

Opening Statement
The Honorable Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife
Thursday, October 15, 2009
H.R. 3644, *the Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Regional Program and National Environmental Literacy Grant Program Act*

Over recent years, experts have observed that our modern lifestyle has led to children spending more time indoors watching television than being outside. The growing disconnect between children and their natural world has been shown to negatively impact child development, and may hamper a child's ability to make decisions as an adult.

In coastal watershed regions such as Guam, where global warming is creating dramatic ecosystem changes, this "nature-deficit disorder" could significantly undermine our stewardship of the natural resources upon which economic development and human health depend. Many experts agree that the best way to remedy this situation is to develop a citizenry that is environmentally literate.

The idea of improving environmental literacy and connecting children to the outdoors through direct contact with nature should be something we can all support. New research shows that children who go outside for hands-on learning have a better understanding of math and science, improved self-esteem, are more motivated to learn, and experience better health through lower rates of attention deficit disorders, obesity, stress, and depression.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has taken on the task to increase environmental literacy in the general public. NOAA's Bay-Watershed Education and Training Program, better known as "B-WET", and Environmental Literacy Grant Program have made great strides in advancing ocean, atmospheric, and environmental literacy in the United States.

Our colleague from California, Congresswoman Lois Capps, introduced H.R. 3644 to formally codify both education grant programs. These outstanding programs have a proven track record of successful hands-on educational experiences. In addition, this legislation will expand access to these two grant programs to island territories in the Pacific Ocean, including the island of Guam which I am honored to represent.

I would like to thank the Congresswoman and her staff for their hard work on this bill. It is imperative, now more than ever, that our Nation's young people not only understand the world around them, but also how their actions affect the environment upon which we all depend. I look forward to working with Congresswoman Capps and the other members of the subcommittee to move this bill forward.