



EDD

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

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New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division Announces 2022 Outdoor Equity Fund Recipients

*Office awards 48 organizations grants totaling over \$800,000
to get 12,391 kids outside*

SANTA FE, N.M. — The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), a division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD), announced the award recipients of the Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF) for the 2022 grant cycle.

The first-of-its-kind OEF was created to enable all New Mexican youth equitable access to the outdoors. The grant supports programming that provides outdoor experiences that foster stewardship and respect for New Mexico's land, water, and cultural heritage.

Since Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed the Outdoor Equity Fund into law in April 2019, the program has granted \$2 million to 130 organizations throughout the state. These local leaders, working in cultural, recreational, and environmental fields, are actively introducing over 37,000 young New Mexicans to the outdoors through day hikes, bike rides, camping trips, whitewater adventures, acequia irrigation, and more. For many of these youth, all 18 and younger, these transformational outdoor experiences are the first time they've participated in these kinds of outdoor recreation.

"New Mexico pioneered the Outdoor Equity Fund in 2019 when Gov. Lujan Grisham signed this innovative, first-of-a-kind program into law," EDD Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. "I'm so proud to continue supporting this next generation of outdoor industry leaders."

ORD is especially grateful to the reviewers and evaluation committee that spent hours analyzing and scoring the applications:

- Kay Bounkeua - New Mexico Deputy Director, The Wilderness Society
- Rachel Swanteson-Franz - Urban to Wild Specialist, The Wilderness Society
- Angel Pena – Executive Director, Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project

- Olivia Jensen – Operations Director, Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project
- Gabaccia Moreno – National Monuments, WYSS Fellow
- Christy Tafoya - Retired Director, New Mexico State Parks; Owner, Christy Tafoya Consulting, LLC.
- Shani Harvie – Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Coordinator, EDD
- Carl Colonius – Outdoor Recreation Planner, ORD
- Alyssa Renwick – Deputy Director, ORD

Private sponsors to the fund include the Wilderness Society, the Turner Foundation, The North Face, and REI, who have invested alongside the State of New Mexico in this innovative grant. Recently, the state invested \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act money to support the program and nurture the next generation of land and water stewards in New Mexico.

This year, 47 organizations were awarded grants ranging from \$2,130 to \$20,000. The total 2022 funding amounted to \$795,133.28. The awardee list includes programs from 16 counties with 50 percent supporting Tribal, rural, and/or land grant communities. The awarded groups will bring 12,221 young New Mexicans hiking, biking, camping, hunting, and more, from now through 2023.

“There are some truly incredible programs in this third round of Outdoor Equity Fund grants,” Axie Navas, ORD director, said. “Other states, and the country as a whole, are paying attention to the grassroots outdoor equity work happening in New Mexico. We are leading the way.”

“The New Mexico Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF) has been leading the nation in investing in increasing equitable access for our youth to the outdoors,” Ángel Peña, Executive Director, Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project, said. “This year’s grant recipient cohort is one of the largest so far, strengthening our state’s ability to tackle the complex, intersecting barriers that limit underserved youths’ ability to enjoy the outdoors. Programs reaching undocumented youth, Indigenous youth, and youth with disabilities, make this grantee cohort one of the most impactful and diverse so far. Nuestra Tierra is honored and always excited to have participated in this year’s OEF distribution process and looks forward to seeing the long-term impact these programs will create for New Mexico’s youth.”

2022 (FY23) Outdoor Equity Fund Award Recipients:

Albuquerque Sign Language Academy (\$20,000, Bernalillo): The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy (ASLA) Honey Badger Conservation Crew supports deaf, hard of hearing, and students with disabilities. ASLA focuses on the environmental sciences in a fun and interactive way through a series of outdoor activities while teaching new skills and activities that encourage youth and their families to access the outdoors in and around New Mexico.

Aldo Leopold Charter School (\$20,000, Grant): Since 2005, Aldo Leopold Charter School provides engaging outdoor experiences to enliven curricular learning, develop a love of place, and an understanding of human impacts overtime to 6-12th graders. Through backpacking trips, grade-level trips, community restoration projects, Youth Conservation Corps program, and Friday community experiences, students come to understand themselves, each other, the community, and their potential in a rapidly changing world.

Amy Biehl High School Foundation (\$5,500.00, Bernalillo): Amy Biehl High School (ABHS) believes that all students benefit from outdoor and shared out-of-class experiences. ABHS is proposing several outdoor experiences that focus specifically on social-emotional learning and applying lessons from Earth Science to a real-life study of the Ponderosa forest.

City of Clovis (\$20,000.00, Curry): The City of Clovis Summer Youth Program is designed to provide Clovis' local youth (K-5) opportunities to engage with the outdoors and learn about the environment. The 8-week program is based at the Roy Walker Recreation Center and utilizes several recreational areas in Clovis, including the Hillcrest Park Zoo, splash park, Potter Pool, sunken garden, playgrounds, walking trails, picnic areas, open spaces, and more.

City of Sunland Park (\$12,608.28, Doña Ana): The City of Sunland Park will offer a series of youth classes and seminars for all youth with a focus on grades 3 through 6. These events will include a hands-on walk throughout the park highlighting the designated topic of the session. The sessions will include lessons on a variety of topics including, Humans and the Environment, Animals, Plants, and Ecology.

Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District (\$9,650.00, Sandoval): This project will provide 100-125 Rio Rancho school students with an experiential hands-on program emphasizing place-based watershed education through local water resource agency presentations, a service learning project called the action project, and an immersive field trip to restore habitat by the Rio Grande under the RiverXchange® program. In addition, the implementation of emerging best practices in equity and environmental education through the RiverXchange® teacher training, program partner meetups, and program development will more effectively support diverse youth in building meaningful and long-term connections to their local environment.

Desert Community Wellness (\$10,000.00, Doña Ana): Project Cougars Outside provides the students at Lynn Community Middle School with hands-on, enriched experiences to foster a love of learning, connections to New Mexico histories, and wellness experiences in our beautiful outdoors. Cougars Outside will create access to students by taking place during the school day, breaking down barriers of cost, time, and transportation all while supporting the learning taking place in the classroom.

Diné Introspective Incorporated (\$20,000.00, San Juan): Diné outdoors provides Indigenous youth in the Four Corners region the opportunity to go rafting the San Juan River. Their Indigenous river guides teach youth to reclaim and revitalize their ancestral roots by visiting cultural sites, learning the importance of all life of the water, animals, and plants, and providing Indigenous knowledge in rafting, ancestral stories, and Diné language.

Doña Ana Village Association (DAVA) (\$15,000.00, Doña Ana): DAVA engage youth about the importance of the national historic trail through community outdoor activities that incorporate the village and the trail. This will include engaging youth in the planning of the outdoor space south of the village, in conjunction with our Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance Grant. DAVA will also continue its mural projects, community bike rides, walking tours of the village and restoration of historic acequias.

East Mountain High School (\$15,000.00, Bernalillo): The EMHS Sophomore Experience is a five-day outdoor education experience that acts as a capstone to the 10th grade year. At the end of the experience, sophomores present on their experience. In this model, 100% of our sophomore class, and eventually, 100% of all students will experience this important cornerstone of our school.

Embudo Valley Tutoring Association (\$5,000.00, Rio Arriba): The Embudo Valley Tutoring Association and Embudo Valley Library collaborate to provide a free four-day-a week after school program that combines culturally relevant outdoor and indoor (weather determinant) activities to reinforce the traditions of agriculture and land stewardship in the Embudo Valley.

Friends of La Luz Range (FOLLR) (\$20,000.00, Otero): FOLLR will provide standardized instruction to students about the identification, handling, use, storage, care, and transportation of

firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment as it pertains to hunting in the forests in New Mexico. The students attend classroom instruction provided by certified instructors who oversee practical application of the use of firearms and archery equipment on the shooting range.

Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks (\$20,000.00, Dona Ana): Our Moving Montañas Program connects youth to our national monument. Through this program, they aim to foster the next generation of public land stewards that represents our minority-majority community. They utilize a vast partnership network to ensure we are reaching those who would not have these opportunities.

Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP)/Silver City Watershed Keepers (SCWK) (\$15,600.00, Grant): The Silver City Watershed Keepers Summer Camp provides an underserved population of youth with an outdoor experience in their local watershed, public lands, and community to empower stewardship of their environment and cultural heritage. Three week-long summer day camps are planned for the summer of 2023, providing up to 60 youth (4-6 graders) with the skills to address issues of environmental protection, including climate change, and preservation of cultural history. Activities at the Gila River, Mimbres River and San Vicente Creek offer kids outdoor experiences and education related to protection of water resources and cultural sites.

Heart of the Gila Inc. (\$13,989.00, Grant): Heart of the Gila's Watershed Recreation and Education Program consists of our Mimbres River Watershed and Gila River Watershed Adventures. Our program provides fun, immersive, environmental education opportunities, focused on local streams, rivers, and 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. Some teen youth who participate in these programs will be recruited for a Gila National Forest / Trails stewardship project and training.

Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance (\$20,000.00, San Miguel): The Gallinas River is the source of life for Las Vegas. The Gallinas River Park, extending through the center of town, is an exceptionally rich outdoor space that is easily accessible to locals. It provides a safe corridor for year-round and migrating birds, as well as bountiful habitat for trout, offering wonderful opportunities for local youth to experience bird watching and fly fishing in their own backyard, inspiring stewardship and respect for the limited and precious water of the Gallinas River, the land that constitutes the Gallinas Watershed, and the cultural heritage of Las Vegas and surrounding areas.

Hero's Path Palliative Care (\$20,000.00, Bernalillo): The program provides outdoor environmental education for children who are medically complex. The program will have a nurse available to care for medical needs while the children participate in outdoor education programs provided by Nature Matters Academy. The educational curriculum is created and taught by biologists with a respect and understanding of our local ecosystems to foster an ethic of environmental stewardship.

Impact Outdoors (\$20,000.00, Guadalupe): Impact Outdoors is a nonprofit organization that provides youth with outdoor education experiences through activities related to ecosystem conservation, habitat management/improvement, biology of native flora and fauna, and overall stewardship of the land.

Latino Outdoors (\$7,500.00, Bernalillo): Latino Outdoors (LO) is a national Latinx-led and serving organization, working towards inclusivity and equitable access to nature. LO Albuquerque will host free monthly, family-friendly outings for Latinx youth, families, and individuals with an emphasis on participants with little or no previous outdoor experience. Outings will include experiences such as day hikes, fishing, rafting, and camping.

Localogy (\$20,000.00, Taos): This camp connects youth in northern Taos County with the local foodshed, watershed, and resilient culture. It explores local farms, ranches, public spaces, acequias, streams, and wild places with community members as our guides. Campers become active stewards of vital systems through fun and engaging service learning.

Mosaic Academy (\$20,000.00, San Juan): Students will combine elements of STEAM to become curious about their local environment through natural study of the landscape. The school provides the perfect opportunity to use elements of science, art, and outdoor gardening to have students design their own outdoor space. Additionally, they plan to expand students' understanding of their natural environment by conducting bike rides through the seasons. This will help them to track the ever-changing desert landscape.

Mountain Kids! (\$20,000.00, Santa Fe): Mountain Kids! is an outdoor education and adventure program, fostering a sense of community and personal challenge and instilling a love of nature. Through the Local Outdoor Learning Adventures (LOLA) Four Seasons program, students from four classrooms at low-income public schools will utilize seasonal, curriculum-connected outdoor adventures culminating in a full week of outdoor adventure camp during Summer 2023.

Native American Community Academy (\$20,000.00, Bernalillo): The Native American Community Academy (NACA) is a community-led charter school designed to serve Native students in grades K-12 with a culturally integrated education. NACA incorporates land-based healing and learning (LBHL) as part of a holistic learning approach.

New Mexico Dream Team (NMDT) (\$20,000.00, Bernalillo): New Mexico Dream Team (NMDT) is a statewide network committed to empowering undocumented, LGBTQ+, and mixed status immigrant families towards liberation. The UndocuHealing program provides a space for immigrant, undocumented, and LGBTQ+ youth to heal from the traumas of displacement and discrimination.

New Mexico Interscholastic Cycling League (\$19,950.00, Bernalillo): The League's mission is to build a youth mountain biking community for New Mexico middle school and high school students that maintains a fun, safe, and challenging environment, while focusing on building friendship, inclusivity, outdoor appreciation, resiliency, respect, and community. One of the goals is to create a cycling league for all without being limited by economic barriers.

New Mexico School for the Arts (\$20,000.00, Santa Fe): This program seeks to foster a deeper awareness and respect for the natural world amongst students through outdoor excursions, environmental education, and developing an outdoor classroom. The program includes a special focus on New Mexico waterways, fire's ecosystem role/impacts, cultural heritage, and the implications of climate change in the region.

New Mexico Wildlife Federation - Nature Niños (\$20,000.00, Bernalillo): The priority of Nature Niños is to reach underserved/marginalized youth and families throughout New Mexico who lack opportunities to connect with our public lands and encourage them to have a meaningful, purposeful, and personal connection to the natural world.

Public Lands Interpretive Association (\$15,000.00, Otero): The Whiptail Trails Club empowers seventh and eighth-grade students to learn about southern New Mexico's public lands. It provides in-class visits and field trips to more than 200 students in rural areas outside of Las Cruces. In addition, the program will provide camping experiences for 15 girls that offer outdoor skills training such as how to read a map, how to pack a backpack successfully, and basic first aid.

Pueblo of Acoma Health & Wellness Program (\$20,000.00, Cibola-Pueblo of Acoma): The Pueblo will provide opportunities to youth that they would not otherwise have the ability to experience due to income, lack of transportation, and limited resources within the community.

These include the integration of the Acoma culture and values within organized outdoor youth programming. A collaborative effort will be established with the Acoma Behavioral Health Program to provide an outdoor youth Gather of Native Americans (GONA) event to incorporate mental health awareness and education.

Railyard Park Conservancy (\$13,500.00, Santa Fe): The Railyard Park Living Laboratory is a field trip designed to engage youth through outdoor play and learning in Santa Fe's 11-acre Railyard Park. Through hands-on field trips, program participants take part in recreation opportunities and engage with ongoing conservation projects within the park's gardens and landscapes.

Reading Quest (\$2,130.00, Santa Fe): Reading Quest provides free tutoring to students in the Santa Fe Public school who struggle with learning to read. As part of their overall approach to student wellness and social/emotional learning, through a five-hour hike on the Nature Conservancy Santa Fe Canyon Preserve Trail, they also provide an opportunity for students who have never been in the woods to be in nature and learn about our relationship to the natural world.

Reunity Resources (\$20,000.00, Santa Fe): Farm Camp is an enriching outdoor education experience for children ages 5-10. Serving approximately 215 children over the summer break, campers participate in hands-on activities, such as seed sowing, harvesting, cooking, and eating to journaling, wild crafting, fort building, adobe play, singing and storytelling. Teachers bring diverse expertise in indigenous land practices, survival skills, herbalism, cooking, nutrition, movement, and art.

Roots & Wings Community Charter School (RWCS) (\$20,000.00, Taos): RWCS provides high-quality outdoor experiences for children grades K-8. No student has ever been turned away for any outdoor trip and they require all students participate in two multi-day/night wilderness experiences each year, more often if time, money, and transportation allow.

Taos Academy Charter School (\$20,000.00, Taos): Taos Academy is a free state-chartered school serving 300 students in grades 5-12. The outdoor education program is a deeply integrated part of their mission and built into their 21st century leadership program and college/career pathways options. This grant will allow the expansion of curricular offerings, ongoing teacher training, and will remove financial and transportation barriers to participation in outdoor programs.

The Semilla Project (\$20,000.00, Bernalillo): The Semilla Project's SemiYA! (YA = Youth Activation) program is a unique organizing model that creates equitable access to the outdoors for BIPOC youth while introducing or increasing their activism, influence, and action on climate change and racial justice. They engage youth and young adults through free outdoor experiences, such as backpacking, camping, and rock climbing — often for the first time.

Together for Brothers (T4B) (\$19,996.00, Bernalillo): The biking and outdoor project will equitably engage boys and young men of color (BYMOC) through access to outdoor recreation including equipment and safety, documenting, sharing stories with decision makers and building capacity for BYMOC to be leaders at all levels in their communities in collaboration with families, community partners and decision makers. T4B is committed to biking and outdoor recreation connected to gender and racial justice that includes climate and environmental justice as well as transit equity and mobility sovereignty.

Town of Mountainair (\$14,785.00, Torrance): The Town of Mountainair will take students from Mountainair Public Schools on outdoor adventures. A majority of these children never leave their small town and definitely do not partake in New Mexico's outdoor recreation. This program will provide opportunities they would not have otherwise, such as visiting Sandia Peak, learning about hot air ballooning at the International Balloon Fiesta, and whitewater rafting.

UNM Community Engagement Center (CEC) (\$20,000.00, Bernalillo): Anti-Racist Youth Leadership Institute (AYLI Outdoors) is a series of outdoor events with a focus on remembering our connection to land, water, and culture, and promoting education and civic engagement for youth who live in urban settings across Albuquerque and surrounding areas. The AYLI series will connect youth to the rich heritage and culture of New Mexico and help them understand the vital role we play in sustaining green spaces and creating access for communities who haven't historically had access, due to unfair policies, laws, history, etc.

Velo Cruces, Inc. (\$16,000.00, Dona Ana): Children with disabilities can benefit from riding adaptive cycles. Physical benefits include increased joint motion, muscle movement, circulation, cardiovascular health, core development, and improved coordination and balance. Emotionally, riding adaptive cycles can help foster inclusion and a sense of independence. Barriers to obtaining an adaptive cycle include prohibitive cost, lack of local availability, and lack of support and guidance as to which cycle or accessory is best suited for a rider's needs. Every Body Rides with Grace seeks to draw attention to these barriers and increase accessibility to cycle riding for New Mexican youth with disabilities.

Village of Los Lunas Open Space (\$15,995.00, Valencia): The program consists of four separate outdoor recreational adventures that correspond to the different seasons. The following trips will consist of ten or twenty youth: a half-day rafting trip, a full-day ski trip, a fishing trip, and a camping trip. These trips would include all associated costs, including transportation, meals, equipment, and lodging when appropriate. Los Lunas Open Space personnel will accompany the youth and help with the educational aspects needed for each activity while encouraging the child to become stewards of the outdoors.

Village of Pecos (\$ 20,000.00, San Miguel): The Village of Pecos will partner with the NM Wildlife Federation's Nature Niños program to develop local programming for youth who come from marginalized communities and families facing economic hardships. The Pecos Pequeños project supports youth and families in the outdoors and will employ Pecos residents to create and administer outdoor recreation- and conservation-based programs within our community, by our community.

Vista Grande High School (\$20,000.00, Taos): The "Place in Time" outdoor recreation program allows students to explore our region's natural resources while connecting to their cultural heritage. Students will learn about the cultural value of a natural resource over time, how that resource is being threatened in our time of climate crisis, and ways to look to the past as we transition toward a more sustainable future. Students will connect with the cultural significance of natural resources and learn about the resiliency of indigenous land management systems.

Walatowa Visitor Center (\$10,000.00, Bernalillo-Pueblo of Jemez): Walatowa Visitor Center will increase access to and participation of youth hiking the Red Rock Trails through guided tours and educational events that share the history and culture of the Jemez Pueblo. Youth will learn about the unique cultural, geological, and environmental elements of the Walatowa area.

Yerba Mansa Project (\$7,950.00, Bernalillo): The Yerba Mansa Project aims to strengthen connectivity between people, plants, and the land in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. We are a volunteer-based, community-supported project dedicated to providing free educational programs and environmental service learning through restoration activities, specifically focused on the native edible and medicinal plants that stand at the center of New Mexico's biological and cultural landscapes. They work to restore some of our most legendary healing plants, teach youth and adults about their importance, and help to protect critical habitats and associated knowledge for present and future generations.

Youth Mural Program (\$20,000.00, Grant): In preparation of the 2024 celebration of the 100th year anniversary of the first designated national wilderness area, the Forest Service has partnered with the Youth Mural Program to commemorate this milestone through public art murals created and designed by area youth. Two permanent murals will connect the Gila, Aldo, and Blue Range Wilderness areas to Silver City and surrounding communities.

YouthWorks (\$20,000.00, Santa Fe): YouthWorks promotes a continuum of land and environmental health projects that offer promising career training and job placements for young people while improving conditions and preserving resources for the public, tackling local climate and poverty issues with youth as the foundation and catalyst for change. Arts and poetry workshops allow youth to share in creative ways, in small groups, and through meeting outdoors in nature, at local farms and parks, and along the Santa Fe River.

Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) (\$20,000.00, McKinley-Zuni Pueblo): This project connects Zuni youth with new opportunities for outdoor recreation and cultural education. ZYEP will facilitate a Winter Recreation Trip for youth focused on engagement with the outdoors and traditional storytelling by community elders. They will also provide opportunities for youth to hike their local lands, accompanied by cultural guides. Additionally, ZYEP will broaden opportunities for youth to bike in the local community. Providing these opportunities for youth is part of a larger cultural shift, opening accessibility to the outdoors for the next generation of Zuni while staying rooted in their identity.



Latino Outdoors (2021 & 2022 awardees)



Heart of the Gila (2021 & 2022 awardees)



*Public Lands Interpretive Association
(2021 & 2022 awardees)*



Town of Mountainair (2021 & 2022 awardees)

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