

Turtle Researchers and Families,

The more I learn about the turtles, especially the Leatherbacks, the more excited I am about our journey. I am so grateful to all the parents for the support that is making it possible for students to have a transformative experience contributing to vital efforts to save the turtles, as well as learn about hands-on scientific research.

This email is quite detailed, with several attachments, so I will send it in the body of this message as well as a PDF. Students and parents, please read carefully.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Final Meeting Checklist
2. Travel Meds Form
3. Itinerary
4. Packing List from EPI
5. Status and Distribution of Leatherback Sea Turtle
6. PDF of this letter

FINAL MEETING:

Our required final logistics meeting will be at 5 PM on Tuesday, March 19, at the Bryant Elementary School Library. (Go in the main doors, turn right and walk through the HUB, then upstairs. The library is on the right at the top of the stairs.) This time enables students and families who have concerts to attend the meeting before the musical performances. We will try to keep the meeting to one hour. I will stay as long as there are questions and discussions.

MEETING CHECKLIST: Please read the attached checklist provided by Ecology Project International (EPI) as it contains most of the information we will go over at our final meeting. Students will receive their T-shirts that evening, which we will wear on our trip south. I will return any Minor International Travel Letters which are in my possession. These need to be kept with passports. Both should be kept in a travel wallet while traveling. Travel wallets usually go on a cord around the neck or a waist belt.

RESOURCES: Check out the great resources on the Sea Turtle Ecology course page. We are looking at some of them in our meetings, but you should read and watch the others on your own. Travelers will receive a printed copy of this article and should read it before we depart: "Status and Distribution of the Leatherback Turtle." I am also attaching the article here. Be not dismayed by the scientific details but read for meaning—you can understand this.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS: Please let me and EPI know if there have been any changes in a student's health status since the time we registered for the course.

MEDICATIONS: Students may bring medications in original containers, marked with contents and the student's name. Pack medications in the carry-on bag. Students will self-administer medications. Please complete the attached Travel Meds form and give it to me at our March 19 meeting. EPI collected information about students' medications, but they do not give me that information. However, I would appreciate having any information you can share so I can better support students.

CONDITIONING: While at the Pacuare Reserve, we will patrol the beach for nesting turtles. These nighttime patrols involve four-hour shifts walking through beach sand, a significant work out. Get ready by amping up your physical activities and build up your strength before the trip.

Jeremy Slead and I had a good meeting with EPI staff Grace Davidson and Katherine Martinez. She elaborated on the itinerary and provided more information. We will share this at our March 19 meeting. The following information is important information to know NOW while gathering what to pack.

ESSENTIALS TO BRING:

1. Insect repellent
2. Sunscreen
3. Hats
4. Water bottles
5. Dark raincoats
6. Flashlight (battery type)
7. Comfortable shoes: Crocks are better than sandals, but not good on the raft. (I will take crocks for the beach and at the Pacuare campus, light tennis shoes for hiking, and water-proof sandals that strap on tightly.)
8. One outfit of dark clothing for patrolling the beach at night.

Pack your things into two bags: one reasonably sized carry-on or checked bag. I expect most or all of us will check one bag. I will pay for students' checked bags and get reimbursed from our funds later. Please refer to baggage details at the bottom of this letter.

DAYPACK: Bring one daypack that we keep with us on the plane—it should contain: face masks, US money in crisp, new \$1 and \$5 denominations, hand sanitizer, prescription lenses if worn, medications in original package if taken, travel documents including passport and Minor International Travel Letter, water bottle, and food.

AVOID COVID: Please be extra cautious starting now until we get to Pacuare! Use physical distancing, masks, and frequent handwashing. EPI requires that we all mask while on the plane. Make sure that travelers have several comfortable masks, preferably N95 or K95. If a traveler is exposed to Covid or tests positive for Covid within two weeks to five days before departure, EPI requires the participant to submit proof of a negative test result taken at least five days after exposure, regardless of vaccination status.

DEPARTURE: Please check the itinerary on the EPI website on the evening of March 23 to see if there are any changes. If not, we will depart from Bryant Elementary at 8 AM on Sunday, March 24 because we are supposed to arrive at the airport 3 hours before our 1:24 PM departure.

RETURN: I anticipate it will be at least 9:30 PM on March 31 by the time we collect checked bags at the Bozeman airport. That means we will get back to Helena between 11:30 PM and midnight. We will try to call parents with an updated arrival time. The bus will bring us back to Bryant Elementary School.

PACK FOOD: Please bring enough food for the long day in your carry-on bag—dry food, not liquids! I am unsure of the lunch options at the Missoula airport. I do know we have a short transfer time in Dallas so its unlikely we will have time to buy food there. We will not get to our

hotel in Costa Rica until at least 10 PM. By that time, their restaurant will be closed, so they will give us a snack.

SAFE ARRIVAL CONTACT: After we arrive, collect baggage, and go through customs, we will call Roberta Lee, who agreed to be our contact person. She will call everyone to let you know we are in Costa Rica. Do not expect any further contact until we get back to the USA as we will be “unplugged.” Please check the attached list for accuracy and let me know if there have been any changes. Keep the attached list in case you need to communicate with other families.

Helena School District administration has asked me to share the following policy. Since it is consistent with the EPI policy, I think it will not surprise you:

Early or Delayed Return of Student Due to Emergency. A student's family will be responsible for any costs associated with sending a student home due to an emergency, disciplinary issue, illness, or other unforeseen circumstance. Should a chaperone have to remain with a student that is unable to travel with the group the cost for any changes to the chaperone's travel arrangements will be covered by the student's parent/guardian.

BAGGAGE REMINDERS:

TSA limits for carry-on bags: Each passenger may carry liquids, gels and aerosols in travel-size containers that are 3.4 ounces or 100 milliliters. Each passenger is limited to one quart-size bag of liquids, gels and aerosols. You can bring larger liquids in checked bags.

American Airlines (traveling south) allows 1 carry-on bag and 1 personal item (purse, briefcase, laptop bag) per passenger fee free. Carry-on should not exceed the following size and weight restrictions: 45 linear inches (22 x 14 x 9 in) or 115 centimeters (56 x 36 x 23 cm) including handles and wheels. Checked bags can be up to 50 pounds but please keep them under 40! Size can be up to 62 inches combining length, height, and width.

United Airlines (traveling north) Checked bags can be up to 30"x20"x12 inches, also up to 50 pounds, but keep it under 40! For carry-on bag limits, please see the airline's website for details: <https://www.united.com/en/us/fly/baggage/carry-on-bags.html>

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for being part of this big adventure!!!