

<http://erenweb.org>  
[erenteam@gmail.com](mailto:erenteam@gmail.com)

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## **Greetings from the EREN Coordinator's Office**

Welcome to our newest members! Thank you for joining EREN and thereby showing an interest in participating in collaborative ecological projects that advance science and education. We are five months into our five year funding cycle with the National Science Foundation and have been focused on developing EREN policies, building a web page, and piloting our first project measuring carbon accumulation in permanent forest plots. Our short-term goal is to try some protocols out with students at the EREN Founder schools and work out some of the bugs. Then, we will invite our broader membership to join the project and teach their students through authentic research as they contribute to what we hope will eventually be a multi-author publication. See the authorship policy on the EREN webpage (<http://erenweb.org>) for more information about how this could work. Other collaborative projects are in development and eventually we will be ready for your ideas too, so stay tuned through our web page, our Facebook site, and our occasional newsletter!

Laurie Anderson, EREN Coordinator  
Ohio Wesleyan University

## **Summary of EREN's RCN Grant**

The Ecological Research as Education Network (EREN) is funded by the National Science Foundation's Research Coordination Network (RCN) Program. EREN will facilitate and develop collaborations among primarily undergraduate institutions (PUI) on ecological research projects at regional and continental scales. Through long-term, coordinated data collection at a network of sites, this project aims to provide insights and tools to identify and analyze broad ecological patterns, thus allowing PUIs with limited resources to enhance their contributions to ecological science and environmental policy. The specific studies within EREN, which currently include topics such as carbon accumulation in tree plots and decomposition of invasive plants, will rely on extensive student engagement and collaboration with faculty through standard teaching labs, as part of summer research experiences, and in a continental ecology course module. Data collected will be shared extensively and in a transparent manner through an online database for use in teaching, and will hopefully provide a foundation for multi-authored publications for EREN participants.

## Get to Know the People in EREN

### Dr. Laurel J. Anderson, Ohio Wesleyan University

Dr. Anderson, Network Coordinator and Chair of the Leadership Working Group for EREN, is an Associate Professor in the Botany-Microbiology Department at Ohio Wesleyan University. She teaches introductory courses in general biology and ecology, as well as upper level classes in plant ecology and global change. Her primary research interest is plant physiological ecology, the study of how physiological processes affect species interactions, community patterns, and ecosystem processes. She has published research on a wide range of topics, including species interactions and water relations in oak savannas, mechanisms affecting species coexistence in subalpine forests, and plant responses to past and future changes in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>. Her current research program focuses on the ecology of the invasive herb *Alliaria petiolata* (garlic mustard) as well as developing and facilitating large-scale, collaborative ecology projects through EREN. Dr. Anderson graduated from Colby College in 1988 with a B.A. in Biology/Environmental Science, and obtained her Ph.D. in Plant Ecology from the University of Colorado in 1994.

Dr. Anderson's webpage can be found at:

<https://sites.google.com/a/owu.edu/anderson-lab-homepage-owu/>

### Dr. Jeffrey A. Simmons, Mount St. Mary's University

Dr. Simmons, Chair of the Research Working Group for EREN, is an Associate Professor of Environmental Science in the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at Mount St. Mary's University in central Maryland. He teaches in the introductory Biology sequence as well as several upper-level courses including Ecology, Toxicology, Environmental Science and Conservation Biology. His research interests are in ecosystem ecology, aquatic ecology and biogeochemistry. He has studied the ecological impacts of acid mine drainage from coal mining and of nutrient loadings from wastewater treatment plants. The bioaccumulation of toxic metals by aquatic plants is another sphere of interest. Currently, his research is focused on the toxicity of high salt concentrations to freshwater aquatic plants and algae and the biogeochemistry of water willow-dominated streams. Dr. Simmons received his B.A. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Rochester in 1987 and his M.S. and Ph.D. in Forest Science from Cornell University in 1991 and 1993, respectively.

Dr. Simmons' webpage can be found at:

<http://faculty.msmary.edu/simmons/>

## The Ecologist's Toolbox

In this section we encourage our members to share "tricks of the trade" that have helped them be more efficient and productive in the teaching/research missions we pursue. If you have a tip to share, please send it to [erenteam@gmail.com](mailto:erenteam@gmail.com) along with your name and affiliation so we can credit you properly!

This "Ecologist's Toolbox" contribution is from Dr. Karen Kuers (Department of Forestry and Geology, Sewanee, University of the the South), an EREN Founder and Lead Scientist of the EREN carbon project.

To efficiently survey trees in a 20 x 20 m plot with a class, divide the plot into 5 x 5 m sections and place a colored surveyor flag at the base of each tree to be surveyed. Use four different colors of flags, and rotate them such that adjacent 5 x 5 m plots are marked with different colors. This allows subgroups of students to work in their own 5 x 5 m plots without getting mixed up and can also facilitate mapping of trees in the site.

## Upcoming events, meetings of interest to EREN members

### 2010 North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

September 29-October 2, 2010

New York State Outdoor Education Association, Buffalo-Niagara, New York

NAAEE 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Research Symposium: September 28-29, 2010

More Information: <http://www.naaee.org/conference/>

### Ecology and Education Summit: Environmental Literacy for a Sustainable World

*Sponsored by the Ecological Society of America*

October 14-15, 2010

National Education Association, Washington, DC

More Information: <http://www.esa.org/eesummit/>

### Creating a Culture of Research on Campus: A Seminar for Deans, Faculty, IT Specialists, Librarians and Research Officers

*Sponsored by the Council on Undergraduate Research*

October 15-16, 2010

The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA

More Information: <http://www.cur.org/pdf/cultureresearch.pdf>

International Symposium on Sustainability Science: An Emerging Paradigm  
and the Urban Environment

October 25-27, 2010

Institute for Sustainability Studies, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ

More Information: <http://csam.montclair.edu/sustainabilitystudies/>

EREN Founders Meeting

November 5-6, 2010

Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, OH

Topics: carbon project, using data collected this fall in labs; continued development of the web page and database; curriculum to match the carbon project; new project development.

More Information: <http://erenweb.org/about/upcoming-events/>

Meeting of Research Coordination Networks Grant Recipients

December 6-7, 2010

National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA