



Oregon State University  
Extension Service  
Outdoor School

**Together, We Are Working to Help Our Outdoor School Community During This Difficult Time:  
*Our united response to COVID-19.***

April 3, 2020

Dear Outdoor School Community,

While it was just a couple months ago that many of us left the January Outdoor School gathering at Camp Tadmor with energy and anticipation, the current public health crisis has put a difficult turn in our paths. We share your concern for the students you would be serving and we recognize the challenges this has created for you and your organizations. We also recognize that for some in our community, this pandemic represents not just an interruption of business but an existential threat, personally and professionally.

Yet we continue to hear about how so many of you are responding to this crisis with resolve and creativity. We deeply appreciate the work you are doing to develop alternative programming and resources, support your communities and staff, and otherwise respond to events we have not seen in this country in generations.

Friends of Outdoor School, Gray Family Foundation, and the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service Outdoor School program want you to know that we are working in collaboration for and with you, our community – to navigate this crisis such that you can, once again, provide powerful Outdoor School (ODS) experiences to our youth. We see you.

United in our cause, we are working to keep you informed and provide you the opportunity to provide feedback that might help us better serve you. First, we will be holding online webinars (details listed below) for our two primary stakeholder groups. Please join the webinar most closely aligned with your role in outdoor school so we may better design the experience for each user group. Both webinars will be recorded and made available on the OSU Extension Outdoor School web page for future viewing by all stakeholders.

**On Wednesday April 8, 2020 at 11:00 am**, the OSU Extension Outdoor School program will be hosting the first webinar for all of Oregon's Measure 99 funded ODS district and school contacts to explain the COVID-19 Response Strategies presented in our March 13, 2020 letter, *AND* to provide a demonstration of the 2020 ODS reporting process as it has been modified to accommodate these Response Strategies. [Click Here for School and District Meeting Registration URL](#)

**On Wednesday April 15, 2020 at 11:00 am**, Friends of Outdoor School, with support from Gray Family Foundation and OSU Extension Outdoor School program will be hosting a second webinar for all of Oregon's ODS providers and sites to provide them with the latest information related to the actions each organization is taking as outlined below. [Click Here for Site and Provider Meeting Registration URL](#)

In addition to the webinars listed above, each of our organizations has a particular role in providing support, and here is how we are working today, and in the coming weeks and months to help ODS in Oregon better navigate this challenging time:

Friends of Outdoor School is:

- Gathering information about the impact of COVID-19 on students, ODS sites and programs, and schools, and preparing ways to share that impact with decision-makers.
- Advocating for programs and sites to be included in federal and state COVID-19 emergency funding programs.
- Identifying and sharing emergency resources with ODS programs and sites.
- Preparing for the aftermath of the pandemic, especially related to continued Measure 99 funding.

Gray Family Foundation is:

- Converting any remaining ODS planning grant funds to general operating support for grantees where ODS is a key priority.
- Adjusting timelines on funds granted to private/independent schools to send current 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> graders to ODS programs, enabling schools to use these funds to:
  - send current 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> graders to ODS next fall (as 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> graders), or
  - apply it to an equivalent program, or
  - reallocate it for the 2020/21 school year programs.
- Continuing to make available, on a quarterly basis, funding for ODS planning projects for current and new ODS providers. [Details available here.](#)
- Identifying additional opportunities to support the ODS community outside of short-term solutions with further updates anticipated in May 2020.

OSU Extension Outdoor School program is:

- Continuing to update our [web-based resources for learning at home](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) for access to our weekly updates.
- Responding with several strategies to help minimize the impact of this health crisis on students and ODS programming, assist districts, schools, and educators, and help provide a level financial cushion to ODS providers and sites. Visit Extension Service Outdoor School [COVID-19 information web page](#) for more information.
- Investigating ways to ensure students who miss out on spring ODS programming have the opportunity to make up this transformative experience, perhaps as 7<sup>th</sup>

graders in the fall of 2020. We will be providing more information on this effort very soon.

- Continuing to work closely with the Oregon Natural Resource Education Program (ONREP) to continue professional learning opportunities for formal and non-formal educators, specifically moving these efforts to web based platforms.

We know that the rapidly changing situation is keeping many of us on our heels and making it more difficult to be strategic and measured in our responses. We also know that the work of our three organizations may change as the situation continues to emerge. And we know that, for many of you, this crisis is affecting all that you do, not just your ODS work. We are committed to communicating with you all as much as possible through this, and we hope that you will reach out in whatever way makes sense for you to let us know how you are doing and how we may be able to help.

Sending all of you our heartfelt support and wishes for good health.

**Warmly from all of us to all of you,**

*Friends of Outdoor School  
Gray Family Foundation  
OSU Extension Outdoor School Program*



**OUTDOOR  
SCHOOL**  
2019-2020