



# EDD

ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

## OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **NM Outdoor Recreation Division Announces Outdoor Equity Fund Recipients**

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), a division of the N.M. Economic Development Department (EDD), announced the inaugural award recipients of the Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF). The first-of-its-kind OEF was created to allow all youth equitable access to the outdoors. The grant will support transformative outdoor experiences that foster stewardship and respect for New Mexico's land, water, and cultural heritage.

A volunteer evaluation committee spent hours poring over 84 applications filled with innovative ideas to get kids outside in a COVID-safe way. The ORD is especially grateful to the reviewers: Gabe Vasquez, Las Cruces city councilor; Marlene Catherine Yanez, La Semilla Food Center program coordinator; Phoebe Suina, founder of High Water Mark; Simon Sotelo, community grassroots organizer at NM Wild; and Anthony Marquez, outdoor recreation business owner.

"The Outdoor Equity Fund is one of the proudest achievements of my administration to date, and I'm humbled that we can provide this incredible opportunity for New Mexico kids," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "The great outdoors is New Mexico's most treasured resource -- our beautiful green forests, our clean air, the mountains and mesas and rivers that make New Mexico the greatest place in the world. Everyone deserves a chance to experience them, and providing these pathways is a big step toward building a robust outdoor recreation economy we know we can create here."

"Investing in youth access to the outdoors *is* economic development," Economic Development Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. "By getting more young New Mexicans outside, the Outdoor Equity Fund builds a rung on the career ladder for these kids to find jobs working with our remarkable lands and waters. The grant opportunity also advances education for the next generation about the importance of a healthy environment to the state's future. I want to thank lawmakers and other donors to the fund for making this a reality."

According to the committee of reviewers, it was no easy task to narrow applicants down to the 25 finalists, and they spent several hours in debate earlier this month making sure the funds

went to the best proposals. The result of their hard work is the below list of organizations providing programming across the state of New Mexico.

“We were blown away by the 84 incredible applications we received for the inaugural Outdoor Equity Fund grant cycle,” ORD Director Axie Navas said. “The tribes, Pueblos, municipalities, counties, and nonprofits who applied developed so many creative ideas to introduce young New Mexicans to the state’s lands and waters in engaging, COVID-safe ways. Our evaluation committee dedicated hours of hard work winnowing down that amazing group to the final recipients, and the result is a truly inspiring collection of organizations nurturing the state’s future land stewards.”

“COVID-19 has proven to all of us how critical access to the outdoors is for healing during these times, and also taking care of our most precious and unique spaces,” New Mexico State Representative Angelica Rubio said. “The Outdoor Equity Fund, which elevates the Division of Outdoor Recreation’s purpose in New Mexico, will do just that-- transforming the possibilities and accessibility for countless New Mexican youth--who deserve this access the most right now.”

The OEF awarded a total of \$261,863.78 toward getting approximately 2,700 kids outside over the next year. It leveraged over \$7 million of total programming funds.

### **FY21 Outdoor Equity Fund Award Recipients:**

#### **Albuquerque Sign Language Academy (ASLA)**

As the only dual language ASL school in the state, ASLA models their approach to outdoor educational opportunities to promote inclusiveness through partnering with the ASL community. Outdoor educational opportunities include events that provide access to students and the community, some of whom are deaf, hard of hearing, and other K-8 students with special needs. It offers summer conservation crews and day activities with outdoor classrooms.

Award: \$10,000

Location: Bernalillo County

[www.aslacademy.com/](http://www.aslacademy.com/)

#### **City of Sunland Park**

The City of Sunland Park will host four weekend events at local parks for youth grades 3-6. The events will be educational and are designed to give the impoverished youth of the City of Sunland Park an opportunity to get out into their environment and do hands-on learning, with a focus on ecology, flora, fauna, and humans & the environment and will provide access to tools that students would not have otherwise.

Award: \$5,500

Location: Sunland Park

[sunlandpark-nm.gov/](http://sunlandpark-nm.gov/)

#### **Embudo Valley Tutoring Association**

The Embudo Valley Tutoring Association and Embudo Valley Library collaborate will provide a free after school program to the local community, focused on the outdoors and engaging children in gardening/farming related activities, such as apple harvesting and processing, seed gathering, soil preparation, and planting. Students will observe life cycles in nature as inspiration for story writing or art projects, and explore the outdoors to deepen their understanding of the natural world.

Award: \$2,000

Location: Dixon and surrounding area

[embudovalleytutoring.com/](http://embudovalleytutoring.com/)

#### **Families and Youth, Inc.: The Outdoor Legacy Project**

The Outdoor Legacy Project will provide resources and support to educate youth on conservation, climate, and cultural connectedness to the outdoors. It seeks to empower youth by providing innovative, quality outdoors experiences that promote having a sense of ownership, relationship, and responsibility with regard to our lands and natural resources.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Las Cruces with trips to surrounding areas

[www.fyinnm.org](http://www.fyinnm.org)

### **Fly Fish NM**

Fly Fish is a nonprofit providing education and outdoor access to underprivileged youth interested in learning how to fly fish. Events will teach youth safety considerations when planning a fishing trip, demonstrate proficiency assembling and casting a fly rod, conservation and preservation of fish habitat, and grant free access to participants to these events. The goal is to foster stewardship and respect for our lands, our wildlife, and our waters.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Youth accessible fisheries throughout New Mexico

[www.flyfishnm.org](http://www.flyfishnm.org)

### **Friends of the Pecos National Historic Park**

Friends of the Pecos National Historic Park is a comprehensive youth-oriented fly-fishing education program that teaches rural community middle and high school age children about conservation and river ecology through the sport of fly fishing. The program will incorporate the importance of climate change, resource conservation, river stewardship and ecology on the ecosystem that impacts New Mexico native, wild, and stocked trout species.

Award: \$6,000

Location: Pecos

[friends-pnhp.org/](http://friends-pnhp.org/)



### **Global Opportunities Unlimited**

Global Opportunities Unlimited is an inclusive educational fishing and watershed project for disabled, disadvantaged, and low-income children. Participants will learn about aquatic ecosystems and the effects of changes in climate.

Award: \$13,000

Location: Bernalillo, Sandoval, Rio Arriba, and San Juan Counties

[www.gounlimited.org/](http://www.gounlimited.org/)

*Photo left: Global Opportunities Unlimited (photo taken prior to COVID-19 health emergency orders)*

### **Heart of the Gila, Inc.**

Heart of the Gila is focused on engaging Grant County youth and their guardians in environmental education opportunities focused around local streams, rivers, and watersheds. Playing, exploring, and enjoying rivers and streams creates a connection to our changing climate through the visual impacts of drought and shrinking watersheds. Including primary caretakers in this project allows for the continuity of meaningful outdoor experiences and can serve to create lasting relationships to wild places.

Award: \$11,388

Location: Grant County

[heartofthegila.org](http://heartofthegila.org)

### **Hermit's Peak Wilderness Alliance (HPWA)**

HPWA has been working vigorously to lay the groundwork for a sustained and long-lasting revitalization effort of the Gallinas River. It is anticipated that this project will foster "querencia" (a love of and connection to place), as engaged youth gain a greater sense of pride and responsibility for the river that supports their community.

Award: \$14,543

Location: Las Vegas, N.M.

[www.hermitpeakwatersheds.org](http://www.hermitpeakwatersheds.org)

### **Karuna Colectiva**

Karuna Colectiva is a "work, learn, earn" environment for indigenous youth to enhance the autonomy, creative skills, health, and success through holistic practices and traditional culture. The program aims to connect indigenous youth back to the water, by taking bike rides along the Bosque trails and learning about the vital necessity of natural environments that are rooted in our cultural identities. Our leaders and guides will help indigenous youth understand the value of their tribal identity and its relevance to the natural world.

Award: Albuquerque

Location: \$5,000

[www.facebook.com/karuna.colectiva](http://www.facebook.com/karuna.colectiva)

### **Kids in Need of Supportive Services (KISS)**

The KISS program offers after school and summer activities for at-risk and low-income youth in Grant county and surrounding areas. While visiting local parks, recreation areas, and lakes children will focus on learning life skills, education, anger management, and motivation, while helping them improve communication, drug awareness, domestic violence, and self-esteem.

Award: \$6,000

Location: Grant County

### **Latino Outdoors (LO)**

LO is a unique national Latinx-led organization, working to create and support a network of ambicultural leaders in the outdoor, conservation, and nature movements. Through outdoor experience, they provide greater opportunities for leadership, mentorship, professional opportunities, and support a platform for storytelling where participants can share cultural connections and narratives that are often overlooked by the mainstream environmental movement.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Bernalillo County

[latinooutdoors.org](http://latinooutdoors.org)

### **Mil Abrazos Community Land Trust: The Enduring Acequia Program**

The Enduring Acequia Program aims to reacquaint modern children with the Acequia, which is essential to maintaining fertility for food production in the area, and will include a diversity of approaches to engage their curiosity, inherent desire to be honored and useful in their community, and prepare them to take the reins of the Acequia management when they come of age. The program will recruit local ranchers and farmers to present the history, anecdotes, historical characters, and events that have shaped this area and made it so unique and worth preserving.

Award: \$6,000

Location: Guadalupe County

[www.milabrazos.org](http://www.milabrazos.org)

### **Mora Creative Council**

The Mora Creative Council's program will introduce the youth of Mora to natural resources and explore the higher education and career opportunities that exist within the county in related fields, all while safely exploring and interacting with the environment.

Award: \$3,000

Location: Mora

[ourmora.org](http://ourmora.org)

### **Mountain Kids! Local Outdoor Learning Adventures**

Local Outdoor Learning Adventures will support Santa Fe Public School K-8 students and teachers in a pilot program to create a local outdoor learning environment on school grounds and local communities, to eventually be scaled up to a district-wide framework. The program will provide training and support to translate curriculum into experiential learning outdoors, culminating in an end-of-year field adventure.

Award: \$8,800

Location: Santa Fe County

[www.sfmountainkids.com](http://www.sfmountainkids.com)

### **National Indian Youth Leadership Project: Project Venture**

Project Venture is an evidence-based, culturally guided, outdoor experiential youth development program using traditional American Indian modes of learning and culturally meaningful community service activities.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Gallup and surrounding area

[projectventure.org](http://projectventure.org)

*Photo right: Project Venture (photo taken prior to COVID-19 health emergency order)*



### **Native American Community Academy (NACA)**

NACA is a community-led public charter school designed to meet the needs of urban Native students in grades K-12 with a culturally integrated education. NACA is incorporating Land-Based Learning (LBL) as part of a holistic learning approach. Many of our students have experienced historical separation from their ancestral lands due to forced relocation and assimilation practices. Healing our relationships with the land is an essential part of enabling students to heal from the generational trauma of colonization, and grow into holistically healthy adults. Land-Based Learnings will help students better understand the holistic connection between land, leadership, community, health, and their own Native identity, in addition to laying the foundations of an active lifestyle, and teaching students to respect and protect the earth.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Primarily Bernalillo County with trips taken throughout the state

[www.nacaschool.org](http://www.nacaschool.org)

### **New Mexico Dream Team: Outdoor UndocuHealing**

The Outdoor UndocuHealing program will empower immigrant youth and other students of color to grapple with larger questions of place, identity, history, and belonging during four weekend backpacking retreats in northern New Mexico's Carson National Forest. It supports multi-generational, undocumented, LGBTQ+, and mixed-status families, with a focus on social justice and therapeutic discussion, and also climate change and the ways that environmental crises often hit communities of color the hardest.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Bernalillo County and New Mexico's Carson National Forest

[www.nmdreamteam.org](http://www.nmdreamteam.org)



### **River Source, Inc.: Getting Hands Engaged in Outdoor Pathways Project**

The Getting Hands Engaged in Outdoor Pathways Project will include a wide array of outdoor recreational activities that will teach youth about living as good stewards of their watersheds by providing watershed science education, planning, monitoring, and ecological restoration. By including community elders, it becomes an environmental inter-generational project and nurtures the next generation of outdoor recreation superheroes.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Bernalillo; Rio Arriba; Santa Fe; Taos; and Valencia Counties

[riversource.net](http://riversource.net)

### **STEAMing Ahead for Success: NM Park Restoration Challenge**

NM Park Restoration Challenge is a multi-generational conservation project developed for grades 6-8 and their families, working together to enhance stewardship for our natural resources. Students, families, and park staff and advisers will form Park Restoration Teams and choose a focus area that has human-caused damage, determine why the damage happened, and formulate how to repair it. Teams will design a project to restore the health of their focus-area of the park's environment, create a plan and budget for carrying out the project, and present their proposition to staff, community, and families.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Grant and Hidalgo Counties

[www.steamingaheadforsuccess.org](http://www.steamingaheadforsuccess.org)

### **Together for Brothers (T4B)**

T4B hosts bicycle projects for self-identified young men of color, ages 12-24 in order to build community and healthy relationships, learn bike safety and maintenance, access outdoor spaces, promote healthy habits, and learn to organize their efforts by telling their own stories to decision-makers about health equity, climate justice, and transit equity.

Award: \$1,500

Location: Albuquerque

[www.togetherforbrothers.org](http://www.togetherforbrothers.org)

### **Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District: The Conservation Writing Workshops**

The Conservation Writing Workshops at Escalante Middle/High School guide youth in finding a voice to express their experience of the outdoors and perspectives on vital conservation issues in the Chama Valley. By taking their skills outside of the classroom, students form genuine interests in science, reading, writing, networking, and stewarding their local lands. Students will develop a publishable essay over the course of the workshops.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Rio Arriba County

### **Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District (Valencia SWCD)**

Valencia SWCD will partner with local wildlife refuges, Friends' groups, a local youth employment agency, and other local agencies to create a 6-month program for youth to investigate their environment in the outdoor classroom of the local conservation areas and national wildlife refuge sites. Students will learn about habitats through walking, hiking, observing, and recording information. Students will undertake a restoration planting project to reflect and memorialize their journey of learning and understanding and the role they play in stewarding the environment.

Award: \$6,469

Location: Valencia County

[www.valenciaswcd.org](http://www.valenciaswcd.org)

### **Western New Mexico University (WNMU) Outdoor Program**

In collaboration with the Youth Mural Project and others, WNMU Outdoor Program will provide a two-week summer camp to Grant and Luna County youth, which incorporates outdoor recreation, inquiry-based science, and the co-creation of a public art mural to be installed at the City of Rocks State Park. Youth will connect cognitive and emotive domains to demonstrate their understanding of the natural world, and gain an understanding of the role of fire in shaping regional landscapes and global climate.

Award: \$12,663

Location: Grant and Luna Counties

[outdoor.wnmu.edu](http://outdoor.wnmu.edu)

### **Zuni Youth Enrichment Project**

All Zuni prayers and traditions are rooted to bringing water to the A:shiwi (Zuni people) to grow food and survive. Different factors including climate change, drought, and upstream damming have dried up the Zuni River.



*The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (photo taken prior to COVID-19 health emergency orders)*

The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project provides opportunities in opposite seasons to use water-based outdoor recreation as a vehicle for educating Zuni youth about the impacts and consequences the Zuni River has on the land, the people, and the traditional religion. Youth will be engaged in outdoor recreation they typically don't have access to while getting a better understanding of bigger issues and the role the outdoor recreation industry can play in conservation efforts.

Award: \$15,000

Location: Primarily Zuni Pueblo with trips taken to Taos County

[www.zyep.org](http://www.zyep.org)

ORD is very appreciative of everyone who took the time to apply for this funding. It is their intention to be able to offer these grants again in early 2021 for the next round of Outdoor Equity Funds.

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*The New Mexico Economic Development Department's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive.*