



NEW MEXICO

OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

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New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division announces \$851,400 in grants to support youth outdoor programs
43 programs selected for Outdoor Equity Fund in communities across New Mexico

SANTA FE, N.M. – New Mexico Economic Development Department’s (EDD) Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) proudly announces the award of \$851,400 in grants to 43 organizations as part of the Fiscal Year 2025 Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF). These grants will benefit programs across 15 counties and seven Tribal communities, enhancing youth access to outdoor activities statewide.

“Investing in these programs provides immediate benefits to youth and communities and also builds long-term economic opportunities in the outdoor recreation sector,” EDD Secretary-Designate Rob Black said, “By empowering young people through these initiatives, we nurture New Mexico’s next generation of outdoor leaders and professionals.”

This year, ORD received a record-breaking 96 applications, with over \$3 million in eligible requests, highlighting the expanding demand and impact of the OEF program. “The substantial increase in applications reflects both a growing need and the effectiveness of these programs,” ORD Director Karina Armijo said. “We’re thrilled to see more Tribal communities and organizations eager to create transformative outdoor opportunities for New Mexico’s youth.”

The funding is provided in part by the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, New Mexico’s first dedicated funding stream for land and water conservation and outdoor recreation. Additionally, awardees will contribute nearly \$2 million in matching funds, further amplifying the impact of these programs and fostering economic growth and career pathways in outdoor recreation across the state.

More than half of the funded programs will serve rural and Tribal communities, providing access to outdoor recreation opportunities to many of our state’s youth for the first time.

“When students hop off the bus to begin a field trip at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, they often tell us that this is their first time ‘in the desert,’ despite most of them living within 10 miles of beautiful natural areas. We love opening their eyes to the wonder of this unique place and the scientists who are studying it,” Asombro Institute for Science Education Executive Director Stephanie Bestelmeyer reflected.

“We use fly fishing as a tool to help support foster children socially and emotionally. Many of the foster kids of New Mexico never get to experience fly fishing, nature, conservation, and not to mention tons of fun. Our team strives to share our passion with these kids so one day they can explore on their own using the knowledge we have instilled in them,” Kaileigh Cera, lead mentor of the Mayfly Project, shared.

“Children with medical complexity and disabilities and their families face many challenges in getting outdoors,” Jennifer Bartz, president of the Hero’s Palliative Care Board of Directors, said. “Our program offers the support they need to experience the joy and healing that nature brings in accessible spaces and motivates us to continue to expand through generous funding from the Outdoor Equity Fund.”

ORD extends gratitude to the review committee, including professionals from the NM Public Education Department, NM Higher Education Department, and the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, for their dedicated efforts in evaluating the large volume of applications.

“This year was incredibly competitive, with many organizations doing extraordinary work. We hope to better meet this increasing demand in the future.” ORD Deputy Director AJ Jones said.

FY25 Outdoor Equity Fund Award Recipients:

Adaptive Sports Program New Mexico (\$17,572.50, Sandoval County): Offering an inclusive ski and snowboarding program for public school students with disabilities, ensuring all youth can be empowered through winter outdoor recreation opportunities.

Albuquerque Sign Language Academy (\$7,500, Bernalillo County): The Outdoor Equity Fund program provides meaningful conservation services and outdoor activities that enable deaf, hard of hearing, and individual and developmentally disabled students to access the outdoors.

Amy Biehl High School (\$7,500, Bernalillo County): The program will offer outdoor learning experiences focused on building social-emotional skills to enhance classroom lessons.

Animas Public Schools (\$40,000, Hidalgo County): The Outdoor Education Program emphasizes place-based learning and environmental literacy by exposing youth to interrelated ecosystems; connecting them to NM’s natural wonders; and preparing them to be environmental leaders.

Asombro Institute for Science Education (\$15,000, Doña Ana, Luna, Otero Counties): Science Discovery Field Trips will extend outdoor access to nearly 1,200 elementary students in southern New Mexico to foster stewardship and connections to local outdoor resources.

Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (\$10,000, Bernalillo County): They will expand a one-of-a-kind K-12 environmental monitoring program to track long-term ecosystem health in the Rio Grande Bosque to reach every 7th grader in Albuquerque.

Clovis Municipal Schools (\$20,000, Curry County): Students in grades 3-12 will have an opportunity to experience the outdoors in eastern New Mexico through fishing, animal identification, and wildlife photography. Students will build and strengthen their skills and have the chance to connect career and technical skills with applications in the outdoors.

Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions (\$10,000, Bernalillo County): Spring and fall programming will provide partner schools and organizations with classroom sessions, day trips, and overnight camping trips focused on environmental stewardship, building bridges between cultures, and personal growth through outdoor adventure.

CYCLE Kids, Inc. (\$9,927.50, Bernalillo County): CYCLE Kids transforms the lives of disadvantaged children by teaching them to ride bikes and adopt healthy eating habits. This program boosts self-esteem, reduces stress, combats obesity, and enhances academic performance.

Dream Diné Charter School (\$40,000, San Juan County): Students will participate in 15 outdoor experiences in NM over 18 months to support their holistic development and help them understand Indigenous traditions and knowledge of the land. Through experiential learning, students will gain an understanding of gardening techniques, Indigenous farming, and connections with the land and river.

Dził Dít’oóí School of Empowerment Action and Perseverance (DEAP) (\$40,000, McKinley County): This Indigenous-led state charter school serves 58 Diné students in rural Navajo, NM. Students will participate in an expanded Land-Based Learning curriculum that will include at least eight outdoor activities (including hiking, trail running, cycling, archery, and camping) to promote wellness through relationships to the land and emotional, cultural, and physical skill-building.

Earth Ways (\$38,880, Grant County): The Walkabout Program gets youth and teens out in local, wild places through monthly all-day excursions to learn about local ecosystems, connect with nature, develop sensory awareness, and gain outdoor skills.

Families & Youth Innovations Plus (\$20,000, Doña Ana County): The Outdoor Legacy Project provides no-cost access to gear rentals, immersive wilderness camps, and day events for youth, emphasizing conservation, cultural education, social-emotional wellbeing, and youth leadership

opportunities.

Fly Fish NM (\$8,163, Bernalillo County): In coordination with local youth organizations, fly-fishing camps will be scheduled throughout New Mexico at various lakes and rivers, and seminars will be hosted to discuss habitat preservation during school breaks and on weekends.

Global Opportunities Unlimited, Inc. (\$40,000, Bernalillo County): This project will fund a technologically robust tri-toon boat that will allow safe and easy access for wheelchair users and others to enjoy water recreation in New Mexico.

Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance (\$20,000, San Miguel County): The program brings Las Vegas, NM youth to the Rio Gallina to experience bird watching and fly fishing and inspires stewardship and respect for their local lands, waters, and the cultural heritage of this area.

Hero's Path Palliative Care (\$40,000, Bernalillo County): The program empowers children with serious illness to live fully by providing family-centered, supportive services, resources, respite, and inclusive outdoor educational programming.

Mandy's Farm (\$19,800, Bernalillo County): The Adaptive Horseback Riding Program offers enriching outdoor experiences at no cost to children with autism and others with intellectual and developmental disabilities who can't afford recreational activities.

Mayfly Project, Santa Fe Chapter, New Mexico (\$5,094.70, Santa Fe County): Programming connects youth in foster care to the therapeutic benefits of fly fishing through a series of five fly-fishing sessions led by trained mentors, where they learn conservation and angling ethics and receive their own fly fishing gear at the end of the program.

Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project (\$10,000, Rio Arriba County): The Summer Youth Internship Program provides an opportunity for students to study advanced STEM concepts, scientific methodology, and leadership training as they learn to record petroglyphs in the field under the mentorship of professionals.

Mountain Kids! (\$10,000, Santa Fe County): The Four Seasons program provides students attending Title 1 Santa Fe Public Schools with seasonal, curriculum-connected, outdoor adventures to local mountains.

NACA Inspired Schools Network (NISN) (\$20,000, Bernalillo County): Programming connects Indigenous students from across NM with culturally relevant, land-based healing and learning experiences. Outings—which include tipi camping and hiking day trips—are led by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and provide Indigenous youth with free, experiential activities to reconnect with their heritage, languages, and the land itself.

National Indian Youth Leadership Development Project, Inc (\$40,000, McKinley County): The Project Venture program is an evidence-based, culturally responsive, youth development program that promotes positive outcomes in outdoor adventure-based, experiential settings using traditional Indigenous modes of learning and culturally meaningful service-learning activities.

Natural Curiosity (\$19,976, Sierra County): The week-long summer day camp provides Sierra County youth with formative, hands-on, outdoor learning experiences focused on the biology of the local environment to spark campers' interest in nature and give them the confidence to explore the outdoors.

New Mexico Dream Team (\$10,000, Bernalillo County): UndocuHealing Outdoors collaborates with undocumented and LGBTQ+ youth to help them reconnect with the outdoors and heal from the trauma of displacement while providing holistic wellness, mobilization, and leadership development.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (New Mexico Wild) (\$9,879.38, Taos County): The Outdoor Academy program guides young people living in rural Taos County through a training and mentorship program that connects them to employment opportunities as fishing and rafting guides.

New Mexico Youth Conservation Foundation (\$18,050, San Miguel County): Provides free access to outdoor gear, education, and training, and assists schools and organizations with resources like transportation and outdoor event support.

Outdoor Gateways (\$12,557.50, Taos County): Ensures equitable access to outdoor recreation for

youth with programming that encourages environmental stewardship through activity-based experiential education to foster personal growth.

Pajarito Environmental Education Center (PEEC) (\$20,000, Rio Arriba County): PEEC's Outdoor Field Science programs turn New Mexico's landscapes into classrooms, engaging students in activities like bird banding, snowshoeing, and hiking. Through field trips and summer camps, PEEC connects students to nature, heritage arts, and science, fostering academic and community success.

Pueblo of Jemez (\$40,000, Sandoval County): The Youth Outdoor Education & Bicycle Safety Program will provide Indigenous K-6th grade children with a bicycle and helmet and teach environmental conservation, bicycle safety, and health and wellness through guided exploration of their natural surroundings.

Railyard Park Conservancy (\$2,833.52, Santa Fe County): The Living Laboratory is a pilot field trip program designed to engage youth with outdoor learning and play in Santa Fe's 11-acre Railyard Park. The program aims to pique students' curiosity about the natural world while introducing them to real-world conservation solutions.

Reunity Resources (\$10,000, Santa Fe County): Farm Camp is an immersive, outdoor day camp that offers season-based, hands-on activities like gardening, journaling, wildcrafting, clay/adobe play, cooking, weaving, fire building, tree climbing, and more.

Rivers and Birds, Inc. (\$10,000, Taos County): The outdoor programs connect Taos County students with nature, teaching stewardship and leadership skills through engaging adventures that combine fun, recreation, and ecology on public lands.

River Source with the Partners in Education as the fiscal sponsor (\$30,000, San Miguel County): The Water Job Pathways program cultivates the next generation of natural resource leaders through hands-on watershed and environmental training that introduces students to field science, outdoor classrooms, and watershed internships.

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (RMYC) (\$9,625, Taos County): The goal of RMYC is to eliminate financial barriers for its nearly 100 members by providing them with outdoor gear, transportation, and healthy food to enhance their participation in conservation work and foster environmental stewardship in their communities.

Santo Domingo Pueblo (\$40,000, Sandoval County): The Mountain Movers program engages Pueblo youth in seasonal activities, guides them to lead community service projects, and encourages conservation career exploration, deepening their cultural identity and commitment to protecting their ancestral lands.

Semilla Project (\$20,000, Bernalillo County): The SemiYA! program fosters equitable outdoor access for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) youth, providing no-cost backpacking, camping, and rock-climbing experiences where participants gain a strong foundation for climate and racial activism through mentorship from community-based activists.

Together for Brothers (T4B) (\$10,000, Bernalillo County): T4B empowers self-identified boys and men of color to be leaders through outdoor recreation, biking, and health-equity education. The program focuses on asset mapping, environmental justice, healthy relationships, and storytelling while providing tools and resources for participants to advocate for outdoor equity and transit access in their communities.

Trout Unlimited (\$38,834.40, Sandoval, Rio Arriba and Santa Fe Counties): Trout Unlimited (TU) and The Uncivilized Outdoorsman (TUO) partner to bring an annual Indigenous and Hispanic Youth Fly Fishing Camp to reconnect youth of Indigenous and traditional Hispanic communities in northern NM to their landscapes, traditions, language, and traditional ecological knowledge through the medium of fly fishing and outdoor recreation, to cultivate a generation of young leaders.

Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District/New Mexico Earthlings (\$10,000, Rio Arriba County): The Future Stewards Program teaches Rio Arriba County high school students hands-on land-stewardship skills and traditions through bi-monthly classes that connect students with mentors, farmers, ranchers, and foresters, culminating in a 4-day watershed internship.

Velo Cruces, Inc (\$20,000, Doña Ana County): Provides increased access to cycling activities for youth

with disabilities in New Mexico, fostering opportunities for these youth to connect with others, develop a sense of independence, and improve overall health and wellness.

Yerba Mansa Project (\$10,206.50, Bernalillo County): Strengthens connectivity between people, plants, and the land in the Middle Rio Grande Valley by providing free, educational programs and environmental service learning with a focus on native, edible, and medicinal plants.

YouthWorks (\$20,000, Santa Fe County): YouthWorks will provide outdoor experiential paid training and education for up to 50 Opportunity Youth, ages 14-24, throughout collaborative river and trail restoration projects, habitat improvements, and farm and agricultural projects.

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Hero's Palliative Care provides access to enriching outdoor experiences to children with medical complexities and disabilities.



Santo Domingo Pueblo engages youth in outdoor activities and conservation projects that deepen cultural identity and teach land and water stewardship.



New Mexico Wilderness Alliance connects Taos youth with training and career opportunities in outdoor recreation.



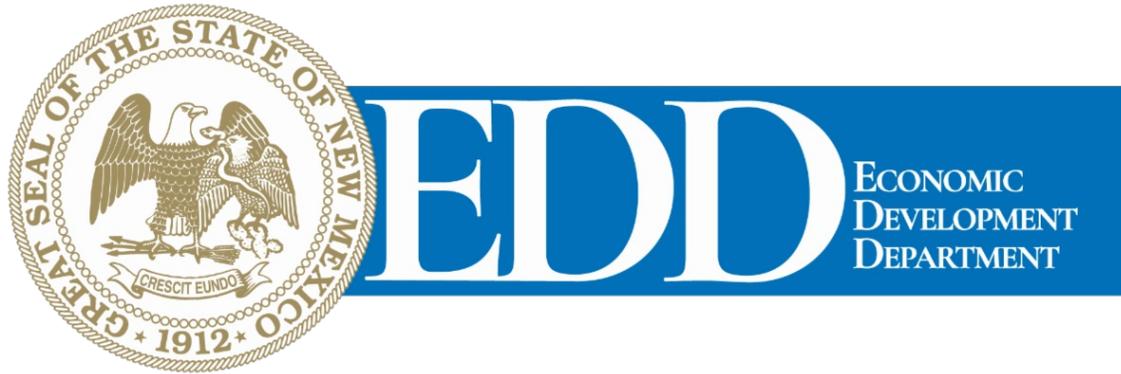
The Mayfly Project uses fly fishing to connect children in foster care to outdoor activities' mental and physical benefits while learning about conservation and angling ethics.



Students collect data at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park in Las Cruces during an Asombro Institute for Science Education field trip.

*The Outdoor Recreation Division is a division of the **New Mexico Economic Development Department**. Its mission is to increase equitable access to the outdoors for all New Mexicans, ensuring healthy outcomes, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity. For more information,*

visit nmoutside.com or follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) at [@NMOutdoorRec](#).



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