

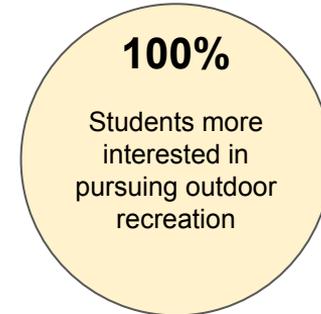
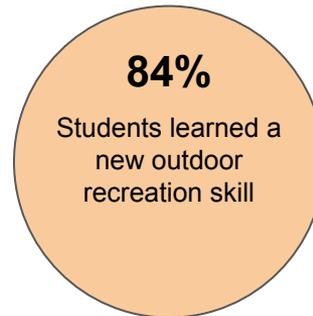


**ADVENTURES**  
**WITHOUT LIMITS**

Outdoor Leadership Program, Supported by the Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund

## Project Snapshot:

- Adventures Without Limits recruited 2 cohorts of rural youth: 1 high school (Estacada, OR) and 1 middle school (Forest Grove, OR), including 8 - 10 students each
- Each cohort participated in an 8 week, after school Outdoor Leadership Program, which also included 4 Saturday field trips - including a “mock” backpacking trip, learning geology and responsible recreation while rock climbing, hiking at the local wetlands restoration park, and completing a student-led environmental stewardship project.
- Of the students who participated, more than 70% qualified for free or reduced lunch, 40% were students with disabilities, and 50% identified as BIPOC.



## Stories from the trail:

“On our first outing, a mock backpacking trip, the students left Estacada in a heavy rain. We arrived at the site and we loaded our packs and discussed the plan. It was clear that the rain was not going to let up nor give us a break. So, we donned our rain gear and headed to the trailhead. We hiked 3 miles within an old growth section of the Salmon River National Forest. It was beautiful, even with the rain. I encouraged the students to find something they found interesting and to stop and point it out to the group. Each found something amazing, different and unique to their perspective. They each described why they found this object or view interesting. In addition to pointing out their own interest, each student was given the opportunity to lead the group. They would set pace and decide if the group would stop for water, detour down an unknown trail or take a snack break. We discussed what it means to lead compared to being just in the front of a line. It was amazing how each leader took the time to look back and check to see the group was staying together and even asked feedback from others on whether we should stop or try something new.

The real highlight to the group was after lunch. We stored the packs and the gear in the van and went hiking up river with water and a snack. We came across a huge old growth stand. The group decided to play Eagle Eye for about 2 hours. It was amazing the bonding, the laughing and the overall stoke that was grown in this one place. Part of the connection that was communicated by the students was the beauty of the big trees and the large and abundant number of ferns. However, the experience of having fun in that space held a higher weight in their reasoning for liking the space. This connection is memory that is based on experience, it cannot be captured in a photo and maybe not even with video. The students took the relationships and the space together to form this memory; conservation essentially is the public wanting to keep the space they have positive memories in or spaces that are similar to the ones they have experienced. We save what we love and what we value; this experience alone made this entire pilot worth the time and money to offer to these young students.”



## Learning Opportunity:

“During the last week of the Outdoor Leadership Program we were focused on the Conservation of the spaces we care about. Students were asked to list different places that they care about and why they care about those spaces. Many of the students in Estacada have different locations that they like to hike or areas they want to protect the right to hunt in. These were the main spaces that they wanted to highlight and see unchanged, or kept pristine. We then walked to the local park, Wade Creek Park, in Estacada which is being renovated due to years of mistreatment and the community not caring after the space once the local mill shut down. This is costing the city a couple millions dollars to repair to its more natural state. The students and I discussed the reality of not taking care of a space and watching it get worse compared to doing the small steps of keeping a place pristine. “Both the environment and the economics makes sense,” Joseph said. This was a huge win of understanding as many in Estacada don't think environmental concerns are real and that it is just a democratic agenda. I don't know where this will leak into the other aspects of life, but it felt like a seed was planted. With more interactions like this, that seed will have more nutrients and a foundation to grow from.”



## Leadership in Action:

We planned a weekend climbing trip at Smith Rock as a culminating activity to wrap up the Outdoor Leadership Program. Unfortunately, due to weather, we had to pivot to indoor rock climbing instead, but still discussed themes of responsible recreation, ecology, and the restoration of trails, campgrounds, and crags in order to resolve the impact of recreation in sensitive habitats.

We brought both the high school and middle school cohorts together for the first time, students of different ages, life experiences, and communities, and witnessed the unexpected magic of mentorship in action when the high school students stepped into natural leadership roles at the gym. Even though it was their first time rock climbing as well, they modeled respectful and appropriate behavior for the middle school students, shared their new knot tying and belay techniques, and celebrated the success of their new friends when they pushed themselves to try harder climbs.

For the high school students, 60% of whom had been suspended or received multiple detentions/disciplinary actions from school in previous year, and 80% of whom had an IEP to support learning disabilities, this was a unique opportunity to be viewed as a leader by their peers and valued for their contributions to the group.

At Adventures Without Limits, we believe that the outdoors are for everyone, and we support OCRF's mission to increase access to our natural resources for years to come by inspiring youth leaders and future conservationists. This program would not have been possible without the support of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund, and we are excited to expand this pilot program for years to come.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

