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OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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Dec 9, 2019

## **Youth Conservation Corp announces country's first-ever Outdoor Equity Fund**

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – The Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) announced today that it is accepting donations for the country's first-ever Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF). New Mexico recognizes that access to the outdoors is a basic human need – yet it's one that has too often been denied to many of our youth. With the creation of the OEF, the state pledges a promise to its children: we want all our youth to get outside.

With transportation and equipment costs often beyond the means of many families struggling to make ends meet, getting far into nature hasn't been equitably available. As a result, many children haven't had the chance to experience some of the very best that New Mexico has to offer: its whitewater, ski slopes, bike trails, camping spots, fishing holes, and remote wilderness.

"New Mexico's great outdoors belong to all of us, and so all of us should have the opportunity to enjoy it -- to explore the land, learn about stewardship, and develop an appreciation for our land, air, and water that will last a lifetime," Gov Michelle Lujan Grisham said. "Through this first-of-its-kind fund, we are taking an important step toward ensuring that opportunity for every single child and young adult in this state. I couldn't be more excited to see this terrific idea come to fruition."

"The Outdoor Equity Fund is a game-changer for New Mexico," said Youth Conservation Corp Executive Director Sarah Wood. "Donations to sustain the fund will make it possible for the YCC and New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Division to bring New Mexico's amazing outdoor opportunities to all youth."

New Mexico's Outdoor Equity Fund will strive to make the outdoors more inclusive and equitable. This year, state lawmakers set aside \$100,000 to fund programs that get under-served youth outside. In addition, private businesses have already pledged investments to the fund, with REI's promise of \$12,500 and Turner Foundation offering \$30,000. Closer to home, the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico (EEANM) will become one of the first investors this month with a donation of over \$1,000 gathered from participants at their Outdoor Equity Conference.

"The Turner Foundation is happy to make a \$30,000 commitment to the Outdoor Equity

Fund and join other partners in helping enable this important initiative to get up and running," Troy Ettl, Program Officer at the Turner Foundation said. "It is our hope that our contribution and those provided from other private partners will help demonstrate the need for this program that will make it a funded priority for years to come."

Starting in 2020, the money will go toward transformative outdoor experiences that foster stewardship and respect for our state's land, water, and cultural heritage. At least 40 percent of the kids who participate in these adventures will be low income and the grants will be divided equitably across the state, in our urban, rural, and tribal communities.

"By engaging kids in exciting and educational outdoor recreation, New Mexico can create a new generation of leaders and land stewards who care about our climate, air, water, environment, wildlife, and natural resources," said Axie Navas, Outdoor Recreation Division Director.

The YCC, an agency with a 28-year track record of employing and training New Mexico's youth, is tasked with administering the fund and will release a request for applications in early spring.

Donations to the fund can be made by sending a check made out to Youth Conservation Corps and mailed to 811 St. Michael's Drive, #206, Santa Fe, NM 87505. In the memo section, please write "Outdoor Equity Fund."

For more information, please contact Executive Director Sarah Wood, (505) 470-3710, [Sarah.Wood@state.nm.us](mailto:Sarah.Wood@state.nm.us) or visit [www.nmoutside.com/our-work](http://www.nmoutside.com/our-work)

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