

## AWLS Summer 2007

The AWLS visit was eight days and seven nights well spent. My colleagues and I scarcely had time to rest during our late June stay as we were whisked from one activity to the next. Our days were filled with curriculum, field trips, dynamic guest speakers, and knowledge fit for use in our programs and classrooms. SCI's own curriculum guides were augmented with curriculum from Project Wild, National Parks, BLM, Fish and Game, as well as expertise from the AWLS staff and idea sharing from fellow participants. In short, it was a remarkable opportunity to learn new ideas, share expertise, and find inspiration in Wyoming's backcountry.

In addition to the curriculum and program offered at AWLS, the networking opportunities were plentiful. It is a rare opportunity to work with such a diverse group of people and it was refreshing to share ideas and learn from educators from each of the geographic regions of our country. That many of us have remained in contact since our stay speaks volumes to the usefulness of this opportunity.

The staff at AWLS rolled out the red carpet for us by providing excellent meals, comfortable accommodations, local expertise, and friendly faces. That these individuals possessed a passion for and knowledge of the outdoors, only added to overall feeling that SCI is serious about providing quality educational experiences.

As Director of Woodleaf Outdoor School in Northern California, I found the experience inspiring and ultimately useful in my day to day program operations. I also found myself, during my Wyoming stay, wishing I had my entire staff in attendance. The refresher course in ecology offered through Penn State, the survival class, all of the discussions regarding wildlife management, as well as the in-depth looks at various wildlife habitats are all relevant to the instruction provided at Woodleaf. Since my return I have incorporated much of the AWLS survival information into our existing survival class and have augmented several of our other classes with curriculum from the AWLS experience. Indeed, much of what we covered fits well with classes we offer such as Pond Ecology, Forest Ecology, and Native American studies.

As a fellow outdoor educator I have long known the impact that the environment has on the education of youth. Our heritage is closely tied with the lands and wildlife that surrounds us. Unfortunately, the children in our schools do not always have the opportunities to hike, hunt, fish, photograph, or just sit and contemplate the out-of-doors. Losing these opportunities could have long range and negative impacts on the health of our citizens and the habitats that support our wildlife. As such, the efforts of SCI through AWLS are commendable, if not essential to the effective education of our youth. Indeed, for each educator in attendance, there are scores of students who will ultimately reap the benefits of the quality training each of us had. As such, I can truly say that the AWLS training is as good as any I have experienced in my career.