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Supporting the network and engaging our statewide community

A quarterly newsletter for PLT facilitators - January 2026



Welcome!

Welcome to the first issue of the **Colorado PLT Facilitator Connection**, a quarterly newsletter specifically for our **facilitator community**. This dedicated space aims to strengthen our network

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Stay up to date with a streamlined look at **facilitator news, statewide announcements and important action items**. Our goal is to ensure you stay **informed and supported**, whether you are leading trainings in rural mountain communities or urban centers.

Thank you for being the **heartbeat of our mission** and for helping us grow together!

— Your PLT coordinators, Danielle Ardrey and Katie Navin



News

Opportunity to go to the 2026 PLT National Conference

Colorado PLT has funds to support facilitator attendance at this year's national conference, [Roots for the Future](#), which is being hosted at Lied Lodge in Nebraska City. This high-impact event will take place March 23-26. Connect with Danielle Ardrey by January 29 if you're interested.

Email Danielle by January 29

The year ahead: 2026 PLT Priorities

We have an exciting year ahead! Guided by the recommendations from our Facilitator Engagement Committee, we'll focus our energy on the following areas:

Facilitator mentorship: Our community holds a wealth of expertise. This year, we're building new ways to foster peer-to-peer connection, ensuring every facilitator feels supported by the collective knowledge of our network. (See the section below to get involved!)

Fundraising for connection: We know how much value there is in meeting face-to-face. Our goal this year is to secure funding for a **multi-day statewide facilitator gathering**. If you have ideas or leads for fundraising, please reach out to **Danielle or Katie** — we'd love to brainstorm

Pre-service support: We're launching our inaugural [Pre-Service Pilot](#) with two Colorado universities. This program is designed to support graduating teachers with PLT as they transition into their first classrooms. A special thank you to **Dorothy Shapland and Jessica Feld** for their roles in bridging these partnerships.

Strategic plan update: We're [refreshing our roadmap](#) for the next five years. This is a collaborative effort, and we'll soon share how you can provide your input to help shape the future of PLT in Colorado.



Action needed

New facilitator orientation

Kicking off this February, our online orientation empowers PLT-trained educators to become workshop leaders. If you know a great candidate ready to take the next step, encourage them to [apply today!](#)

Become a facilitator mentor

Help welcome our new leaders! Mentors provide feedback on workshop action plans and offer support during a new facilitator's first event. Interested in sharing your expertise? [Contact Danielle.](#)

Join the facilitator community committee

We are forming a new committee to build a stronger support network — discussing everything from mentorship structures to coordinator support. Help shape how we connect! [Contact Danielle.](#)

Share your workshop photos

We want to spotlight your great work! If you're leading a PLT workshop between January and March, please send photos our way to be featured in the next issue. [Submit Jan-March photos.](#)

Celebrate PLT's 50th anniversary

2026 marks 50 years of PLT! We want to showcase Colorado's rich history in the national celebration during the upcoming conference. Please dig through your archives and submit photos from throughout the decades. [Contribute photos.](#)

Plan your 2026 workshops

If you're ready to lead a training, remember to submit your [professional development proposal](#)

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🧡 Community

A lookback on 2025



👏 Facilitator spotlight



Name and title: Melanie Matthews, Conservation Education and Outreach Assistant

Organization/Affiliation: Colorado State Forest Service

Location: Fort Collins

Go-to activity: What's your favorite PLT activity to facilitate, and why does it always resonate with participants?

My favorite PLT activity to facilitate is Poet-Tree. I love creating a space for participants to engage with their creative side and learn about new forms of poetry!

there are no right or wrong answers. Poems can be structured or free-verse, and be inspired by anything. It gives participants a way to self-reflect while also engaging in something creative!

The "why": What is the most rewarding part of being a PLT facilitator for you?

The most rewarding part of being a PLT facilitator is helping others find connections between our forests and the work they do. Whether it's through curriculum similarities or learning new ways to look at neighborhood trees, PLT helps foster stronger connections between participants and the nature in their lives. I find it extremely rewarding to help make these connections and help participants understand how PLT can fit into their lives and work.

The highlight reel: Can you share a favorite memory or a "lightbulb moment" you witnessed during a workshop?

My favorite memory from a workshop is centered around my favorite activity — Poet-Tree! I was facilitating a workshop for environmental educators and gave everyone an opportunity to share their poems if they would like. At first, no one wanted to share until one participant raised their hand. When they finished, the whole group applauded and everyone wanted to share — we just needed someone to break the ice. I saw connections form as people bonded over their poems, and the energy in the room was very supportive and encouraging. It was a great experience to see people come together and share their poems while also building a community!

Peer wisdom: If you could give one piece of advice to a fellow facilitator, what would it be?

Don't be afraid to participate in the activities and have fun with them! Facilitating for students or new PLT educators can be the most engaging for both you and your participants when you're having fun and actively engaged. Don't be afraid to be silly and take part in the activities — you'll learn to understand them better as an educator and from the perspective of a participant!

Off the clock: When you aren't facilitating, what hobby or activity keeps you busy?

When I'm not facilitating, I'm often found being creative or working on learning new things. I'm finishing my senior year at Colorado State University, am an active crocheter and just learned how to knit!



Contact the state coordinators

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[Visit PLT facilitator website](#)

This newsletter is dedicated to supporting our facilitators as they deliver high-quality environmental education professional development across Colorado.



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