

Environmental Education in Theory and Practice
Recommendations for Roger Williams Park

by

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Thesis

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to make recommendations for improving environmental education in the Providence area. I begin with an explanation of why environmental education is a worthwhile activity. Following this rationale is a characterization of the conceptual process of environmental education and what we want to accomplish through that process. This theory of environmental education is related to what is going on in the Providence area, specifically at Roger Williams Park. In order to establish a context for discussing educational programming at Roger Williams Park, I have included a sample of the resources available for environmental education in the Providence area. This is accompanied by a discussion of how these resources are currently being used.

The final section of my thesis applies theories of environmental education in a critical assessment of the programs at Roger Williams Park. This large urban park has extensive facilities that are uniquely suited for environmental education. Early in the twentieth century, grand programs were frequently offered by the Park and this tradition has recently been renewed. Because the resources available at Roger Williams Park and the administrative structure of the Department of Public Parks influence what actually happens and affect the potential for growth, both are analyzed in greater depth. This provides the background for recommendations on how the Park could better facilitate environmental education. A complex political situation surrounds the Parks Department and has severe implications for realizing the potential for successful programming in Roger Williams Park. The situation is not optimistic, yet it should not be considered hopeless. Some small investments in planning, designing and implementing public programs at Roger Williams

Park are still possible and could dramatically improve environmental education in the Providence area.