



# EDD

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## OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **NM Outdoor Recreation Division Awarded National Park Service Grant**

*Grant to assist with statewide strategy on outdoor education*

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), a division of the N.M. Economic Development Department (EDD), was awarded a National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) grant providing technical assistance in the creation of a statewide strategy on outdoor education, ORD Director Axie Navas announced today.

The NPS RTCA grant is a competitive program designed to support community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. Navas applied for this program because she knows how important the outdoor recreation industry is to our state's economy.

“The assistance from the National Park Service will enable us to start building a cradle-to-career pathway for New Mexican youth interested in putting down roots in our outdoor recreation economy,” Navas said. “We’re so honored to bring together this diverse group of expert educators to create a truly comprehensive outdoor education strategy.”

According to the September 2019 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis [state-level data](#), the outdoor recreation economy in New Mexico makes up 2.5% of total state GDP -- or \$2.3 billion. Over 33,500 people are employed in this sector, more than in either farming or manufacturing. It is a powerhouse with the ability to dramatically diversify the state's economy.

A strategic statewide education plan builds a pathway from pre-K through higher-ed for students interested in working in and for the outdoors. This path will emphasize early outdoor access through programs like the Outdoor Equity Fund, climate education, internships with outdoor professionals and universities, and real-world paid experience that opens doors to solid New Mexico careers in tribal and rural areas.

Without a strategic plan in place, individual schools, universities and agencies have pursued their own outdoor education programs, and the result is a patchwork of paths with no unified vision. This project will attempt to address that gap by bringing together professional educators and outdoor employers from across the state to develop a blueprint, laying out a truly comprehensive outdoor recreation education vision. Through the RTCA grant, NPS will provide staff expertise in facilitating and drafting the strategy, along with a cash award.

A comprehensive outdoor education plan has more wide-ranging benefits than just career preparation. By getting kids outside early and often, these programs help nurture the next generation of stewards and keep our communities healthier and more vibrant.

“The National Park Service is excited to work with the Office of Outdoor Recreation and their partners in creating youth oriented recreation and education opportunities that lead to outdoor engagement and careers,” NPS RTCA Community Planner, Marcy DeMillion said.

Among the agencies and organizations who are partnering with ORD on the project so far are the New Mexico Indian Affairs Dept., Senator Heinrich’s Office, Dept. of Workforce Solutions, Dept. of Public Education, Dept. of Higher Education, Dept. of Early Childhood Development and Education, State Parks Division, Future Focused Education, Wings of America, Western NM University, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State Land Office, State Forestry Division, New Mexico Dept. of Cultural Affairs, and Environmental Education of New Mexico.

ORD was also awarded a \$20,000 grant from the North Face to support the Outdoor Equity Fund, another key part of its education strategy. To learn more about the Outdoor Equity Fund, [visit the website](#).

To learn more about the National Park Service Grant, [visit their website](#).

To learn more about New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Economy, read [Outdoor Recreation and New Mexico’s Economy](#) joint report from ORD and Headwaters Economics.

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