February 12, 2011

Dear Yosemite Institute Education Team,

Greetings, my name is Jenna Beers and I am very excited to be applying to the Yosemite Institute. It has been a long time dream of mine to work as a field educator for your organization. I feel most alive when I am exploring natural environments, and am deeply committed to my work with children. As such, I have found Environmental Education to be my calling and I am committed sharing this love and excitement for natural environments with our youth.

As the program coordinator and teacher for the Youth Stewardship Program I had the daily privilege to educate San Francisco public school students from a diverse range of backgrounds, in the remnant natural spaces within their urban environment. I work in hopes of inspiring a connection to and reverence for these and other natural spaces, within my students. I believe that socially and environmentally responsible lifestyles begin with this deeply felt appreciation.

I have seen the profound influence that outdoor education has on children through my work at UC Berkeley, in the Youth Stewardship Program, as well as at Hidden Villa, an outdoor education camp. Hidden Villa is dedicated to developing multicultural understanding as well as environmental awareness. This is accomplished by bringing together a socio-economically and culturally diverse group of youth and staff to explore the wonder of summer on an organic farm and in the wilderness of the mountains. At Hidden Villa, I assisted campers to break down social barriers through their shared experiences in the wilderness and cooperative farming. Affording access, to environmental education, for students of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds is a central focus of mine, and one that seems embraced by the Yosemite Institute ..

I resonate deeply with the educational pedagogies of YI. Inquiry-based education is the style of education that I have found most effective, authentic and impressionable for my students. In addition HI’s core frameworks are entirely aligned with those of the Youth Stewardship Program. Sense of Place and Interdependence are two of our five education modules, and each of our field trips includes a hands-on restoration project to enliven the student’s sense of stewardship. These similarities contribute to why YI seems like an excellent fit for me.

Both my job experience and schooling have prepared me to be a part of Yosemite Institute. I graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in May of 2009 with a BS in Conservation and Resource Studies, focusing on Environmental Education and Ecology. I also have minors in Education and Forestry. Throughout my time at UC Berkeley I sought out every opportunity for field education, providing me with a strong background in ecology and experiential education. I have pioneered an array of programs including a mentoring program called The Sage project as well as a student run environmental education course. I have also worked as a teacher’s assistant for a central course in Environmental Education at UC Berkeley.

I am creative, responsible and determined, and I work to affect positive change and equal access. I want to work to bridge this disconnect between our youth and natural spaces and inspire children to be in awe of their environment. I think that outdoor education, both structured and playful, should be in the life of every child. This education helps children develop into people compassionate about creating a just and sustainable future.