTF Board of Directors, and chaired its Education Committee which produced educational publications for the Lodi Marsh Trail, and worked on a Master Plan for Education on the Ice Age Trail. The Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation presented him with its Leadership Award for the Year 2000-2001 for his contributions.

### Publications and Presentations

As a teacher and leading spokesperson for EE, Engleson made countless presentations at state and national conferences, teacher workshops, legislative hearings, and other forums. His writing also greatly influenced the profession of EE within the state and nationally. As noted above, his 1985 and 1994 editions of *A Guide to Curriculum Planning in Environmental Education* received national and international recognition and have significantly advanced the field of formal K-12 education and teacher training. In addition, he created newsletters for WAEE and the Wisconsin DPI, wrote many journal articles, edited conference proceedings, and served for 13 years as Consulting Editor of the Journal of Environmental Education, the nation's most prestigious professional journal in EE. See Full Biography for a List of Publications.

### Honors and Awards

In recognition of his contributions and many years of service, Engleson received the most prestigious awards from state and national EE professional organizations including: WAEE's “1975 Aldo Leopold Award for Meritorious Service”; NAAEE's “1991 Award for Outstanding Individual Service to Environmental Education” and its 1988 “Outstanding Institutional Environmental Education Award” presented to the Wisconsin DPI and, in turn, to Engleson for