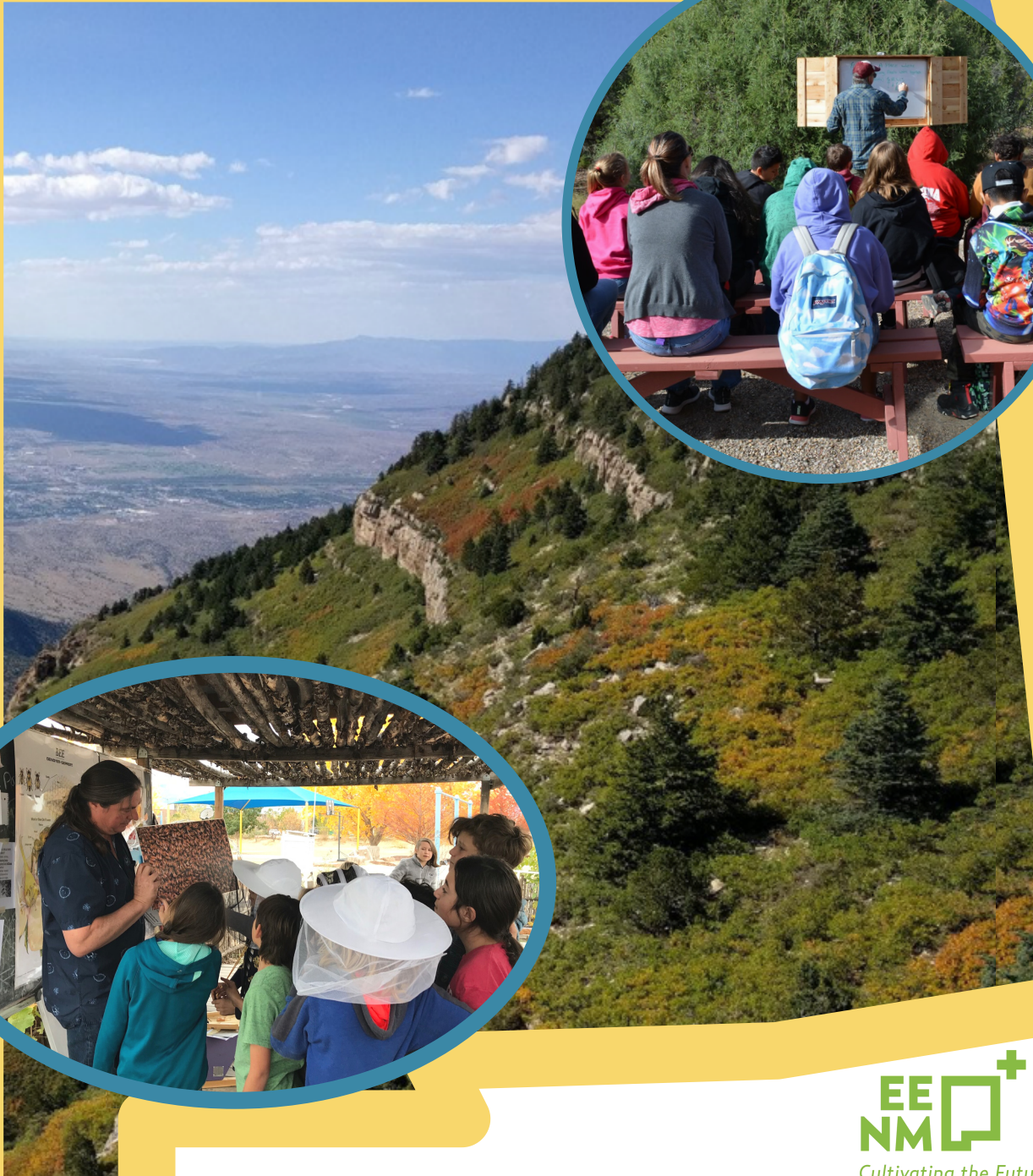


# Recommendations for Outdoor Learning in New Mexico

*Report prepared for the Legislative Education Study Committee*



Cultivating the Future  
of Environmental Education

Prepared by Environmental Education of New Mexico

*Senate Memorial 1 Interagency Outdoor Classroom Task Force*

# Recommendations for Outdoor Learning in New Mexico



Report prepared for the Legislative Education Study Committee

November 2021

Recommendations developed by: Interagency Outdoor Classroom Task Force Named in Senate Memorial 1  
Report prepared by: Environmental Education of New Mexico

## Contact information

David Certain, State Parks Division, [DavidL.Certain@state.nm.us](mailto:DavidL.Certain@state.nm.us)

Eileen Everett, Environmental Education of New Mexico, [director@eenm.org](mailto:director@eenm.org)

Sue George, Wild Friends, [sgeorge2@unm.edu](mailto:sgeorge2@unm.edu)

Axie Navas, Outdoor Recreation Division, [Alexandra.Navas@state.nm.us](mailto:Alexandra.Navas@state.nm.us)

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Origins of Senate Memorial 1 .....	2
Outdoor Classroom Task Force Goals from SM1 .....	2
Task Force Meetings To Date .....	3
Recommendations .....	8
Appendices.....	11
Supplemental Resources .....	19



## Executive Summary

The interagency Outdoor Classroom Task Force named in Senate Memorial 1 convened June - October 2021 and developed three recommendations to establish and expand the use of outdoor classrooms for schools and build career paths for New Mexico's youth by coordinating existing efforts on outdoor recreation and education and youth career development in New Mexico.

### Recommendations

1. Establish an Outdoor Classrooms Program at the New Mexico Public Education Department
2. Create a synopsis of funding opportunities for outdoor classrooms and outdoor learning offered by state agencies and increase appropriations for these funding opportunities
3. Support the continued work of the Outdoor Classroom Task Force on the following themes, prioritized from the meetings to date:
  - a) Increasing state agency staffing for outdoor learning
  - b) Professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers and informal educators
  - c) Outdoor gear libraries
  - d) Benchmarks and evaluation for outdoor learning
  - e) Connections to environmental learning (e.g. forest management, climate change, etc.)



image credit:  
districtadministration.com



image credit:  
districtadministration.com



image credit:  
edutopia.com

## Origins of Senate Memorial 1

Senate Memorial 1 (SM1), sponsored by Senator Correa Hemphill, originated with hundreds of Wild Friends students across New Mexico, who voted to work on outdoor classrooms in the fall of 2020. The students learned about the benefits and challenges of outdoor classrooms, created design prototypes for an outdoor classroom at their school, helped to draft a memorial encouraging the implementation of outdoor classrooms, and then testified (virtually) in support of the memorial during the 2021 session of the New Mexico State Legislature. The memorial passed the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support on February 24, 2021.

SM 1 was supported by a wide array of interests, including educators of all types, students, parents, and many other citizens and groups; it was especially bolstered by the partnership and efforts of Environmental Education of New Mexico. Environmental Education of New Mexico is the outdoor and environmental education professional support network of more than 150 organizations serving more than 280,000 New Mexican children annually and works to ensure that every child in the state has equitable access to environmental and outdoor learning.

The Wild Friends program, at the UNM School of Law, is an award-winning experiential civics and science education program. The program works primarily with Title 1 schools in grades 4-12 throughout the state, including Wagon Mound, Grady, Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque. Each fall, students begin learning about the democratic process by voting on a topic of conservation interest on which to work. They research the winning topic, with state-standard aligned science lessons, materials, and guest speakers provided by Wild Friends staff. Interactive civics lessons then provide the foundation for their work in drafting legislation that addresses their topic. The highlight is the opportunity to advocate for their legislation during the legislative session, where they speak with district legislators, testify as expert witnesses during committee hearings, and act as advisors during floor votes. The mission of the Wild Friends program is to ensure that our youth know that they have a voice in our democratic system, and the passage of SM1 is testament to the power of those voices.

## Outdoor Classroom Task Force Goals from SM1

SM1 states:

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that, using existing resources, the New Mexico outdoor recreation division of the economic development department and the state parks division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department be requested to convene a task force to develop and recommend actions to establish and expand the use of outdoor classrooms for schools and build career paths for New Mexico's youth by coordinating



existing efforts on outdoor recreation and education and youth career development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the two divisions be requested to include among the task force membership representatives from the wild friends program, environmental education of New Mexico and the following state agencies: the public education department; the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department; the early childhood education and care department; the state land office; the department of game and fish; the cultural affairs department; and the tourism department;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to submit a report to the appropriate interim legislative committees by October 31, 2021 that details the task force's recommendations, including strategies to promote outdoor classrooms in all schools in New Mexico."

## Task Force Meetings To Date

Environmental Education of New Mexico volunteered to host and facilitate the first two meetings of the Outdoor Classroom Task Force, which occurred remotely via Zoom on July 22, 2021 and October 6, 2021. To facilitate shared understanding of opportunities and challenges across agencies, two representatives were invited from state agencies (Table 1): an individual in a practitioner role (e.g., Sandia Mountain Natural History Center Educator) and an individual in a decision making role (e.g., Director of Historic Sites, Office of the Department of Cultural Affairs Cabinet Secretary).

The purpose of the first two meetings was to "gain a shared understanding of statewide initiatives, programs, and projects that already support outdoor learning and outdoor classrooms to develop and recommend actions to establish and expand outdoor classrooms."

At the forefront of these meetings, common definitions from [New Mexico's Outdoor Learning Guidance](#) by Environmental Education of New Mexico and the Public Education Department were shared:

- **Outdoor learning**, or **outdoor education**, refers to a broad, interdisciplinary set of activities that include discovery, experimentation, learning about and connecting to the outdoors and natural world, and engaging in environmental and recreational activities in an outdoor setting.
- **Environmental education** is an interdisciplinary educational process that helps people learn more about individual and community connections to natural systems, fostering environmental literacy and civic engagement.

- An **outdoor classroom** is an external shelter or space within the school grounds, which creates a practical area for outdoor learning.

*Table 1. Participating Agencies/Organizations and Representatives*

Agency/Organization	Representatives	Title
Environmental Education of New Mexico	Eileen Everett Stephanie Haan-Amato Tallie Segel	Executive Director Comm. & Development Director Director of Strategy
New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs	Vanessa Barela	Educator
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	Lance Cherry Craig Sanchez Storm Usrey	Chief of Information & Education Assistant Chief of Education Conservation Education Mgr.
New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department	Jamie O'Malley	Early Care & Education Mgr.
New Mexico Forestry Division	Laura McCarthy Mary Stuever	State Forester District Forester
New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division	Axie Navas	Director
New Mexico Public Education Department	Yanira Vazquez	Director of Math & Science
New Mexico State Land Office	Craig Johnson	Director of Outdoor Recreation
New Mexico State Parks Division	David Certain Heather MacCurdy	Prgm. Support Bureau Chief Park Superintendent
New Mexico State Senate	Siah Correa Hemphill	State Senator
New Mexico Tourism Department	Lucy Stanus Antoinette Vigil	Clean & Beautiful Prgm. Coord. Deputy Secretary
Wild Friends	Sue George Allyson Wiley	Director Assistant Director

During the first meeting of the Outdoor Classroom Task Force, the origins of SM1 were presented by Wild Friends along with an overview of Wild Friends student recommendations on outdoor classrooms. To also provide broader context for outdoor

learning and outdoor classroom efforts statewide beyond efforts by state agencies the following was shared:

1. The USDA Forest Service Southwestern Region presented on the *State of Outdoor and Environmental Learning (SOEL): A Landscape Analysis of Opportunities in the Southwest* (Partners: USDA Forest Service's Southwestern Region, Arizona Association for Environmental Education (AAEE), and Environmental Education of New Mexico (EENM)) - [eenm.org/soel](http://eenm.org/soel). The SOEL is a regional inventory of outdoor and environmental learning initiatives, curricula, and programs in the Southwestern region. Currently, there are over 400 programs serving over 280,000 New Mexican children represented in the SOEL.
2. Environmental Education of New Mexico presented *Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way: A multi-year shared vision and strategy to provide daily equitable access to the outdoors and environmental learning for all New Mexico kids*, the result of three years of community dialogues with over 200 individuals representing 90 organizations and developed with the support of the 17 EENM Fellows. These community dialogues were open to youth, teachers, educators, parents, school administrators, and interested community members in related fields like outdoor recreation, education, local food, conservation, and environmental justice. This shared vision and strategy, the first of its kind in the country, provides a framework for systemic change to support equitable daily access to the outdoors and environmental learning in New Mexico and consists of a variety of prioritized recommendations, including suggested policies.
3. Environmental Education of New Mexico also presented other [statewide initiatives and policies](#) that have occurred over the years to support outdoor and environmental learning, including House Memorial 3, the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, passed by the New Mexico Legislature in 2012; past Statewide Environmental Literacy Planning efforts; and New Mexico's Outdoor Learning Guidance and its resource website, [outdoorlearningnm.org](http://outdoorlearningnm.org).

Over the course of the two meetings, each state agency was invited to present with the following two prompts:

1. Share your agency's initiatives and programs for outdoor learning/outdoor classrooms.
2. What is a recommendation you have from your agency (e.g. a lever to pull in the system, a policy) to expand or deepen your outdoor learning/outdoor classroom offerings at a larger scale?



The recommendations have been consolidated into the Recommendations section, and below is what was captured from the sharing of agency initiatives and programs already in place supporting outdoor learning and outdoor classrooms (Table 2). For more detailed notes, please see the Meeting Highlights in the attached appendices.

*Table 2. State Agency Existing Outdoor Learning/Classroom Programs and Recommendations*

Agency	Existing Programs	Recommendations
New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs	<b>Sandia Mountain Natural History Center:</b> nature center that partners with Albuquerque Public Schools to provide outdoor learning for district students and students statewide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased funding for transportation</li> <li>• An additional Sandia Mountain Natural History Center staff member (which could serve an additional 5,000 students/year)</li> </ul>
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	<b>Resources:</b> Wildlife Notes and education trunks <b>Education Programs:</b> aquatic resources education (e.g., Fishing Skills, Watershed Watch, and Trout in the Classroom), National Archery in Schools, Youth Shooting Sports, Hunter Education, Off-Highway Vehicle Safety Training, online education programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing measurement standards and benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of outdoor learning in New Mexico</li> </ul>
New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department	<b>Childcare Stabilization and Child Care Health and Safety grants:</b> funds from these grants may be used by recipients for facilitating outdoor learning with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of outdoor gear lending libraries</li> </ul>
New Mexico Forestry Division	<b>Adult Outreach:</b> includes firefighter training and landowner education <b>Youth Education:</b> education programs with schools and other youth groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting existing programs throughout the state</li> <li>• Increased professional development for teachers and curriculum developers to bolster outdoor knowledge</li> <li>• Raising awareness of urban forests, the impacts of climate change, and the increased use of fire in forest management</li> </ul>
New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division	<b>Cradle to Career:</b> outdoor industry education and career pathway strategy <b>Outdoor Equity Fund:</b> funds outdoor experiences for underserved youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased funding to operate programs at full capacity</li> </ul>

New Mexico Public Education Department	Connections to College and Career Readiness programs, Work-Based Learning programs, and Student Internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PED can facilitate communication with educators and administrators around the programs already named and better understanding the challenges facing schools (e.g., bus driver shortages affecting transportation)</li> </ul>
New Mexico State Land Office	<b>Education Access Permits:</b> process for schools and education groups to apply to conduct outdoor education on State Land Trust lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring stakeholders know that Educational Access Permits exist and how to identify State Trust Land in their area</li> <li>• Soliciting feedback on improving the State Land Office's educational and recreational access permits</li> </ul>
New Mexico State Parks Division	<p><b>Field Trips:</b> visitation of Parks by students on field trips</p> <p><b>Kids 'n Parks:</b> transportation grants to transport students to Parks for field trips</p> <p><b>Land and Water Conservation Fund:</b> National Park Service funding provided to New Mexico for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased teacher professional development, which could include training on activities that could be conducted at Parks</li> <li>• Add an Outdoor Learning Coordinator position at the state and/or local level to coordinate requests for field trips</li> </ul>
New Mexico Tourism Department	<b>NM Clean and Beautiful:</b> a state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, a nationwide litter control and beautification initiative, which can provide funding for items that can support outdoor learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing funding opportunities across agencies</li> </ul>

### Spotlight On State Parks Division Outdoor Classroom and Kids 'n Parks Programs

The State Parks Division provides quality educational experiences and outdoor classroom opportunities for students and other visitors to state parks through the Outdoor Classroom program which provides students with hands-on, curriculum-based outdoor experiences. One of the program's most successful components is the Kids 'n Parks transportation grants that provide funding to schools to help pay for the cost of buses. Since 2007, State Parks has provided outdoor classroom experiences for more than 175,000 K-12 students from public or public charter schools through this program. This program regularly awards all of its \$15,000 annual budget. However, there does not appear to be a need for a significant increase in this budget as most applicants currently receive a grant. The fact that there is not greater demand for this program suggests that there may be issues with school districts or teachers not being able to support field trips and outdoor classroom experiences for reasons other than transportation costs like **teacher professional development** and having **access to standards-aligned outdoor curricula and activities**.

## Recommendations

The Outdoor Classroom Task Force named in SM1, comprised of representatives of the following state agencies: the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division of the Economic Development Department and the State Parks Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, the Public Education Department; the Forestry Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department; the Early Childhood Education and Care Department; the State Land Office; the Department of Game and Fish; the Cultural Affairs Department; and the Tourism Department, and representatives from the Wild Friends Program and Environmental Education of New Mexico, make the following recommendations. These recommendations will establish and expand the use of outdoor classrooms for schools and build career paths for New Mexico's youth by coordinating existing efforts on outdoor recreation and education and youth career development:

### **1. Establish an Outdoor Classrooms Program at the New Mexico Public Education Department**

To help coordinate and support outdoor classrooms statewide at schools and in local communities, it is recommended that an Outdoor Classrooms Program be created at the Public Education Department. An Outdoor Classrooms Program would allow for more coordination among state agencies, teachers, school administrators, and community-based organizations to support outdoor learning in a variety of forms and capacities. The establishment of an Outdoor Classrooms Program at the top level of education in New Mexico would demonstrate that outdoor learning is a high priority, elevate outdoor learning across state agencies, and allow for New Mexicans to better understand the vast outdoor opportunities that already exist for New Mexican youth.

To support the Outdoor Classrooms Program, funding should be designated for the following:

- a) Two permanent FTEs to be housed in the Public Education Department:  
Outdoor Learning Specialist and Outdoor Learning Assistant
- b) Micro-grants for schools to build and further develop outdoor classrooms on school grounds
- c) Ongoing professional development opportunities in outdoor learning for K-12 teachers

This recommendation is also in direct alignment with Policy Recommendation #1 (pg. 5) "Resource an Office of Outdoor and Environmental Education at the state level to support teachers and school staff" from *Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way: A multi-year shared vision and strategy to provide daily equitable access to the outdoors and*



*environmental learning for all New Mexico kids* from Environmental Education of New Mexico. These two positions will aid in coordinating efforts across local education agencies as well as state agencies. Micro-grants will alleviate pressures on schools to find independent funding sources to develop and equip their outdoor classrooms. Professional development will support teachers at all levels in supporting their students and their instructional time through the use of outdoor classrooms.

## **2. Create a synopsis of funding opportunities for outdoor classrooms and outdoor learning offered by state agencies and increase appropriations for these funding opportunities**

Multiple state agencies identified the need to market grants and other funding opportunities that already support outdoor classrooms and outdoor learning more broadly. Agencies can coordinate to create a short (1-2 page) document that includes a brief synopsis of the funding opportunity, timelines, link to RFP, amount of funding available and other relevant information.

Funding opportunities named during the Outdoor Classroom Task Force meetings include the following:

- a) Outdoor Equity Fund and Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant (Outdoor Recreation Division)
- b) Kids 'n Parks (State Parks)
- c) Share with Wildlife (Department of Game and Fish)
- d) Clean and Beautiful (Tourism Department)
- e) Childcare Stabilization Grant and the New Mexico Child Care Health & Safety Grant (Early Childhood Education and Care Department)

These funding opportunities often do not meet the demand that exists for funding outdoor classrooms and outdoor learning in New Mexico, and it is recommended that increased funding be appropriated to match the eligible requests received for these programs.

This recommendation is in alignment with the “Funding and Sustainability” recommendation (pg. 11) of *Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way: A multi-year shared vision and strategy to provide daily equitable access to the outdoors and environmental learning for all New Mexico kids* from Environmental Education of New Mexico and also aligns with the solution to “Share grant funding opportunities” referenced (pg. 19) in *Cradle to Career New Mexico*, New Mexico’s first statewide outdoor industry education and career pathway strategy.

### **3. Support the continued work of the Outdoor Classroom Task Force on the following themes, prioritized from the meetings to date:**

- a) Increasing state agency staffing for outdoor learning
- b) Professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers and informal educators
- c) Outdoor gear libraries
- d) Benchmarks and evaluation for outdoor learning
- e) Connections to environmental learning (e.g. forest management, climate change, etc.)

The information sharing among agencies as well as brief conversations around opportunities to grow outdoor learning proved valuable, and it is recommended that the Outdoor Classroom Task Force continue to meet on a regular basis.

Continued work on the priority topics listed above would lead to improved delivery and outcomes of existing initiatives, programs, and support facility and division needs. Additionally, it is critical to develop common standards for benchmarking and evaluation across agencies to continue to support analysis and understanding of impacts of outdoor learning on student, teacher, and school outcomes. This will also support the outreach and education directives for environmental learning outlined in strategic plans guiding multiple state agencies (e.g., EMNRD Forest Management plan).

Although the prioritized themes above came up consistently between the two meetings, other themes mentioned include the following: marketing across agencies and increasing use of the *State of Outdoor and Environmental Learning* (SOEL; hosted by Environmental Education of New Mexico and USDA Forest Service Southwestern Region, [eenm.org/soel](http://eenm.org/soel)), streamlining processes for using state-owned lands for outdoor learning (e.g., permits, educational waivers), and transportation to state managed lands through outdoor and environmental education programs supported by state agencies.

It is recommended that the Outdoor Classroom Task Force continue to meet through 2022 and deliver a report on additional findings and recommendations to the Legislative Education Study Committee and Legislative Finance Committee by the end of 2022.

## Appendices

### **Appendix A** - Outdoor Classroom Task Force Meeting Highlights from July 22, 2021 **Interagency Outdoor Classroom Task Force** (named in [Senate Memorial 1](#))

#### **Meeting #1 Highlights**

July 22, 2021, 10-11:30 a.m.

#### Attendance

- Siah Correa Hemphill, NM State Senator
- David Certain, NM State Parks
- Heather MacCurdy, NM State Parks
- Lance Cherry, NM Department of Game and Fish
- Storm Usrey, NM Department of Game and Fish
- Craig Sanchez, NM Department of Game and Fish
- Axie Navas, Outdoor Recreation Division
- Jamie O'Malley, Early Childhood Education and Care Department
- Sue George, Wild Friends
- Craig Johnson, NM State Land Office
- Laura McCarthy, NM State Forestry Division
- Antoinette Vigil, NM Tourism Department
- Mary Stuever, NM State Forestry Division
- Vanessa Barela, NM Department of Cultural Affairs
- Lucy Stanus, NM Clean and Beautiful
- Eileen Everett, Environmental Education of NM
- Stephanie Haan-Amato, Environmental Education of NM
- Bridget Tam, USDA Forest Service (joined for presentation of SOEL)
- Thea Garrett, USDA Forest Service (joined for presentation of SOEL)

#### Activities

1. Axie Navas from the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division and David Certain from New Mexico State Parks welcomed the Task Force members and thanked everyone for attending and their efforts on behalf of NM's youth.
2. Senator Siah Correa Hemphill (Sponsor of Senate Memorial 1, SM1) thanked the task force members for their work with the children of our state and for joining the Task Force to establish and expand the use of outdoor classrooms for schools and build career paths for New Mexico's youth. She discussed the benefits of outdoor learning.
3. Each member of the Task Force introduced themselves and stated the agency or organization they represent.



4. Sue George from Wild Friends discussed the organization and how students chose the topic of outdoor classrooms to champion in the 2021 NM Legislative Session. She showed a video featuring the students behind SM1 (link: [Overview of outdoor classrooms](#)), which included the students' research and recommendations for outdoor classrooms.
5. Bridget Tam from the USDA Forest Service presented the *State of Outdoor and Environmental Learning* (SOEL) database and dashboard. The SOEL includes outdoor and environmental learning programs in NM and AZ and can be used as a resource in determining areas that are rich in programing and identifying gaps.
6. Eileen Everett of Environmental Education presented an overview of NM statewide initiatives in support of outdoor and environmental learning ([click here to view the slideshow](#)), which included policies and statewide strategies. She discussed the work of the EENM Fellows and the shared vision and strategy [Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way](#). She presented the recommendations that resulted from Community Gatherings of environmental education professionals from around the state, which included the funding of Outdoor Education Coordinators and the inclusion of outdoor classrooms in state policies.
7. Axie Navas from Outdoor Recreation Division reported two main initiatives being spearheaded by their agency:
  1. *Cradle to Career* program, which involves a paid internship for high school students that partners them with the outdoor industry and schools. There are currently seven students in the program, and the Division hopes to expand the program to include more students in the future.
  2. Outdoor Equity Fund, which funds outdoor experiences for underserved youth. Axie mentioned that more robust permanent funding would ensure that this important program could continue to serve the children of NM. She estimated that the program would be able to operate at full capacity if funded at \$1.1 million annually.
8. David Certain and Heather MacCurdy from NM State Parks discussed visitation of Parks by students on field trips. On some occasions, the classroom teacher leads a program at the Park, and sometimes their staff or partner staff leads the field trip. They said that they would like to facilitate increased training of teachers on field trip curriculum, such as the Bosque Education Guide, so that educators are able to lead more field trips.

David also reported two State Parks programs for youth outdoor learning:

1. Kids 'n Parks, which is funded by a voluntary tax check box
    - Provides transportation grants for classroom field trips to Parks
    - They have not experienced excess demand from teachers. There's just as much demand as there is funding. They'd like to see more interest from teachers.
  2. Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has the potential to provide funding for more outdoor learning
- 
9. Vanessa Barela from the Department of Cultural Affairs stated that the Sandia Mountain Natural History Center has a partnership with Albuquerque Public Schools to provide outdoor learning opportunities for district students. They serve more than 20,000 students each year. The Center provides field trips for every 5th grader in the district and a second grade program as well. They also deliver classroom lessons to students in schools around the state.
    - Vanessa said that they could expand their program with increased funding for transportation and an additional staff member. She estimated that they could reach 5,000 more students with the addition of each new staff member.
  10. Axie Navas thanked everyone for coming and mentioned the Outdoor Economics Conference on September 29-October 1.
  11. Eileen Everett and Axie Navas stated that they will send a Doodle Poll to coordinate the date and time of the next Task Force meeting, which will be in early October.

**Appendix B - Outdoor Classroom Task Force Meeting Highlights from October 6, 2021**  
**Interagency Outdoor Classroom Task Force** (named in [Senate Memorial 1](#))  
**Meeting #2 Highlights**  
October 6, 2021, 10-12 p.m.

Attendance

- Siah Correa Hemphill, NM State Senator
- Sue George, Wild Friends
- Allyson Wiley, Wild Friends
- Eileen Everett, Environmental Education of NM
- Tallie Segel, Environmental Education of NM
- Stephanie Haan-Amato, Environmental Education of NM
- Axie Navas, Outdoor Recreation Division
- Lance Cherry, NM Game & Fish
- Storm Usrey, NM Game & Fish
- Craig Sanchez, NM Game & Fish
- Craig Johnson, NM State Land Office
- Heather MacCurdy, NM State Parks
- David Certain, NM State Parks
- Lucy Stanus, NM Tourism
- Mary Stuever, NM Forestry
- Yanira Vazquez, NMPED Math & Sci. Bureau
- Jamie O'Malley, NM Early Childhood Education & Care

Activities

1. Axie Navas from the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division welcomed Task Force Members. She thanked everyone for their participation and EENM for facilitating today's meeting. David Certain of New Mexico State Parks stated that he is excited for the Parks' participation in this important effort and thanked Task Force members for their work.
2. Senator Siah Correa Hemphill welcomed participants and thanked everyone for their work in outdoor education on behalf of the state's children. She said that as a school psychologist, she has seen the benefits firsthand. She added that New Mexico, a beautiful state with excellent weather year-round, is particularly well-positioned to be a leader in outdoor learning. She mentioned that she is working with Secretary of Education Designate Kurt Steinhaus on the topic.
3. Eileen Everett and Stephanie Haan-Amato of EENM provided a quick recap of Task Force Meeting #1, held on July 22, 2021, and mentioned the success of [Outdoor Learning Week](#) (September 27-October 1), also named in SM1. Tallie Segel of EENM gave a short update on the state's program and curricula inventory and landscape analysis, the [State of Outdoor and Environmental](#)



[Learning \(SOEL\)](#), and encouraged participants to [add their programs](#) to the inventory database. Tallie also discussed a [new collection of outdoor classroom case studies](#) compiled by EENM that showcases existing and in-progress outdoor classrooms around the state.

4. Craig Johnson from the NM State Land Office stated that the agency is an enthusiastic supporter of outdoor learning and has shared values with the Task Force. He mentioned that the agency has a revenue-generating mission and that the State Land Office provides up to one-third of the operating budgets of several school districts. Craig discussed the Education Access Permits program. He said that it's a way for schools and education groups to apply to conduct outdoor education on State Land Trust lands. He mentioned that it might be possible to consider simple changes to the process in order to obtain more benefits for schools and groups, such as streamlining the application and consideration of transportation to sites. Eileen asked David Certain about whether it'd be possible to connect the State Parks Kids 'n Parks Transportation Grants program to this potential need. David stated that the Kids 'n Parks program is funded by a check-off on the NM Tax Return and is limited by the amount of funding generated. David recommended increasing awareness of the program to demonstrate the demand and illustrate the need for increased funding. Craig recommended ensuring stakeholders know that Educational Access Permits exist and [how to identify State Trust Land](#) in their area. Craig also expressed the need to solicit feedback on improving the State Land Office's educational and recreational access permits.
5. Lance Cherry of the NM Department of Game and Fish provided an overview of the agency's [outdoor education programs and curricula](#). Lance shared that the agency provides resources, such as online curricula, wildlife notes, and education trunks. Lance also discussed the department's many education programs, such as aquatic resources education (e.g., Fishing Skills, Watershed Watch, and Trout in the Classroom), National Archery in Schools, Youth Shooting Sports, Hunter Education, and Off-Highway Vehicle Safety Training. Additionally, he told the group about the agency's online education programs and their "100 in 100" initiative, in which they released a new online lesson plan every day for 100 days during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, they were reaching more than 48,000 youth and family members annually in the state. Lance said that the power of this Task Force was in the synergy of the group and determining how to combine efforts to have the greatest reach and impact. He recommended determining how to generate measurement standards and benchmarks to

evaluate the effectiveness of outdoor learning in New Mexico.

6. Lucy Stanus of the NM Tourism Department provided an overview of the agency's NM Clean and Beautiful program, which is a state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, a nationwide litter control and beautification initiative. Lucy explained that there are five goals of the program, and one includes empowering youth. The program has provided more than \$200,000 for youth initiatives in 53 NM communities. Lucy discussed several objectives of the youth empowerment goal, including educating students, providing service opportunities for youth groups (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, church groups, and athletic clubs), employing youth interns, and providing youth leadership opportunities. She stated that there were opportunities within the program to help with outdoor classroom initiatives. Specifically, the program can fund benches and picnic tables made with recycled materials, community gardens, compost programs, trash and recycling receptacles, and other outdoor classroom materials. She also mentioned a new campaign called [Keep New Mexico True](#) to protect our waterways via trash removal. Sharing funding opportunities like the Clean and Beautiful program across agencies to reach as many NM communities as possible was recommended. Coordinated sharing of agency grant opportunities with educators and communities is a potential opportunity to address this recommendation.
7. Mary Stuever of the NM Forestry Division gave an overview of the agency's outreach efforts and began by saying that the responsibility for teaching the land ethic to kids lies with all of us. She stated that more than a century of excluding fire has had a large negative impact on the state's forests. Most of their outreach around this issue is aimed at adults, such as firefighter training and landowner education. Mary stated that the agency also conducts education with schools and other youth groups. The agency has used Project Learning Tree curriculum. She mentioned some education programs conducted by the Forestry Division, including Bosque Day in Socorro, their work with Cimmaron and Chama schools, and the Philmont Demonstration Forest. Mary explained the NM Forest Action Plan, which includes 10 strategies for the next 10 years, and reported that there is an outdoor education component in all of the strategies included. Mary recommended being sure to support programs that already exist, such as *Cradle to Career*, and to work directly with teachers and curriculum developers to bolster outdoor knowledge. She also stated that it's important to raise awareness of urban forests, the impacts of climate change, and the increased use of fire in forest management.

8. Jamie O'Malley of the NM Early Childhood Education and Care Department shared an overview of the [Childcare Stabilization Grant](#) and the [NM Child Care Health and Safety Grant](#) that the agency administers. She stated that funds from the grants may be used by recipients for facilitating outdoor learning with children as they see fit. Jamie recommended the implementation of outdoor gear lending libraries and offered help with the coordination of the effort. She stated that the agency oversees five [toy lending libraries](#), and the experience they've gained from administering the program could be helpful if gear libraries are implemented. Perhaps the possibility of adding a gear library to one or more of these sites could be explored.
9. Yanira Vazquez of the NM Public Education Department Math and Science Bureau reported that she had reached out to federal partners about outdoor classrooms and is awaiting updates. The agency's focus tends to be on the perspective of educators. Yanira said that she was interested to hear about the needs she heard expressed today, such as transportation and the need to communicate with educators and administrators. She offered to help connect agencies with teachers and administrators when needed. She mentioned a regular email blast that is sent to superintendents and school leaders. Yanira also said that transportation may continue to be a need because of the statewide bus driver shortage, which may affect the availability of buses and drivers for outdoor education conducted off of school grounds. Yanira mentioned some initiatives that the agency has facilitated that could connect to outdoor learning, including College and Career Readiness programs, Work-Based Learning programs, and Student Internships. She said that the agency had partnered with counties and tribes to provide funding and resources for these programs.
10. EENM staff with support from Senator Siah Correa Hemphill, Sue George, Axie Navas, and David Certain provided a quick overview of the next steps for the Task Force's work. EENM offered to take the lead in compiling the recommendations of the Task Force into a report for the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC). EENM is committed to transparency in this process, will be submitting a draft to the Task Force for review later this month, and will also schedule an optional meeting for those who can attend and would like to discuss the report before it is presented. The LESC will hear from the Task Force during their November meeting, which is currently scheduled for November 17-19, 2021.

11. David Curtain closed by stating that the work of the Task Force to date has been very productive. He thanked everyone for their tremendous feedback and honest dialogue.
12. The next Task Force meeting date is to be determined. Eileen proposed meeting sometime after the LESC meeting and before the Special Session of the Legislation begins (December 6).

## Supplemental Resources

***Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way: A multi-year shared vision and strategy to provide daily equitable access to the outdoors and environmental learning for all New Mexico kids*** - [eenm.org/every-kid-every-day-every-way](https://eenm.org/every-kid-every-day-every-way)

From 2018-2020, Environmental Education of New Mexico supported community-centered dialogues for educators, teachers, youth-led organizations, youth program providers, and interested community members representing interconnected interests like outdoor recreation, education, conservation, and environmental justice which led to the creation of *Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way*. Over 200 individuals representing 90 organizations contributed to the recommendations including those for policy, professional development, aligning programs, and funding and sustainability laid out in *Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way*. In 2020, EENM supported 17 EENM Fellows to reflect on these convenings and engage in systems mapping to envision a future for *Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way*. Hundreds of pages of notes representing ideas, perspectives, solutions, and opportunities were distilled down to this prioritized set of recommendations.

***Cradle to Career New Mexico*** - [files.constantcontact.com/c6415b071017ce936be-498a-49ee-b7cd-260825324e38.pdf](https://files.constantcontact.com/c6415b071017ce936be-498a-49ee-b7cd-260825324e38.pdf)

According to the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division, “The New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD), in partnership with the National Park Service’s (NPS) Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA), has published a report to further efforts to grow the outdoor economy.

*Cradle to Career New Mexico* is New Mexico’s first statewide outdoor industry education and career pathway strategy. This report identifies existing federal, state, tribal and local opportunities that provide outdoor access, programming, and internships within the state’s outdoor industry. It also recommends actions for federal, state, tribal, local, and private partners to further this access and to equitably increase family-sustaining jobs within this sector for New Mexicans.”