Berkshire Museum hosts the 2015 Berkshire Region MITS Summer Institute

Professional development opportunity for area educators to focus on innovative STEM skills

[PITTSFIELD, MA] -- The Berkshire Museum will host the Berkshire Region Museum Institute for Teaching Science (MITS) summer session, July 6 to 10, 2015, for middle and high school teachers. This year’s theme is Going with the Flow: Using Inquiry Methods to Teach Watershed Science. The Berkshire Museum is the lead educational partner for MITS in the Berkshires. The program is presented with instructing partners Housatonic Valley Association, Flying Cloud Institute, and American Rivers.

This exciting professional development program will focus on the ecology and history of our local rivers and watersheds. Participants will learn from experts about what is affecting water quality in the rivers that flow through our communities and how scientists effectively measure watershed health using principles of ecology, engineering, and robotics. The week-long Institute includes outside exploration of local rivers and time indoors at the museum for hands-on inquiry based projects.

Institute participants will build and use a SeaPerch underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) and then take it back to their classrooms. The SeaPerch ROV is used to take videos of underwater ecosystems and collect water samples. SeaPerch curriculum serves as an introduction to basics in engineering, ship and submarine design, and an exploration of ways that engineers have been able to explore places that are too dangerous or unreachable for humans to visit.

The educators will explore a variety of methods to test water quality including Benthic Macro Invertebrate and chemical test kits. They also will build miniature urban
landscapes to prototype methods for remediating runoff in an exploration of “low impact development” solutions to non-point source pollution. Participants will learn from experts about the science and politics of dam removal that have been affecting our local New England rivers and they will hear the story of PCB pollution and removal in the Housatonic River watershed and examine issues surrounding urban and agricultural runoff into rivers and aquifers.

Throughout the course, participating educators will try out, develop, and implement inquiry-based approaches and project ideas for use in the classroom that amplify the concepts covered in the course and that will encourage students to become critical, inquisitive thinkers. Throughout the Institute the educators will be working with proven methods of assessing student learning and incorporating the Common Core Standards.

Educators who complete the Summer Institute earn professional development points and/or graduate credits from either Mass. College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) or Cambridge College, based on a teacher’s chosen level of participation. All activities will be linked to Massachusetts Common Core State Standard Initiative and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) initiatives. All teachers from grades 5 to 12 are welcome to attend.

Online registration for the Summer Institute is available at www.mits.org. There will be an orientation on June 20 as well as the July 6-10 session. The deadline to guarantee a spot is June 1; late sign-ups will be accepted based on space availability. Meghan Bone, Berkshire Museum’s School and Teacher Program Specialist, can answer questions about the program; she can be reached at 413.443.7171, ext. 332, or mbone@berkshiremuseum.org.

The registration fee, which includes the cost of the SeaPerch kit, is $400 for individual participants and $375 for two or more participants from same school district.

About the Berkshire Museum
Located in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, at 39 South St., the Berkshire Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is $13 adult, $6 child; Museum members and children age 3 and under enjoy free admission. For more information, visit www.berkshiremuseum.org or call 413.443.7171.

In association with the Smithsonian since 2013, Berkshire Museum is part of a select group of museums, cultural, educational, and arts organizations that share the Smithsonian's resources with the nation.

Established by Zenas Crane in 1903, Berkshire Museum integrates art, history, and natural science in a wide range of programs and exhibitions that inspire educational connections between the disciplines. **Immortal Present: Art and East Asia** will be on view May 23 through September 7. **Objectify: A Look into the Permanent Collection** is currently on view. Little Cinema is open year-round. Spark!Lab, Feigenbaum Hall of Innovation, Worlds in Miniature, Aquarium, and other exhibits are ongoing.

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