

# **National Association of Environmental Professionals**

## **White Paper**

### **The Spirit of the Affiliation Agreement**

#### **Opening Statement**

It is our belief that together we are stronger and that strong friendships and affiliations begin with a belief that each individual, and in our case each NAEP member and Chapter member, will find value in our professional interactions, our connectedness and our mutual interests. With this new NAEP and Chapter Affiliation Agreement we begin taking the steps toward a trusting relationship and an assurance that there are mutual benefits for NAEP and its Chapters to be closely linked.

#### **Where did Our Affiliation Begin?**

For each state or regional association linked with NAEP, our affiliation began during the chapter's formation with NAEP's support and guidance in how to effectively bring environmental professionals together for exchange and dialogue and how to create a sustainable professional organization. Since that time, NAEP and the Chapters have interacted in a variety of professional ways and most prominently in the coordination and occurrences of NAEP's annual conferences and other national or regional events.

In 2004, NAEP introduced chapter affiliation agreements nationwide. Many, but not all, Chapters ratified these agreements at that time. The genesis of the current Affiliation Agreement occurred at a September 2007 NAEP/Chapter retreat. At this retreat, it was apparent that both NAEP and Chapters sought a greater realization in the NAEP/Chapter relationship with the goal of improving the mutual benefits of all member levels for both the Chapters and NAEP. Strengthening that NAEP /Chapter relationship and the value given to one another was a major priority identified at the NAEP Strategic Planning Session held in August 2008. One of the session's resultant tasks to support this goal of a stronger relationship was re-evaluating and revising the NAEP/Chapter Affiliation Agreement.

#### **What is the Affiliation Agreement?**

At the January 23, 2010 NAEP Board of Directors meeting, the Board approved the Affiliation Agreement that has been in development since 2008. The document represents the hard work and commitment of many individuals within NAEP and incorporates the insightful comments and input from most of the Chapters and their leadership. Discussions at all levels have been frank and honest, like they should be; and affirming, a great basis for understanding and progress toward strengthening our relationship.

NAEP recognizes the unique and individual circumstances of each Chapter and we have sought to find the best association between NAEP and the Chapters. This Agreement is a way that all Chapters can recognize their membership in a larger organization with national experience, expertise and prominence. It is also a way to recognize the interrelationships we all have to each other professionally.

The Affiliation Agreement does not intend to alienate any current or future Chapters, their leaderships or their memberships. It is meant as a mutually beneficial association between the Chapters and NAEP, an association and friendship that began many years ago. We believe it provides a means for NAEP to start expanding our benefits to Chapter members and not limiting that benefit to just NAEP members.

### **What are the Local Benefits?**

The benefits to the Chapters are articulated in the Agreement. The benefits include conference and training discounts, national e-News, chapter representation and use of NAEP logo, on-line access to *Environmental Practice* articles, and Chapter listings on the NAEP website. *Environmental Practice*, NAEP's peer reviewed journal that is widely distributed to major universities and libraries here and abroad, is the only national journal on environmental practices. An on-line version of the journal will be launched this year. The NAEP national office also sends e-blasts of Chapter events to NAEP members.

Beyond these benefits are opportunities for each affiliated Chapter member to be associated with a national organization that attests to professional standards of practice and a code of ethics. Affiliate Chapter members can also access national experts in all fields of environmental practice and embrace opportunities to provide their expertise to a national audience. In these instances, the experts, the local professionals and the attentive audiences all gain, while the Chapter improves its ability for wider professional development opportunities of its members. NAEP also offers Chapters access to and dialogue with key federal agencies, such as the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), US EPA, US DOE, and other resource and regulatory agencies. NAEP has a close association with the Academy of Board Certified Environmental Professionals (ABCEP), the only national certification organization for environmental professionals.

In addition, NAEP currently collects membership dues through on line website applications and secures credit card transactions for nearly all of the Chapters. Those costs are absorbed by NAEP and the full Chapter membership fee is given to the Chapter. The NAEP national office on a weekly basis assists Chapters with a variety of administrative requests. NAEP also directly supports initiatives of the Chapters to hold statewide or regional events and conferences to increase their professional exposure and membership. NAEP has also researched offering Chapters general liability and other association insurance through NAEP's policies and will be implementing an initiative on this soon. As NAEP becomes a stronger organization, we will increase our assistance to the Chapters in ways that provide the most value and mutual benefit.

### **What are the National Benefits?**

As part of the Affiliation Agreement, each Chapter will provide additional support to NAEP through the affiliation rate assessment. This will enable NAEP, through our Association Manager, Executive Committee and Board of Directors, to expand our outreach to Chapters and their members. We are working to initiate on-line environmental training, a national speakers list, more national exposure of local or regional Chapter events for travelling NAEP members, and support of Chapter events and membership drives (for new Chapter and NAEP members). These are just a few initiatives we have developed and discussed as we grow stronger together. We will grow this list as our membership grows. Also, there is strength in numbers. Another benefit to NAEP is with affiliate memberships in the thousands, NAEP would be much better positioned to act as a significant participant on the national

environmental stage. This increase in national prominence would in turn provide some mutual benefit back to the Chapters who will have a louder, more unified voice in the spectrum of current local, regional and national environmental policy, regulatory legislation and issues.

### **How does the Bottom Line Effect Our Mutual Success?**

Based upon the input we have heard, the largest challenge and concern for some Chapters is the cost associated with the NAEP/Chapter affiliation. The cost rate and number of NAEP members are directly related, yet inversely proportional. Simply put, the more NAEP members in a Chapter, the less cost to the Chapter per person. The Agreement has been developed with the idea and intent that this cost will decline as NAEP membership increases.

NAEP understands that the Chapters' budgets for the coming year have been set. Therefore, the Agreement's initiation date will start at the Chapter's next budget cycle. We believe this gives each Chapter time to assess its resources, and for NAEP, it gives us time to help Chapters increase your NAEP membership. The membership goal for NAEP members in each Chapter as expressed in the Agreement is first and foremost a goal. A goal that is worthy to aspire to over time. As noted in the Agreement, the time period is five years. It is a measure of success for the cooperative efforts between NAEP and the Chapters in the common pursuit of increasing membership at all levels and providing the highest quality professional interactions and interests possible.

### **Closing Statement: Where the Affiliation Agreement Leads Us**

The Affiliation Agreement is intended to support a stronger and more mutually-beneficial relationship between NAEP and the Chapters. The Agreement is the means whereby we start a new journey together; a journey we are confident will result in increased benefits to every member at every level of the Association and Chapters. We all benefit from the additional interactions, because we become better informed as environmental professionals and lead more enhanced career lives. Leadership begins with how we shape and create our future and the future of those we lead. It requires courage, conviction and empathy. We are all leaders, those of us taking this journey together; so let's lead the way. Together we have the power to create our future – a stronger more enduring future that gives to each of us the brightest and highest professional reward.