Legislative action update:

Outdoor School

The broad impact of Outdoor School on all of Oregon is well known and supported by many studies. Statewide, Outdoor School programs improve school attendance rates, increase student interest in being outside and physically active, and increase students’ science and math test scores. Outdoor School programs are also shown to be an especially strong economic generator for Oregon’s rural communities. (see story pg. 2)

HB 2648 and SB 439, legislation that would provide meaningful and lasting funding for Oregon’s Outdoor School programs, is the focus of advocacy for many across the state. These bills would create an “Outdoor Education Fund,” set eligibility criteria for Outdoor School programs, designate Oregon State University Extension Service to oversee the fund and provide support to local programs, and direct $22 million per year to support the program.

But although more than 2,000 individual handwritten letters from educators, students, former Outdoor School graduates, and business and community leaders have been delivered to the Capitol and more than 100 legislative meetings were held to discuss Outdoor School legislation, neither of these important bills has been scheduled for action.

While Democrats and Republicans agree that Outdoor School is valuable for Oregon, these bills remain stuck in committee while time is running out for legislative leadership to move them to a floor vote.

Help us save Outdoor School! It’s as easy as 1, 2, 3.

With less than three weeks before Legislature shuts down, we need you to exercise your democratic rights!

1. Go to OutdoorSchoolForAll.org
2. Check out the petition on the home page and forward it to others
3. Send a short email to your legislators and share your thoughts with them.

Find your legislators: OregonLegislature.gov/FindYourLegislator

“Science is my path to make a difference. I discovered this passion in the pouring rain beneath a forest of big-leaf maples covered in moss with five inquisitive sixth graders. We were testing the dissolved oxygen of the Salmon River when Rosa’s eyes lit up and she exclaimed, “I never knew I could learn all this!” When this student realized she was capable of understanding the natural world and cared about the world she discovered—this same moment I knew how I would spend my life. I built community, excited students about learning, and discovered my talents in creating joy for ecology. My exposure to science while volunteering as a student leader for Outdoor School gave me the momentum, passion, and confidence to become a woman in science.”

- Adrienne Godschalx
Former student leader
ODS field instructor
Two MESD districts return to full week

On July 1st all school districts adopt their 2015-16 budgets, and the Reynolds and Portland Public School Districts have included earmarks to return to a full week of Outdoor School! Camp overnights will increase from two nights to five, meaning a big increase in facilities and staff. MESD Outdoor School Director Dan “Teal” Prince and his staff are busy with preparations.

“Planning for the expansion is going great,” says Prince. “We’re exploring camps to add to accommodate the increase in students. Camp owners have been really excited about it and we have some great options.”

More camp overnights also mean greater opportunities to serve more high schoolers as Student Leaders.

“We’re going to be creatively recruiting and working on retention over summer. Lots of emails will be going out to remind them to register for fall.”

New report: Outdoor School improves state economy

A new economic study reveals that implementing Outdoor School programs statewide would add more than 1,000 full-time jobs and increase income by over $26 million statewide.

“These jobs would be primarily located in rural areas where structural unemployment in Oregon is particularly acute,” the report states, “and assuming the program continued to run year after year that these jobs would be permanent rather than temporary.”

Sponsored by the Gray Family Foundation, the report was compiled by Robin Hahnel, Professor Emeritus American University Dept. of Economics, Research Affiliate PSU Dept. of Economics, and Co-director of Economics for Equity and the Environment.

8th annual ODS staff Pitch n’ Putt raises SL scholarship funds

In full Outdoor School style, a little drizzle didn’t stop ODS staff from another fun and successful Pitch n’ Putt F.U.Ndraiser, held on the Pub Golf Course at McMenamin’s Edgefield. There was incredible team spirit, and although “Team Freedom” liberat—seiz—STOLE the trophy off the first hole, it was another sweeping victory for the “Flock Its” who stole the show in their hot pink "Flun." They raised enough for almost a full student leader scholarship!

THANK YOU to our Outdoor School staff, who worked tirelessly all week and then really brought the fun to the fundraiser. And a shout-out to Arata Creek School, who brought a hearty team to support our Student Leaders.

Want to donate? Couldn’t make it out that day? Feel free to donate through Friends of Outdoor School, earmarked for the Pitch n’ Putt Scholarship!
Outdoor School positively affects school attendance, study shows

Established and led by the Gray Family Foundation and Friends of Outdoor School, the Oregon Outdoor Education Coalition (OOEC) launched! Highlights:

- **December**: OOEC launched listening sessions statewide to hear what YOU had to say about outdoor education.
- **January**: OOEC officially kicked off our first project, “Outdoor School For All,” at the World Forestry Center, featuring Outdoor School camper Timber Joey.
- **March**: 95 advocates from more than 21 cities gathered in the Capitol for our Legislative Awareness Day. We met with 57 lawmakers and delivered 54 letters of support!
- **April**: Submitted Outdoor School bills to legislature seeking full state funding for a week of ODS for every Oregon fifth or sixth grader, and launched a statewide grassroots series of organizing meetings.

For the fifth consecutive year, we were chosen for Willamette Week’s Give!Guide. YOU gave a record $28,431 -- that’s almost DOUBLE last year’s donations! Thank you!!

Christopher Powell won 2014 Photo of the Year at our 13th annual Photo of the Year awards gala. Huge thanks to our new organizing sponsor, OutdoorProject.com!

ODS founder Warren “Mr. Gil” Gilfillan and five other “old timers” gathered at Camp Howard this past fall for a reunion full of laughs and reminiscing.

- We wrapped a third successful summer of Adventure WILD summer camp, hosting 92 campers at Mazamas Mountaineering center and Leach Botanical Garden. This summer, Auggie “Phish” Ford joins Adventure WILD as camp manager for five weeks of fun! (Use your Chinook Book coupon for $50 off one week of camp)
- We welcomed Brina Bolanz to the Friends of ODS team!
- East Multnomah Soil & Water District granted $33 per student up to $225K to send students in their region to ODS.
- We partnered with Sustain:Green MasterCard®, the first biodegradable, environmentally-conscious credit card. They donate $5 to us for each card members’ first purchase!
- ODS presented a total of $7,000 in Student Leader scholarships to seven amazing recipients, and ODS staff held their 8th Annual Pitch n’ Putt F.U.N.draiser to fund their scholarship award.

This spring the Outdoor School Research team from PSU and MESD Outdoor School completed analysis of more than 17,000 student records in order to understand the impact of ODS on students’ academic success indicators. In the study, funded by Gray Family Foundation and Goodman Family Foundation, the team found that program length matters: A full six-day/five-night program has a statistically significant impact on attendance, especially for Asian, African American, and Spanish as a first language students.

The research also showed that Outdoor School has a more positive impact on students who attend in the fall than those who attend during spring session.

“We also found that there are some important results about high school students that have yet to be analyzed,” said researcher Jennifer Basham. “We’re exploring funding options to complete this additional analysis.”
NWRESD celebrates success, faces challenges

There’s much to celebrate, says NWRESD Outdoor School Director John Jackson. When spring session ends, 9,500 of their districts’ students will have attended the program this year—more than they’ve ever served in their 45-year history.

Jackson credits regular grant support from Metro, US Fish & Wildlife and the Juan Young Trust for keeping his Outdoor School program healthy. In particular, he said, the Gray Family Foundation’s generous support is valuable for schools who are attending for first time or bringing the program back after a prolonged hiatus.

But there’s a downside to success: As participation continues to rise, NWRESD has had an increasingly greater challenge recruiting enough high school and college Student Leader volunteers.

What’s the cause?
Recruitment for spring session has fallen due to the Smarter Balanced testing now required of juniors. Some administration, teachers or the students themselves decide it’s too onerous to spend time away from the classroom. Applicant numbers are further reduced by schools that do not allow their sophomores to volunteer, or do not allow NWRESD to recruit on campus—a key method of gaining high numbers of volunteers, according to Jackson.

“Not long ago, one of our district’s high schools used to be a top producer of Student Leaders,” said Jackson. “But this spring only one student from their high school is volunteering for the first week of June, yet we’re serving all of the district’s sixth graders.”

What’s the solution?
Communication and partnerships between elementary/middle schools, high schools and NWRESD is vital, he said. Woodburn School District, for example, has said they’ll provide all the high school volunteers needed.

“Schools who want to send their kids to Outdoor School need to get their high schools’ commitment to provide volunteers. They also need to understand that we can no longer partner with districts who don’t allow reasonable recruitment access to their high school students. We have no choice.”

Parents can talk to their children’s principals to encourage them to grow these partnerships.
Why save Outdoor School?

Let these sixth graders from Troutdale’s Walt Morey Middle School tell you:

“The high schoolers were amazing and how they use their school time just to be spending time with kids like me that's awesome. When I grow up I want to be just like them.”

“What I mostly liked about Outdoor School was campfire and what I hated was saying Bye.”

“I even found out that my dad went to Camp Arrah Wanna! He got really excited.”

“I wish… kids from families that don't have enough money to go to Outdoor School can still go and they can learn and have lots of fun just like I did.”

“It feels amazing to be apart of a group like that. You get to connect with different people.”

“You are learning without realizing you are! When I came back to school and took the quiz I was surprised about how much I remembered.”

“Outdoor School helped me to understand science a lot better than I did before…. I now have decided that hands-on science is way better than sitting around in the same old seat reading from science books.”

SIGN THE PETITION.
Help us show the political leadership in Salem just how strongly Oregon feels about saving Outdoor School.

Sign the petition at OutdoorSchoolForAll.org to help us secure the funding needed to send every Oregon 5th or 6th grader to Outdoor School.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR.
We’ve made it so easy, you can start writing your letter today!
We've gathered together a list of all the newspapers in Oregon and collected the links to their submission pages.

To get started, select your county here: tinyurl.com/ODS-letter-to-editor
Find detailed tips here: OutdoorSchoolForAll.org/letters-to-the-editor

Excerpt from recently published letter to the editor: “Outdoor School changes lives. It gives our children an opportunity to take a break from video games, television, and other electronic devices by getting them outdoors and experiencing Oregon’s natural resources firsthand. Our children develop critical thinking and social skills that have proven to help them learn better and to gain a better understanding of how natural systems work.”

Charles F. Sams III
Oregon Outdoor Education Coalition Member
Volunteer Spotlight: 
Lori Meadows

Lori Meadows has been co-director of Prineville’s Crook County Outdoor School for six years. She attended as a sixth grader, a high school counselor, and for the past 27 years as a sixth grade teacher.

Q: How did you become involved with Outdoor School For All?
A: I attended the December listening session in Bend after I received an email from the Gray Family Foundation, then I spoke about our program at an organizing meeting in April. I also asked our seventh and eighth graders to write letters to their legislators. They’d had some time since sixth grade to reflect on their experiences, and I had tears in my eyes reading many of them.

Q: Is funding an issue for your program?
A: In 57 years we’ve been cut from the district budget six times. But in that time only one group of sixth graders didn’t attend. We make it happen because it’s too important not to. This year the district gave us about half the funds, with the rest made up by grants and parent fees. But for my previous five years as co-director we had to fund it all, and it was exhausting. Mine is a basically unpaid position on top of full-time teaching duties. In our program, sixth-grade teachers also instruct at Outdoor School. As a co-director I receive a slightly larger stipend than the teachers, but once, we added up all our time and we figured we’re paid about $3 an hour!

Q: If Outdoor School was fully state funded, how would you allocate your budget?
A: I’d put the money toward teacher in-service so they have more training and resources to teach at Outdoor School. I’d like to add opportunities to both the lower and upper grades, to prepare younger kids for their Outdoor School experience and get our seventh and eighth graders out of the classroom too, give them something wonderful to look forward to.

Q: In what ways is your job fulfilling?
A: For me personally, Outdoor School changed who I was and helped me realize I wanted to teach, to help kids build their confidence. I believe so strongly that it’s such an important part of sixth grade life. For five days, the children get a chance to get away from sometimes tough home lives and see that life can be different. Barriers are broken down and they find out who they really are. For high school counselors, it builds leadership skills and confidence that ‘I can be in charge of something. I can do this.’” Over the years, I’ve seen so many kids become successful adults because of their Outdoor School experience.
**2014-15 Outdoor School Scholarship Winners**

Five-time Student Leader and recruiter Helen “Quark” Sanderson recently completed Cleveland High School’s rigorous International Baccalaureate diploma program. Quark was a member of the school’s state championship speech and debate team, Dragon Boat team captain, and a top Poetry Interpretation and Radio Commentary speaker. In the fall she will head to Case Western Reserve University to study physics and electrical engineering.

Also a Cleveland International Baccalaureate recipient, Naomi “Tazz” Tsai was in the top 10 percent of her school’s higher level physics class. She was part of OHSU’s partnership program, Lewis and Clark’s STEM program, and the ACE Mentor Program. A Rose Festival princess, Tazz became a candidate to polish her public speaking skills. This five-time Student Leader also played on the swim and varsity cross-country teams and in the Cleveland Jazz Band. Tazz will choose between offers from four Northwest universities, followed by medical school.

Described by ODS site supervisor Doug “Flank” Lloyd as the “solid rock” for her sixth-grade students, Iris “Nova” Smith is the recipient of the Heather Schoeck Memorial Scholarship. Nova carried a perfect GPA at Grant High School, was a 13-year member of the Japanese immersion program, and ran varsity hurdles for three years. Outside of school Nova volunteered to work with medically fragile newborns, loves baking, sewing and photography, and summits mountain peaks. This five-time Student Leader plans to study pre-med with a major in biology or bioengineering as she works toward her goal of becoming a physician.

Described as “always positive” with an “award-winning” smile, Salvador “Salt” Garcia-Lopez is another five-time Student Leader and recipient of the Lorax Scholarship. To attain his goal of being the first in his family to graduate college, he’s been a dedicated part of Reynolds’ College Possible program, where he demonstrated his incredible leadership ability and perseverance. Salt also served as ASB vice president and was active in Outward Bound and the LINK Crew leadership club, and in April he attended the SkillsUSA State Leadership and Skills Conference. Salt plans to earn a master’s degree in secondary education to fulfill his goal of becoming a teacher.

An active SL recruiter, Morgan “Luna” McAllister worked an impressive six sessions at Outdoor School. Luna worked at a variety of different sites and programs and excelled at them all. A graduate of Metro East Web Academy, this AP Scholar completed one of the most rigorous courses of study available to an Oregon high school student. Last summer she left home and family to attend art school in San Francisco, and credits her ODS experiences with giving her the tools to successfully navigate independent life. She looks forward to earning a bachelor’s degree in visual effects and animation with a minor in film.

Friends of Outdoor School intern Olivia “Paw” Evans is the winner of — you guessed it, the Friends of Outdoor School scholarship! ODS staff has seen this Metropolitan Learning Center graduate and SL recruiter grow from a shy teen to a vibrant, outgoing young woman. As part of her school’s Teen Leadership Council, she co-wrote a grant for a school-wide Anti-Bullying Campaign and worked to revive a summer camp for adopted children as her senior project. Paw is beyond excited to attend Humboldt State University in the fall to study environmental sciences.

Vy “Avyva” Nguyen, winner of the Outdoor School Staff Scholarship, excelled in the demanding college prep curriculum at St. Mary’s Academy. There, she was a member of the Science Olympiad team, Campus Ministry, and ambassador leadership program. She also was co-president of the math club and co-editor of the school’s literary magazine, Escribe Maria (all the more impressive because English is her second language!) A natural teacher, Avyva was a three-time Student Leader for Oregon Trail Overnight and two-time ODS Student Leader. She plans to attend OSU in the fall, majoring in biohealth sciences with the ultimate goal of earning a Doctorate of Pharmacy.
Adventure WILD!
Summer Day Camp for ages 4-8

5 sessions of fun & nature learning:
July 6 - Aug 7

2 East Portland base camps:
Leach Botanical Garden
Mazamas Mountaineering Center

AdventureWILD.org 971-266-1797
a benefit for Friends of Outdoor School

For more information, contact Kim Silva at Kim@FriendsOfOutdoorSchool.org or 503-257-1774.
www.FriendsOfOutdoorSchool.org