Date: 5/16/2011

Kim Lazier  
Mentor Teacher

Yosemite Institute  
PO Box 487  
Yosemite, CA 95389

Dear Ms. Lazier:

I am applying for a Fall 2011 Field Educator position with Yosemite Institute (YI) because I am passionate about facilitating positive experiences for people in wilderness settings that foster increased environmental awareness, personal growth, and community building. I feel that I am a strong candidate for the Field Educator position, and would be a potent asset to YI, because of my broad knowledge-base of natural and manipulated ecosystems, coupled with 3 years of experience in experiential and outdoor environmental education (EE).

Education and concurrent employment at the University of California-Davis, from 7/2008 to 12/2010 strengthened my theoretical and applied knowledge of natural sciences, and my ability to effectively share this knowledge with others. In addition to earning a Master of Science degree in International Agricultural Development, I was continuously employed as a researcher in the Agroecosystems Laboratory, where I had the opportunity to mentor undergraduate, and high-school students in the application of the scientific method as a process to understand complex systems. In addition I was employed as a teaching assistant for a course in Forest Ecology, where I was able to share my enthusiasm with undergraduates through lectures, hands-on activities, and thematic tours in the Arboretum. I also assumed extra-curricular activities such as co-developing a teaching curriculum on California Ethnobotany for the Children’s Ecological Garden, consisting of native planting demonstrations, docent-led tours, and course interpretational materials.

Prior to attending graduate school, I worked as a Teacher-Naturalist with Westminster Woods Environmental Education Program for 2.5 years, where I gained a foundation in designing and delivering customized inquiry-based EE programs, which were highly relevant, culturally appropriate, and served the needs of participants from a diversity of communities including urban residents, and English Language Learners. I also worked as a Challenge Course Facilitator for a total of 2.5 years at Westminster Woods, The Next Level, and Camp Tawonga, where I led a wide-array of team-building activities, and honed my ability to implement and model risk management to participants and fellow staff members, insuring a physically and emotionally safe environment for all involved. In the summer of 2006 I developed a love for, and knowledge of, Yosemite National Park, through my work as a Wilderness Leader for Camp Tawonga where I was solely responsible for leading campers safely over uneven terrain in the backcountry for an average of 6 miles per day. Through these experiences I have become skilled at navigating the space between encouraging participants to challenge themselves in the outdoors under sometimes-adverse conditions, and insuring that they are safe and relatively comfortable, in order to provide an empowering experience in nature. Furthermore, these positions have given me a thorough understanding of challenges that may arise in communicating an array of ecological curriculum to youth in a living-classroom, and have afforded me the opportunity to cultivate effective solutions in diverse situations.

Besides experience in teaching EE and a strong foundation in the natural sciences, I am fluent in Spanish and Polish and can comfortably teach in both languages. I have been certified in Wilderness First Aid (2006-2008) and am excited to pursue certification as a Wilderness First Responder in August 2011. I would also bring to YI community-building and conflict resolution skills, mindfulness and yoga training, and an aptitude for connecting wilderness experiences to participants’ daily lives and communities. It would be an honor to work with YI in sharing the wonders of the natural world with culturally and financially diverse youth, and I greatly appreciate your consideration and review of my attached resume.

Sincerely,

Paula Wild  
M.S. International Agricultural Development