A History of The
National Earth Science Teachers Association
by Janet J. Woerner (First President of NESTA 83-86)

The National Earth Science Teachers Association was the offspring of the Michigan Earth Science Teachers Association. The Michigan Earth Science Teachers' Association [MESTA] had its early beginnings in two meetings which were organized by Rod Cranson, an Earth Science teacher at Waverly High School in Lansing, MI in 1967. These meetings were a result of consultations with some college and pre-college teachers interested in Earth Science and teaching in 1966 and a survey of Michigan teachers which Rod conducted.
Jan Woerner, an Earth Science teacher at the Freeland, Michigan community schools first attended on November 1 and 2, 1968 at Lansing Community College. There were 28 participants at this Third Annual MESTA Conference.
The success of the organization in Michigan led the MESTA Executive Board to consider expanding the organization to other states. The MESTA Executive Board continued to talk about a national organization for and about pre-college Earth Science teaching, and in February 1982, voted to give Dr. Harold B. Stonehouse, $300 to organize a national group. "Stoney" began sending out notices prior to the NSTA annual meeting, and the first NESTA meeting was organized on April 9, 1983 at the annual NSTA meeting in Dallas, Texas.
The National Earth Science Teachers Association (NESTA) was chartered in April 1983 in order to promote, extend, and support Earth Science education at the pre-college level. The organization was founded by pre-college Earth Science teachers and others interested in Earth Science at the precollege level in order to fill the void in leadership which existed in this science teaching area. The following summer (1983), NESTA became an Associated Group of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), the professional organization which represents all science teachers.
In the fall of 1991, NESTA had about 1000 members in 50 states from coast-to-coast and border-to-border - and even a few international members. The organization does not limit membership; however, the majority of the members are classroom teachers, and the focus of all activities is Earth Science at the pre-college level. Nearly all of the NESTA presidents have been pre-college Earth Science teachers at the time of their election.
In 1984, NESTA submitted a proposal to various government and industrial organizations, soliciting summer internships for Earth Science teachers. This program had difficulty getting started, with only two participating government agencies the first year. The idea, however, caught on with the American Geological Institute (now the American Geosciences Institute [AGI]) and with the United States Geological Survey [USGS], who had maintained their own internships for Earth Science teachers for several years.
The Earth Scientist, NESTA's Journal, is produced quarterly, and is one of the services which the organization provides. In pre-internet years, a fifth issue was released in the early spring and was called the "Summer School for Earth Science Teachers" issue. It was a compilation of summer courses of interest to Earth Science teachers and was designed and edited by H. B. Stonehouse through the 1989 issue, and later edited by William Maury Harris, at Saint Thomas University in Houston Texas. The extensive list was compiled from the results of inquiries circulated to colleges, universities, and state science supervisors. In addition to distribution to members, NESTA provided distribution copies of this issue at the National Science Teachers Association's national conference.
NESTA has organized and conducted geology field conferences for Earth Science teachers and other interested individuals. In the summer of 1984, a trip to the Black Hills and Glacier National Park was led by NESTA members. The 1985 field conference was held in Yellowstone and the Tetons. In 1986, a field conference was held in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada; in 1987, one field conference went to Bancroft Ontario and a second one involving environmental concerns took participants along the eastern and southern shore of Lake Michigan. In 1988, a trip called "The Superior Experience" led teachers on a problem-solving outing in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The Superior Experience was repeated in 1989, and a second conference to the caves in Indiana also provided field experiences for NESTA and MESTA members. In 1990, the unique "Astronomy in Arizona" field conference provided the second non-geology Earth Science conference.
Scripted slide shows appropriate for Earth Science classes were pioneered by MESTA beginning as early as 1971. NESTA members helped to add to the library which eventually had 25 different sets, and 18 single concept short sets. With the development of the internet, this effort to produce slide sets has been retired.

During 1984 and 1985, in correspondence with the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the Carnegie Foundation and other national commissions and committees, NESTA emphasized the lack of consideration of Earth Science as an integral part of pre-college science education. Replies from the correspondence confirmed that this idea was held in many circles, and NESTA began to draft the position paper on the importance of Earth Science Education. This position paper, published in *The Earth Scientist* and all of the NSTA publications, was endorsed by the National Science Teachers Association, Council for Elementary Science International, National Association of Geology Teachers, American Geological Institute, and American Geophysical Union. Some interesting developments ensued and have included Earth Science as part of all elementary curricula and have seen Earth Science as one of the integral strands in the NSTA Scope and Sequence Coordination project. These and efforts by NESTA members had important impacts on the National Science Education Standards, and on Benchmarks.

NESTA spearheaded the networking of Earth-related organizations and professionals. Early liaisons with AGI placed NESTA members on important national committees, and NESTA members served as interns at AGI and USGS. At the current time, NESTA is still an associated group of the National Science Teachers Association, a member society of the American Geosciences Institute, an associated society of the American Geophysical Union, the Geological Society of America, and a member of the Triangle Coalition. In its association with NSTA, NESTA in conjunction with NAGT, recognize those teachers who have been selected as outstanding Geoscience teachers.

NESTA's association with AGU resulted in a program called "The Earth Science Alliance." This Alliance put individual NESTA members in touch with Earth Science professionals in order to help improve the "Earth literacy" of pre-college students. The professionals provided support, short field trips, seminars, discussion sessions, etc. to help the teacher in the classroom.

Updated and Edited by Tom Ervin 12/2020
History above covers NESTA dates from 1966-1990 (approx.)