

# Summary Sheet: Redefining Progress Ecological Footprint Proposal to the Environmental Protection Agency

“The Shadow We Cast:” Strengthening Environmental Education with the Ecological Footprint

## 1) Project Summary

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a) Organizations: **Redefining Progress (RP)** is a non-profit organization that works with a broad array of partners to shift the economy and public policy towards sustainability. As the international home of Ecological Footprint (Footprint) analysis, the world’s most popular measure of sustainability, we are frequently asked for materials and training to support educational use of the Footprint. Our **partners** in the project are **Creative Change Educational Solutions**, a non-profit organization providing curricula, training, and programs on sustainable development and ecological economics; and the **California Geographic Alliance**, a network of 5,500 educators that conducts workshops throughout the state.

b) Summary Statement: The Ecological Footprint is a scientifically reviewed framework for problem solving and critical thinking skills to help students understand cumulative environmental impacts. It is also a powerful tool for students to link the information they learn in the classroom to community issues and personal choices. This project is the third phase of RP’s education work. In the first phase, we researched current use of the Footprint as an educational tool with program development funds from the Packard Foundation. We found that many teachers currently use Footprint analysis in the classroom, but some important gaps in existing materials have hindered wider use. The second phase (to be completed by October 2004) is a partnership with Earth Day Network to develop and test lesson plans and other educational materials that fill these gaps. In this project, the third phase, RP will provide training for over 100 California teachers in grades 7-12 in the use of the newly developed learning materials. The project’s **goal** is to help teachers *develop teaching skills and knowledge* to integrate into their classroom instruction both the scientific and social aspects of humanity’s use of renewable resources, using the Footprint concept.

Our **objectives** are to: 1) Design full-day teacher training modules and guides for teacher-trainers to run workshops that give participating educators the background and skills they need to utilize the lesson plans and multi-media applications that will result from our curriculum-development partnership with EarthDay Network; 2) Prepare four teacher-educators from partner organizations to deliver teacher training; 3) Hold four teacher workshops around the state of California, teaching at least 100 geography and other social studies participant educators the skills they need to use and integrate the Footprint into their teaching, reaching at least 5,000 students. Participant educators will identify opportunities to use their new skills and develop ideas for linking Footprint instruction to community activities within schools and in their communities; 4) Support participant educators via an online community, with opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences with other educators; 5) Evaluate feedback from participant educators on the effectiveness of the module in improving their knowledge of the Footprint and skill levels in relating concepts to their current teaching topics. Use matching funds to update training materials based on their feedback; and 6) Disseminate Footprint-based lesson plans, supporting materials, and teacher training materials at a national education conference, through the Internet, and through partners’ existing networks.

c) Educational Priority: We will focus on improving participant educators’ knowledge and skills (EPA Priority #5) in teaching problem solving and inquiry based course work, using Footprint analysis as a tool. Participant educators will receive the materials, training, and support to successfully integrate Footprint analysis into lesson plans that pique students’ interests while challenging and improving their skills as problem solvers and critical thinkers.

d) Delivery Method: Lesson plans and other materials will be delivered to participant educators through professional development at workshops and a national conference. RP and partner organizations will also disseminate the materials to their networks and through their Internet sites.

e) Audience: Our primary audience is at least 100 geography and social studies teachers who reach students in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Inclusion in these subject areas will help speed the integration of environmental education into all fields of study, beyond the sciences. Each teacher will reach at least 50 students in their first year for a total of 5,000 students of diverse backgrounds. More students will benefit as teachers reach out to other teachers and continue to use their lesson plans in future years.