



# NEW MEXICO

## OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

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Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham  
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### **New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division's FY24 Outdoor Equity Funding Reaches \$3.7 million**

*Outdoor Equity Fund has supported 115 organizations with outdoor youth programming in the current fiscal year*

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) of the New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) has announced funding of \$975,142 in new Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF) awards to 33 organizations.

These awards will be distributed to 16 rural, 13 urban, one land grant, and five Tribal communities. Of those awarded, 28 are first-time recipients of OEF funding.

The first-of-its-kind Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF) was created in 2019 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 legislation, the program has granted over \$5.7 million to nearly 250 organizations throughout the state, actively introducing over 72,000 young New Mexicans to the outdoors through hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, horsemanship clinics, and rich lessons in wilderness safety and water conservation.

“The Outdoor Equity Fund is a powerful engine that benefits our outdoor recreation economy by creating jobs in recreational activities throughout New Mexico,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “This funding source also introduces New Mexico youth to the great outdoors, often for the first time. Through this program, more children are discovering our state's rich outdoor beauty and becoming the next generation of protectors of our unique lands, waters, and cultures.”

“This cornerstone program of the Outdoor Recreation Division continues to have a major impact on the state's outdoor recreation industry,” Acting EDD Cabinet Secretary Mark Roper said. “It not only increases equitable outdoor access for youth, but it also supports outdoor

recreation businesses through equipment purchases and guide contracts, creates jobs, and diversifies the economy, especially in rural communities.”

For the third round of the FY24 Outdoor Equity Fund grant cycle, recipients were awarded \$975,142 with grants averaging \$30,000. Awardees bring an additional total match of \$698,401 and serve 14 counties across New Mexico benefiting 8,879 youth through their combined efforts.

“ORD’s programming is helping raise the next generation of stewards of our natural environment,” ORD Director Karina Armijo said. “Through strategic investments in transformative outdoor experiences, New Mexico’s youth are developing a deep connection with the outdoor industry, which may pave the way for their future success within it. With the financial support of OEF funding, these programs are creating equitable opportunities that will positively impact the lives of nearly 9,000 young individuals in this funding cycle alone. We are honored to be part of these efforts.”

Total FY24 OEF awards have reached an impressive level with \$3,730,528 in grant awards — a level nearly 4.7 times greater than funding the prior fiscal year — with 115 organizations generating \$2.8 million in matching funds and reaching over 36,000 youth.

“The Mountain Movers program isn't just about outdoor activities; it's about empowering our youth in Santo Domingo Pueblo,” Santo Domingo Pueblo Rosemary Reano said. “Through mentorship, education, and access to the outdoors, we hope to ignite a passion that transforms lives. We are grateful for the Outdoor Equity Fund's support in helping us create opportunities for our children to connect with nature, their heritage, and ultimately, themselves.”

“Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps Hiking Clubs promote environmental awareness, healthy living, and cultural reconnection for local Indigenous youth from the Navajo Nation and Pueblos of Acoma and Isleta,” Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps Director Chas Robles said. “The award from the Outdoor Equity Fund will facilitate building deeper community connections with elders and knowledge keepers to create expanded and more impactful opportunities for Indigenous youth to engage with their ancestral homelands while sparking a life-long love of and desire to protect the environment.”

Outdoor Equity Fund awards were made possible through both state and federal funding this year, including junior bill and special appropriations funds and over two million in American Rescue Plan Act money. Funding for the Outdoor Equity fund for fiscal year 2025 will be provided by the state’s Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, a bipartisan land and water conservation initiative.

The grant applications were reviewed and scored by a six-member panel that included: ORD Director Karina Armijo, The Wilderness Society New Mexico State Senior Manager Kay Bounkeua, ORD Deputy Director AJ Jones, Outdoorist Oath Executive Director Gabaccia Moreno, Disability Advocate and Social Impact Consultant Kyle Stepp, and New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps Commission Executive Director Sarah Wood.

2024 Round Three (FY24) Outdoor Equity Fund Award Recipients:

**Alameda Elementary Schools** (\$40,000, Bernalillo County): The Alameda Elementary School Woodland Learning Initiative connects students ages 4-8 and their families to the unique bosque habitat. Programming grows their sense of connection and belonging to a place, as well as their understanding of forest ecosystems through regular Forest School

lessons, walking field trips, the creation of a rustic “Alameda Grove” outdoor classroom, and participation in local tree planting initiatives.

**Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps.** (\$40,000, Bernalillo County): The Hiking Club program of Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps began in the Pueblo of Acoma as a cultural revitalization and outdoor recreation project with a mission to reconnect Indigenous elementary-aged youth to their ancestral lands, culture, and heritage while fostering exploration and curiosity.

**Catron County** (\$9,096.28, Catron County): Big Strike Horse Show Management will offer horsemanship clinics to 4-H/ FFA youth, nonaffiliated youth, and their family members to introduce a variety of disciplines and uses of equines in the equine industry. The program is designed to introduce new and exciting ways to utilize equines as a family outdoor recreational activity.

**Clovis Municipal Schools - iAcademy** (\$9,565.95, Curry County): iAcademy will take 94 students from grades 7-12 to the beautiful Carlsbad Caverns National Park in Carlsbad, New Mexico. Chaperoned students will gain a deep understanding of Carlsbad Caverns by studying the geology, biodiversity, and history of the park.

**Cobre Consolidated School District** (\$10,000, Grant County): Funding will support the creation of a bike club program for the four elementary schools in the Cobre Consolidated School District.

**Continental Divide Trail Coalition** (\$15,000, Bernalillo County): The Continental Divide Trail Coalition and Latino Outdoors will partner to host multiple events during Latino Conservation Week, July 13-20, 2024. Latino Conservation Week was created to support the Latino community in enjoying the outdoors and participating in activities to protect our natural resources. Events will include a youth rafting trip, a community extravaganza at Rio Bravo Community Park, and a hike along the Continental Divide Trail.

**Earth Care** (\$40,000, Santa Fe County): Earth Care's program provides Indigenous, POC, and low-income youth with meaningful outdoor experiences that foster a profound connection to the environment, develop essential leadership skills, and empower them to address environmental challenges in both urban and rural communities of northern New Mexico.

**Earth's Birthday Project** (\$40,000, Sandoval County): Celebrate Planet Earth's Exploradores Outdoor Classroom (EOC) program provides enriching dual language outdoor learning experiences for pre-K and kindergarten students and their families, especially to those with limited access to such opportunities.

**Horsin' Around Therapeutic Riding Center** (\$20,000, Valencia County): Horsin' Around recognizes the need for outdoor recreation activities for those with emotional and/or physical challenges. Grant funding will allow Horsin' Around to provide low-cost and/or no-cost riding sessions to disadvantaged groups.

**Impact Outdoors** (\$40,000, Guadalupe County): Impact Outdoors engages youth, families, veterans, active military, first responders, and the public to bolster conservation-minded leadership within their communities. At their free workshops hosted throughout the year, Impact Outdoors fortifies habitats through structured improvements, providing reengagement and retention opportunities, and building outdoor classroom spaces to highlight the resources living in our lands.

**Keres Children's Learning Center (KCLC)** (\$40,000, Sandoval County): Funding will support KCLC's Mobile Outdoor Immersion Classroom, a traveling setting allowing education to take place in the field, at cultural sites, by a river, or in the mountains. The curriculum includes lessons about plants, animals, traditional activities, crafts, and outdoor activities. All classes are conducted in Keres using immersion techniques.

**Kids In Need of Supportive Services** (\$5,000, Grant County): Kids in Need of Supportive Services focus on getting kids outdoors to increase healthy fitness, raise levels of vitamin D, and protect children from future bone problems, heart disease, diabetes, and other health issues.

**La Plazita Institute (LPI)** (\$40,000, Bernalillo County): LPI outdoor classroom connects youth to culture, water resources, agricultural programs, food education, and landscapes including historical landmarks in New Mexico. Their outdoor classroom provides space to use the natural elements as tools for leadership in caring for the land and water.

**La Semilla Food Center** (\$40,000, Dona Ana County): La Semilla Food Center's Descubrimientos Del Desierto Program links middle and high school youth in southern New Mexico to the outdoors while learning about native plants and their historical and present uses for food, medicine, art, and culture. Through hikes and outdoor excursions, youth deepen their relationship with the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem, practice ethical foraging, and work with local knowledge holders to learn traditional practices for using plants as food, art, and medicine.

**Localogy** (\$40,000, Taos County): Localogy provides tuition-free summer camps to underserved local youth through the Sangre de Cristo Youth Ranch (SCYR) Residential Camp and the Vida Day Camp. SCYR Ranch Camp is a four-week camp for 10- to 12-year-old children on a working farm/ranch and in the surrounding wilderness. SCYR Wild Camp is planned and implemented by the 13- to 15-year-old campers including service work performed by crews dispersed throughout the community, and a youth-led high adventure mountaineering. Vida Camp connects 7- to 12-year-old children with their native, resilient culture.

**Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project** (\$40,000, Rio Arriba County): The Summer Youth Internship Program will provide students with an introduction to the field of archaeology, environmental science, and its relevance to local histories. The 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. Mesa Prieta also hosts local K-12 schools throughout the year to visit the preserve and engage with their outdoor education curriculum.

**Mountain Center** (\$40,000, Santa Fe County): The Mountain Center's Teen Adventure Program supports youth connecting to nature. Funded programming teaches teens skills essential to exploring the outdoors and that are transferable to school, work, and home. Teens can gain skills in ropes courses, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, and environmental stewardship.

**NACA Inspired Schools Network (NISN)** (\$40,000, Bernalillo County): NISN is connecting Indigenous students from across New Mexico with culturally relevant land-based learning experiences. Planned outings, including 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.

**Native American Community Academy Foundation (NACA)** (\$40,000, Bernalillo County): The NACA Foundation provides a variety of Land-Based Healing and Learning opportunities (LBHL) focused on Food Keepers (cultivation and seed saving) and Medicine Keepers (wild food gathering and processing) for all 431 K-12 students. Funded programming will be integrated during class time and offered after school to consistently engage students with the land.

**Natural Curiosity** (\$39,930, Sierra County): Natural Curiosity's Field Biology Summer Day Camp is a week-long outdoor education program for local youth of different age groups to explore and learn about wild places in "their backyard" of Sierra County. Participants will hike, track animal signs, learn wilderness awareness/safety skills, and engage in other activities that build a connection with nature.

**New Mexico Child First Network, Inc. (NMCFN)** (\$20,450, Bernalillo County): NMCFN's Second Annual Fishing Day and Picnic offers children in foster care and their families a fun and supportive environment to connect with nature, learn fishing, and build positive relationships.

**New Mexico School for the Arts - Art Institute** (\$21,000, Santa Fe County): Funded efforts will focus on outdoor equity as it relates to collective healing through restorative practice. Programming includes a special focus on New Mexico waterways, ecosystem role/impacts of fire, cultural heritage, and the implications of climate change.

**Northern Youth Project** (\$40,000, Rio Arriba County): Built by teens for teens since 2009, the Northern Youth Project has provided meaningful opportunities for youth in rural Rio Arriba County to learn and grow together through agriculture, art, leadership programs, and internships. They steward a one-acre garden in the heart of Abiquiu, allowing youth to connect with cultural tradition, while exploring the surrounding environment through outdoor programming.

**On A Wing and A Prayer** (\$15,000, Sandoval County): With inspiring stories and hopeful solutions, Wonderful Wanderings Outdoors with Wings! introduces students to New Mexico birds and their challenges. Birds have educated visitors outdoors on campuses, in parks, and at community events to champion greater awareness.

**Questa Independent School District** (\$40,000 Taos County): The Questa Independent School District Outdoor Experiential Education Program is committed to providing students with hands-on learning integrated into the surrounding landscapes.

**Recuerda a Cesar Chavez Committee** (\$40,000, Bernalillo County): The Dolores Huerta Day of Service is an opportunity for K-12 students to visit Sanchez Farm Open Space connecting them to lessons about the history of César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, the farm workers' movement, unions, and sustainable agriculture. At the farm, students engage in hands-on activities where they work the land, steward the environment, and celebrate land-based heritages.

**San Juan College** (\$25,200, San Juan County): San Juan College's Outdoor Adventure Education Program promotes inclusivity and provides climate and environmental education. By intertwining these elements with outdoor activities such as hiking, snowshoeing, canoeing, paddling boats, climbing, camping, rafting, and disc golf, the program aspires to instill a sense of environmental stewardship in participants.

**Santa Domingo Pueblo** (\$40,000, Sandoval County): Guided by tradition and a thirst for adventure, Santo Domingo Pueblo youth embark on a transformative journey in the Mountain Movers program. Through outdoor adventures, knowledge exchange, and service projects, Pueblo youth have opportunities to develop into skilled explorers and passionate advocates for their land and culture.

**SheJumps** (\$20,000, Santa Fe County): SheJumps' Wild Skills Outdoor Activities Camps will work with 80 girls, ages 8-17, from underserved New Mexico communities. Through a series of no-cost camps throughout the year, girls will participate in outdoor activities including skiing/snowboarding, mountain biking, hiking, and environmental education.

**Silver Consolidated School District** (\$10,000, Grant County): Funding will institutionalize and support a district-wide bike club program for elementary schools in Silver City.

**University of New Mexico - Taos** (\$40,000, Taos): Empowerment through the Enjoyment of Education Environment Excursions increases access to outdoor activities that have traditionally been cost-prohibitive to the UNM-Taos student population.

**Upper Pecos Watershed Association** (\$14,900, San Miguel County): Funded programming will provide opportunities for youth from Pecos Independent Schools to experience the outdoors in the rugged and scenic Pecos Canyon. Students will travel to the iconic Upper Pecos River to collect and test water samples and assist in recording, tabulating, and graphing the data.

**Wellness Studios, Inc.** (\$20,000, Bernalillo County): Wellness Studios has partnered with youth programs to implement the Wellness from Within Initiative, a health program utilizing a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approach to introduce integrative health modalities while students attend their academic training. The mission is to ensure successful completion of the academic training, prevent future career burnout, and reduce the likelihood of chronic health issues.

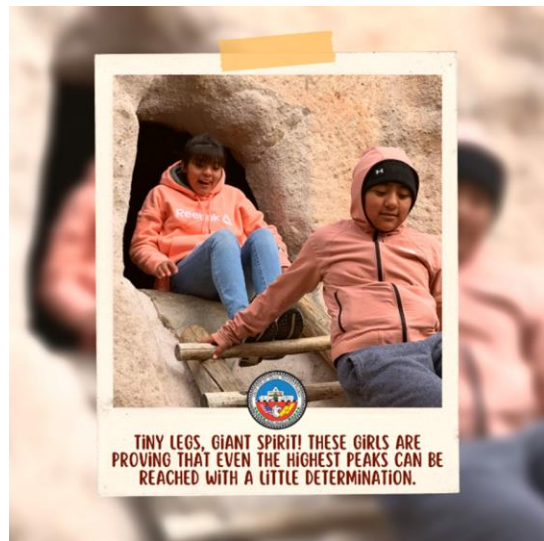
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*Photos courtesy of Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps*



*Photo shared by Santo Domingo Pueblo,  
Photography by Kiefer Garcia*



*Photo courtesy of Santo Domingo Pueblo*

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