

Directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators // Spring 2023

Outdoor School for All



**ANCA'S
PRIORITIES**

**EQUITY AND
INCLUSION**

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The *Directions* journal contains news and trends in the nature & environmental learning center profession, as well as relevant resources and stories of innovative leadership.

If you are part of the nature center profession and wish to receive more resources like *Directions*, see [ANCA membership levels](#).

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Cover photo: An aerial view of a program at NorthBay, an outdoor school on the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland.

About ANCA

Founded in 1989, the Association of Nature Center Administrators is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting best leadership and management practices for nature and environmental learning centers. Serving more than 700 members, ANCA is the leader in the profession.

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Evaluating ANCA's Strategic Plan and Priorities

At a recent board and staff retreat, we reflected on recent changes for ANCA members and assessed progress on our strategic plan.

Asa Duffee, ANCA Director of Marketing & Communications
Jen Levy, ANCA Executive Director

IN LATE FEBRUARY, the ANCA board of directors and full-time staff met virtually for two days of organizational reflection and planning — part of an annual ANCA retreat. This practice importantly allows us the time to evaluate the past year's progress on our strategic plan, [ANCA 2025](#), and how our work is aligning with our values.

We always have much to reflect on, but 2022 felt replete with change and undertakings. ANCA resumed in-person programming for the first time since the beginning of 2020, including the 2022 ANCA Annual Summit at Irvine Nature Center in Owings Mills, Md., as well as our in-person [Peer Consults](#). We also expanded our virtual programming through [CONNECTS](#), reaching more professionals and organizations. We launched the ANCA Culture Survey, and more than 600 professionals participated providing the critical data we need to determine our next steps. Most importantly, we continued to provide community for our members.

Of course, much has been happening for ANCA members as well. The past year brought with it higher operating costs due to inflation and hiring challenges due to a changing workforce. These operational aspects have been major obstacles for many organizations, and on top of this, we still see lingering fatigue from the pandemic. This combination of challenges makes it yet more important to support each other professionally, and to take care of ourselves in order to reduce burnout.

ANCA members have also seen a backlash toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, in particular against the LGBTQ community. While this back-

lash comes from small groups of people, it can have a significantly harmful impact on our organizations and the LGBTQ professionals at those organizations. In some instances, ANCA members have had to cancel programs due to threats of violence. This is unacceptable, and ANCA stands with the LGBTQ members of our community, as well as the organizations that provide safe spaces for LGBTQ people. We also support our members who are faced with hard decisions while leading their organizations.

ANCA is now developing programs around all of these challenges — keep an eye out for new ANCA [CONNECTS](#), as well as sessions at the [2023 ANCA Annual Summit](#) at The Ecology School in Saco, Maine. We will of course continue to support nature centers, outdoor schools, and other environmental organizations achieve their missions through best practices, in addition to celebrating our collective successes along the way.

The retreat allowed us the opportunity to celebrate our successes, reflect on what has changed for our members, and review and revise our priorities. In asking ourselves, “What will success look like at the end of 2023?” we identified the need to maintain a strong foundation as well as continue to move forward with our strategic priorities. The priorities we identified include shoring up our policies and procedures to ensure we have the capacity to continue our work toward a desired future.

ANCA is a strong community thanks to our staff, our board, and our members. We understand that our peer network is our greatest resource, and we will continue to listen to our members and respond with the programs and resources they need. 🌱

Current Priorities

At ANCA's staff and board retreat we identified certain priorities for the next year, all of which are rooted in our strategic plan. These include:

HELP ANCA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT PROMOTE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION.

Recognizing that social inequities are systemic, we see a need to focus on policies and procedures. Our work will include sharing examples of equitable policies, as well as creating programming around this topic.

SUPPORT PEOPLE WHO ARE PART OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS WITHIN ANCA, WITH SPECIFIC FOCUS ON PEOPLE OF COLOR, LGBTQ PEOPLE, AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

As we discuss in the ANCA Culture Survey Overview on pages 3-6, last year we found that people of color, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities all have lower workplace satisfaction scores than their counterparts. We are currently exploring how we can best support these three groups.

INCREASE DIVERSITY ACROSS OUR MEMBERSHIP, WITH A FOCUS ON RACIAL DIVERSITY, LGBTQIA+ DIVERSITY, AND ABILITY DIVERSITY.

As the Culture Survey demonstrated, our profession is demographically homogeneous, particularly in race — the field is overwhelmingly (87.5%) White. While we believe that it is important to begin DEI work with creating equitable and inclusive spaces, we must also be intentional with growing our membership through recruitment tactics and organizational partnerships. As such, we want to prioritize these three types of diversity when reaching out to prospective members and partners.

DEVELOP PROGRAMS FOR ANCA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS' BOARDS OF DIRECTORS/ TRUSTEES.

Best management and leadership practices includes developing an active and engaged board. Now that we have three full-time staff and a growing network, we want to elevate our focus on boards.

BUILD ANCA'S CAPACITY WITH GRANTS AND NATIONAL FUNDING.

While we have significantly grown our capacity in recent years, we want to further pursue sources of funding from foundations and federal programs.

REVIEW ANCA'S INVESTMENT POLICIES.

Update ANCA's investment policies and ensure that investment return is aligned with the policy.

ASSESS OUR PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD.

Recognizing that ANCA now has more capacity, we want to evaluate how we can best work with other national organizations — asking not only how a relationship can benefit us, but also how we can contribute to other networks.

The ANCA Culture Survey: An Overview

In our most recent strategic plan, ANCA 2025, we stated a desire to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within our membership and the profession. As an organization and an industry, however, in the past we have struggled to quantify the data needed to provide critical feedback for improvement.



Therefore in early 2022 we implemented the *ANCA Culture Survey* to establish a benchmark of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our professional field. To develop this survey, we contracted with Cream City Conservation and Consulting and administered the survey through Culture Amp, a survey platform specifically made to evaluate organizational culture. We sent this survey to ANCA members and paid staff at ANCA member organizations, and we asked directors and managers at these organizations to share the survey with all other paid staff within the organization. Our goal was to identify any disparities in experiences of nature and environmental learning center employees based on social identities.

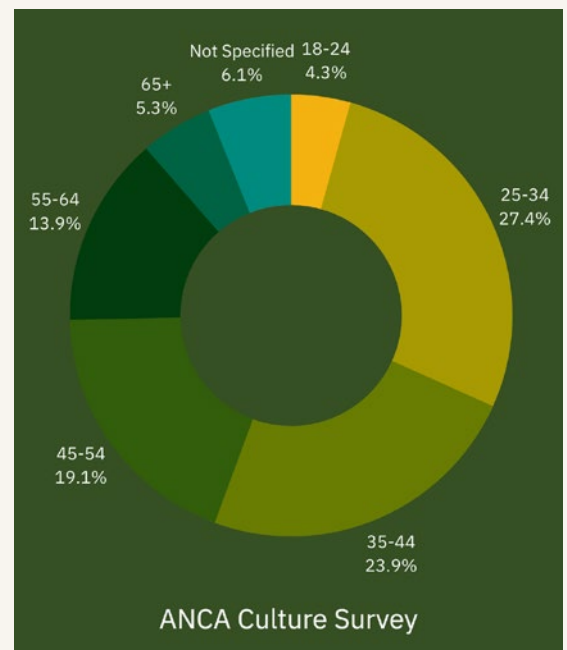
As leaders, we need to understand if decisions are fair, voices are heard, and if our staff see opportunities for themselves in the future. The results of this survey shed light on areas that need our attention, as well as areas of current strengths. Directors and managers within our profession can use this data to inform their own organizations; the data is also guiding ANCA's next steps in providing support and training to our members.

This overview shares the initial results of the Culture Survey. We will periodically release more in-depth analyses of these results and share recommendations for how nature centers as a profession may work toward a more equitable and inclusive field.

Age

ANCA is committed to supporting leaders at all stages of their leadership journey, so we hoped this survey would help us understand the range and ratios of ages represented in our membership.

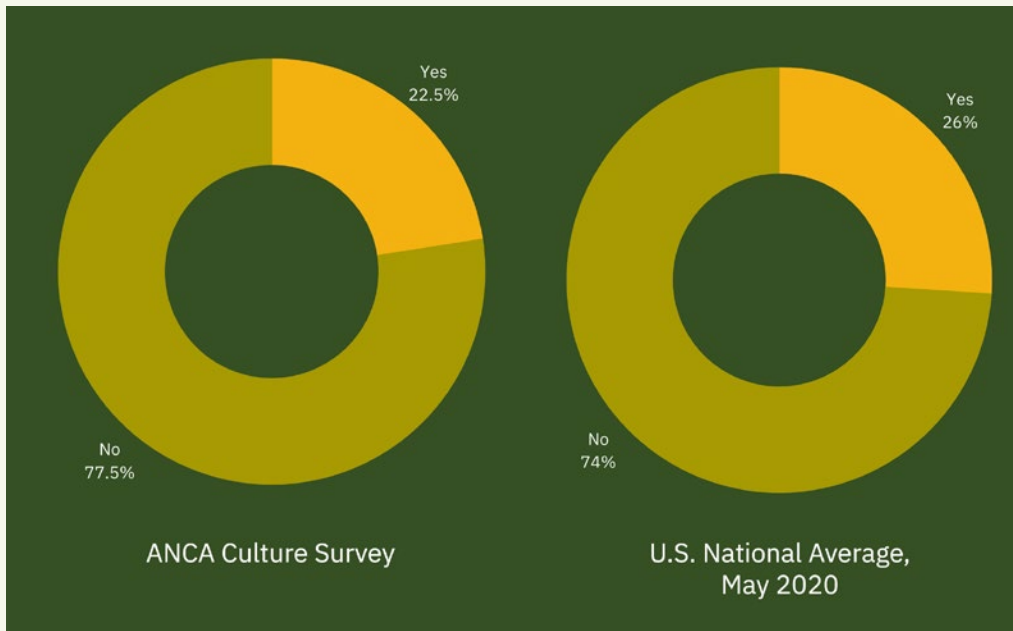
Overall, the survey showed fairly strong age diversity in our membership. That said, approximately 38% of staff in our survey will reach retirement age in the next 20 years, which means nurturing our young leaders is more important than ever!



Disability

We know that nature has immense benefits for people of all abilities. The nature center field has struggled with providing equitable access to folks of all abilities, so ANCA hoped that this survey could help us understand how well people with disabilities were represented in our membership.

ANCA trends slightly behind the national population in terms of representation of people with disabilities, but not by much. These numbers are an important reminder that our efforts toward accessibility are important not just for the communities we serve but for our membership as well.

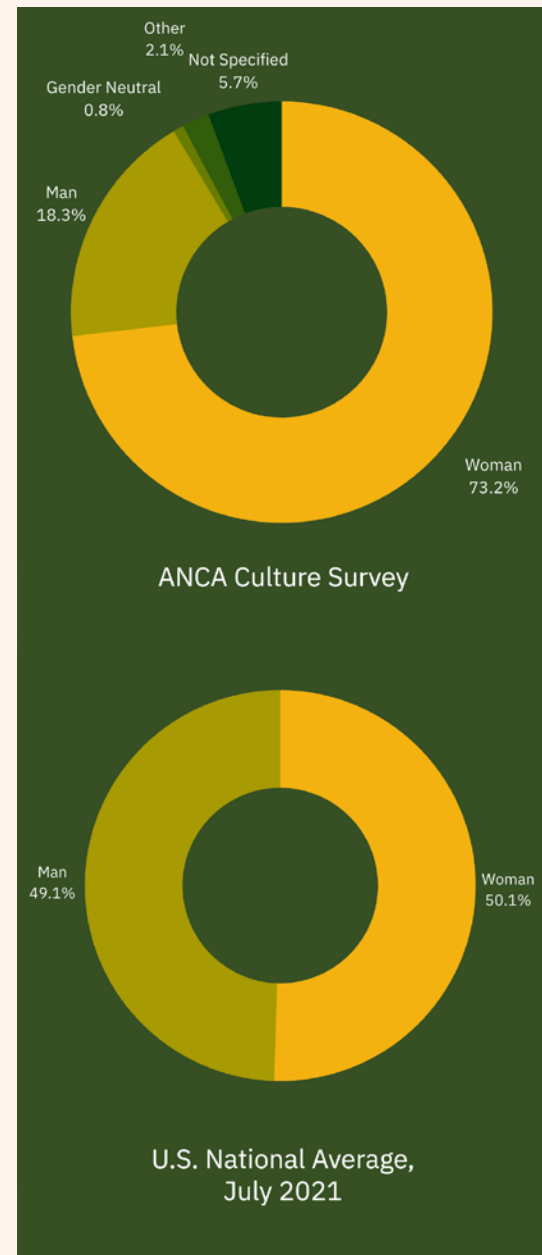


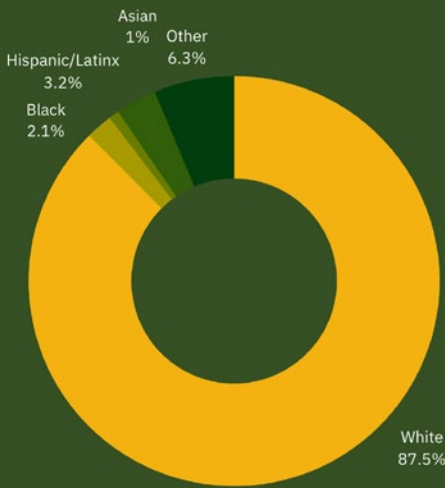
Gender Identity

In addition to longstanding questions about the gender gap between men and women in terms of leadership roles and pay equity, gender identity in a broader sense has become an increasingly divisive issue in our country. ANCA wanted to understand how our community identifies, and what leadership looks like in terms of gender across our network.

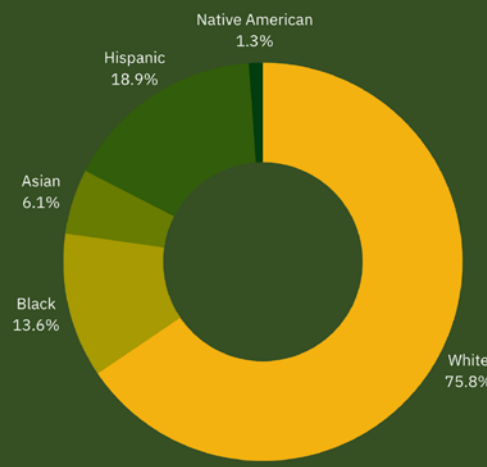
It likely comes as no surprise that women make up nearly three quarters of the ANCA community. And this is not unique to the nature center field. According to American Association of University Women (AAUW): “Women make up 75% of workers in the sectors that encompass most nonprofits.” However, leadership tends to lag behind the overall workforce, and even at the highest level, pay gaps between men and women are pervasive. Again, from AAUW: “Female CEOs at organizations with an annual budget of less than \$1 million experience median pay gaps of between 6 percent and 13 percent relative to male CEOs. At larger nonprofits, where men outnumber women, the gap is larger: female CEOs face a median 18 percent pay gap at the nonprofits with the largest budgets.” So, it is worth noting that representation does not always lead to equity, and there is likely more work to do for us in terms of gender equity!

The survey’s results also clearly reflect the shifting cultural reality related to gender identity. According to Heath Davis Fogg, author of *Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter?*, “Among Gen Z, 59% believe that forms should offer more options than “man” and “woman,” 35% report personally knowing someone who uses gender neutral pronouns, and one in six identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community. This generation is growing up with “intersectionality” and “queerness” in their vocabularies.” At the same time, we have also seen (both nationally and specifically in our nature center community) a harsh backlash toward gender-inclusive language and practices. This issue may be one of the toughest and most important ones facing the ANCA community in the coming years.

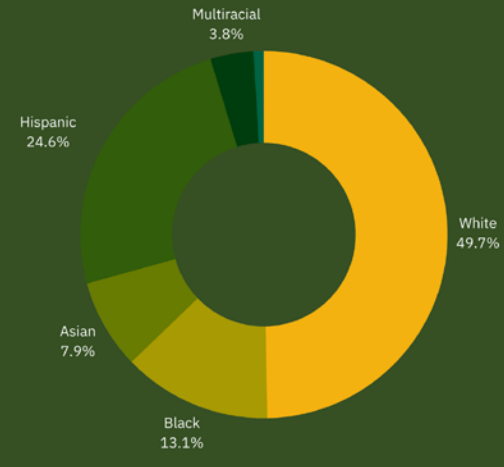




ANCA Culture Survey



U.S. National Average, July 2021



Estimated demographics of U.S. population, 2045

Race/Ethnicity

In ANCA’s Core Values, we state that the collective wisdom and diversity of our peer network is our greatest resource. While there are many dimensions of diversity, we knew that racial and ethnic diversity in our network was an area where we were lacking as an organization, and we also knew it was an area of critical importance. This culture survey helped shine a light on the gaps and our opportunities for growth.

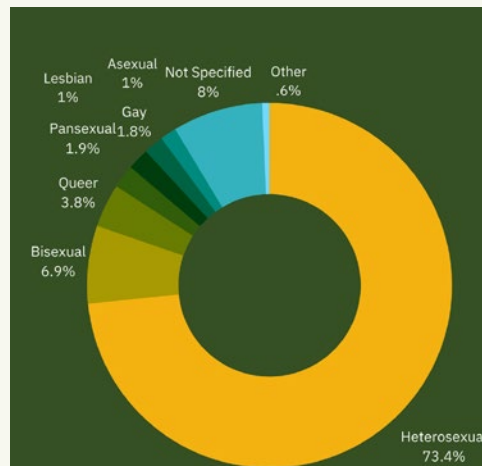
ANCA’s racial diversity lags significantly behind our nation’s makeup with White staff being significantly overrepresented, and BIPOC staff being significantly underrepresented. As the U.S. demographics shift toward a majority BIPOC population by 2045, it is absolutely critical that nature centers, and ANCA, shift as well. In order to appropriately engage, represent, and serve our communities, our leadership needs to more closely mirror those communities.

The ANCA Culture Survey and the U.S. National Average includes persons reporting more than one race. Estimated 2045 demographics are based on William H. Frey’s analysis of US Census population estimates.

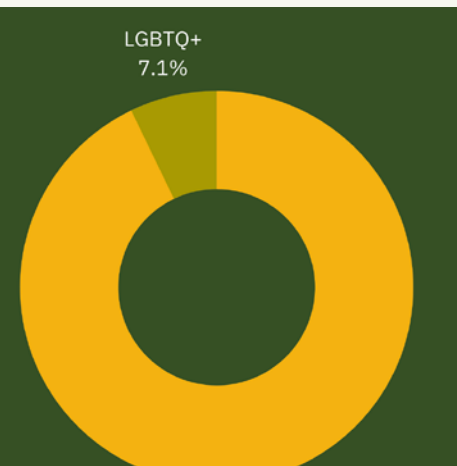
Sexual Orientation

Another dimension of diversity that is important to ANCA is sexual orientation. We want our network and our centers to be welcoming to folks who are part of the LGBTQ+ community and we hoped this survey would give us a clearer picture of how our members identify.

As you can see, the ANCA network trends above the U.S. national average in terms of representation of the LGBTQ+ community. While we hope this means that LGBTQ+ folks feel a sense of belonging in the field, we know that these numbers don’t tell the whole story. As noted above in the “gender” section, we know many folks who identify as transgender, nonbinary, and genderqueer have



ANCA Culture Survey



U.S. National Average, July 2021

encountered discrimination in their communities and workplaces. We know we have work to do to make ANCA and our member cen-

ters safe and welcoming spaces for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

WORKPLACE SATISFACTION & PERCEPTION

The Culture Survey went beyond demographic information, also including questions about how participants perceive their organization as a workplace. These questions pertained to fairness, decision-making, professional opportunities, belonging, diversity, and equity.

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

Diversity

As the demographic information showed, the nature center field is predominantly White and homogenous in other respects. Respondents' perception about this lack of diversity correlates to the data we collected — only 41% of respondents feel positive about diversity at their organization; 28% feel that diversity is actively lacking at their organization.

Fairness

19% of respondents consider their organization to have unfair practices, with 20% of all respondents holding neutral feelings about fairness at their organization.

Workplace Satisfaction

Our data show that staff members in marginalized groups have lower workplace satisfaction scores than their counterparts:

BIPOC Staff

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) staff reported lower workplace satisfaction than White staff, with significantly lower scores for workplace equity, belonging, professional opportunities, and engagement.

LGBTQ+ Staff

LGBTQ+ staff reported lower workplace satisfaction than non-LGBTQ+ staff in nearly all factors within their organization.

Staff with Disabilities

Staff with disabilities reported lower workplace satisfaction than abled staff in nearly all factors within their organization.

AREAS OF SUCCESS

92%

of respondents felt that their work contributes to a broader purpose

75%

of respondents feel that they are part of the decision-making processes at their organization

82%

of respondents reported a feeling of belonging with their organization

CONCLUSION

ANCA is a network involving hundreds of organizations throughout North America, and collectively this network makes outdoor education possible for millions of people. Our data here, however, show that nature center staff throughout the industry do not reflect the demographics of our communities. Further, when staff are BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or disabled, they do not feel as welcome or heard within their organization as their counterparts.

As a profession, we must actively promote equity and inclusion within our organizations. Our workplaces are now disproportionately homogeneous particularly regarding race and ethnicity, and that homogeneity hinders our ability to connect people with nature. If we wish to truly achieve our organizational missions, we need to examine how we are not reaching major populations within our communities, and purposefully address those gaps. The survival of our industry and the well-being of our natural areas depend on it. 🌱



Outdoor School for All: *A Campaign Gains Momentum*

ANCA is supporting a campaign that aims to ultimately provide every child in the U.S. with at least one outdoor school experience.

Photo: Students participate in a program at the North Cascades Institute, an outdoor school operating in Rockport, Wash.

by Asa Duffee, ANCA Director of Marketing & Communications

ANCA serves a variety of organizations, all with similar missions of connecting people with the outdoors and protecting natural habitats. However, organizations differ in their methods. Some offer brief programs for school field trips, some operate nature-based preschools that host the same children each day, and others host public programs for all ages.

Unique among these organizations is the outdoor school, which offers overnight programs over multiple days. These programs are youth-based and academic, typically operating through school partnerships where students and classroom teachers participate together, sharing educational activities and meals.

In recent years, a growing movement has been seeking to expand opportunities for children to attend outdoor schools. This movement, called *Outdoor School for All* (OSFA), has already established statewide funding in Oregon and Washington, with other state legislations considering funding now.

Outdoor School for All (cont.)

ANCA has begun coordinating a national Outdoor School for All campaign that aims to provide every child in the U.S. with at least one outdoor school experience during their K-12 education. The campaign's goals include establishing new outdoor schools, strengthening existing programs, and providing funding for more students to access these organizations.

WHY OUTDOOR SCHOOLS?

Outdoor schools offer a one-of-a-kind experience for students. By hosting programs over multiple days, these organizations offer unparalleled immersion in a learning environment focused on the outdoors.

Because outdoor school programs are academic in nature, they go beyond recreational activities by incorporating experiential learning in science, conservation, and sustainability; students learn hands-on through observation and study. Many outdoor schools are accredited as educational institutions.

Outdoor school programs also feature social and emotional learning that develops participants' sense of self and community. Because they live and learn together, students develop close ties to their surroundings and peers, all the while engaging in the immersive study of ecological processes and how people connect to the environment.

This translates to strong impacts for students. **In one study** of teachers whose classrooms attended outdoor school in Oregon, 73 percent reported that the outdoor school experience either moderately or substantially improved their students' school engagement. The same study

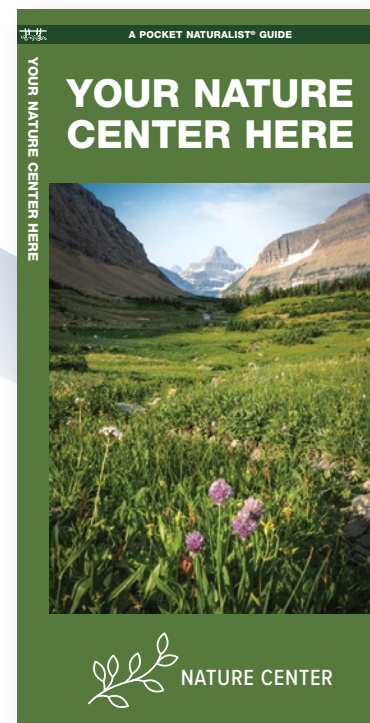


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surveyed over 3,000 students who participated in outdoor school and found that because of their outdoor school experience, those students are more motivated to learn, more likely to positively engage in school, and more likely to perform environmental stewardship behaviors.

For all of these reasons, ANCA supports the outdoor school industry and is leading the movement for expanding outdoor school experiences to students across the country.

WASHINGTON ESTABLISHES SOME FUNDING, AND HOPES TO BUILD REGULAR FUNDS FOR OUTDOOR SCHOOLS

The state of Washington has a long history of outdoor school, with

many outdoor schools starting in the 1940s and 50s. Today a number of outdoor schools are spread throughout the state, including ANCA members [IslandWood](#), [Mount St. Helens Institute](#), [NatureBridge](#), [North Cascades Institute](#), and [Waskowitz Outdoor Education Center](#).

A little over ten years ago, these organizations came together to share best practices and resources. This became known as the [Washington Outdoor School Coalition](#) (WOSC), and while WOSC initially formed for these outdoor schools to communicate with and support each other, in 2016 conversations began about Outdoor School for All statewide funding. That year Oregon voters passed a ballot measure that authorized

funds to provide an outdoor school experience for every fifth- and sixth-grade student in the state — and WOSC saw this as momentum that could inspire their work.

In the years that followed, WOSC developed the networks and support needed to secure funding for OSFA. The funding began with \$10 million in 2021 via COVID relief funds, and then in 2022 the state legislature passed a bill that supported the development of outdoor education programs, allocated grants to school districts and outdoor school providers, and directly funded overnight outdoor school experiences for fifth- and sixth-grade students.

The movement has garnered support from Washington Governor Jay Inslee, who himself

A program at NorthBay, an outdoor school on the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland.



attended an outdoor school, Camp Waskowitz, as a student. With In-slee's support, the state legislature recently allocated \$40 million to outdoor school funding for the next two years. \$31.8M is specifically allocated for overnight school, and most of the remaining balance is for K-12 outdoor education programs.

While the success of Outdoor School for All in Washington has been years in the making, the work is proving fruitful, says Talia Schmitt, Coalition Manager of WOSC. Schmitt notes that the legislation had widespread bipartisan support in both the House (92-5) and the Senate (44-3).

"It seems to cross political boundaries," Schmitt says. "And that's a really exciting prospect."



Jeff Giesen, Associate Director of North Cascades Institute in Sedro Woolley, Wash., agrees that Outdoor School for All holds appeal beyond just a single audience.

"The Outdoor School for All movement is for kids, and it is for schools, but it's going to ... expand the reach of the outdoors for many, many people," Giesen says, noting that creating more outdoor school experiences will involve broad networks of people.

MARYLAND BUILDS A COALITION FOR ITS OWN OUTDOOR SCHOOL FOR ALL

On the other side of the continent, organizations in Maryland are in the process of advocating for statewide Outdoor School for All funding. One of the leading organizations in this effort is ANCA member **NorthBay**, an outdoor school near the northernmost point of Chesapeake Bay.

Rick Garber, Director of Education at NorthBay, says that the organization didn't start its advocacy efforts identifying with Outdoor School for All, but rather began with the goal of providing equitable access to environmental education for Maryland students. Only during this process did NorthBay come to discover the broader Outdoor School for All movement, whose cornerstone is equitable access for all children, proving a perfect fit for NorthBay's goals.

Maryland as a state has well-established standards for environmental education, particularly surrounding watersheds. However, these come as an unfunded mandate, which makes for discrepancies in how schools are able to comply with those standards. As such NorthBay and other organizations are working with

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Outdoor School for All (cont.)

lawmakers to allocate more significant funding to outdoor schools and other environmental education programs.

The largest step for this advocacy work is building a strong coalition that includes legislators, outdoor schools, environmental foundations, and school systems, all working together. But how does one actually build this coalition?

“The old-fashioned way,” says Garber. “Face to face.”

This winter and spring he’s been meeting with legislators, school representatives, and environmental education leaders all over the state. This kind of personal contact has been essential for building meaningful relationships with the wide variety of constituents and representatives involved in this process. Sometimes NorthBay has been able to build such connections at gatherings such as the Maryland Association for Environmental Outdoor Education Annual Conference, but often it takes the initiative of reaching out to indi-

Students participate in a program at NorthBay.



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viduals and then meeting at their own site or location.

Currently NorthBay is focusing efforts on building this larger coalition, with the prospect of securing funding during the legislative session that begins in January 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CAMPAIGNS IN OTHER STATES

Advocacy work on this level will look different in each state, as will the funding systems that are available to implement Outdoor School for All. Yet, it is entirely possible for states to develop their own Outdoor School for All campaigns; ANCA has identified nine states with current Outdoor School for All campaigns (see pgs 13-14).

For developing campaigns, Schmitt advises that building a strong network is the crucial first step.

“One of the things I would recommend for states who are starting up an Outdoor School for All campaign is to build up your coalition and have this active voice of



A Note from Katie Wright, Outdoor School for All Consultant for ANCA

Shortly after the pandemic began, a small group of outdoor schools began meeting regularly through ANCA to shift the dialogue from “How will we survive?” to “How will we thrive?” As we all watched the growing need for kids to reap the benefits of being in nature, we also watched the devastating impact of pandemic closures on the outdoor school industry. It became clear that there was a need, and momentum building, for a national Outdoor School for All movement.

Just imagine what the world would look like if every child had access to an outdoor school experience.

The ANCA Outdoor School for All Consortium consists of representatives from nine organizations across the country:

- ANCA
- Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Peninsula, Ohio
- Islandwood in Bainbridge Island, Wash.
- Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont in Townsend, Tenn.
- NatureBridge in Calif., Va., and Wash.
- NorthBay in North East, Md.
- North Cascades Institute in Sedro-Woolley, Wash.
- The Ecology School in Saco, Maine
- Wolf Ridge in Finland, Minn.

These organizations have contributed financially and meet biweekly to support the efforts to increase access to Outdoor School for All across the country.

Over the next year the Consortium will be working to secure base funding to support the ongoing work of a national Outdoor School for All movement. This funding will support capacity building for outdoor schools through coalition building and training. Using ANCA’s Peer Consult model the Consortium will work to support the growth of state and regional coalitions with the goal of working together to drive more resources to outdoor schools. This funding will also support an analysis of the outdoor school industry to determine where the gaps and needs are to grow the industry. We will look to establish an evaluation tool that can be used by outdoor schools to measure their individual success as well as providing data for the collective impact of the industry.

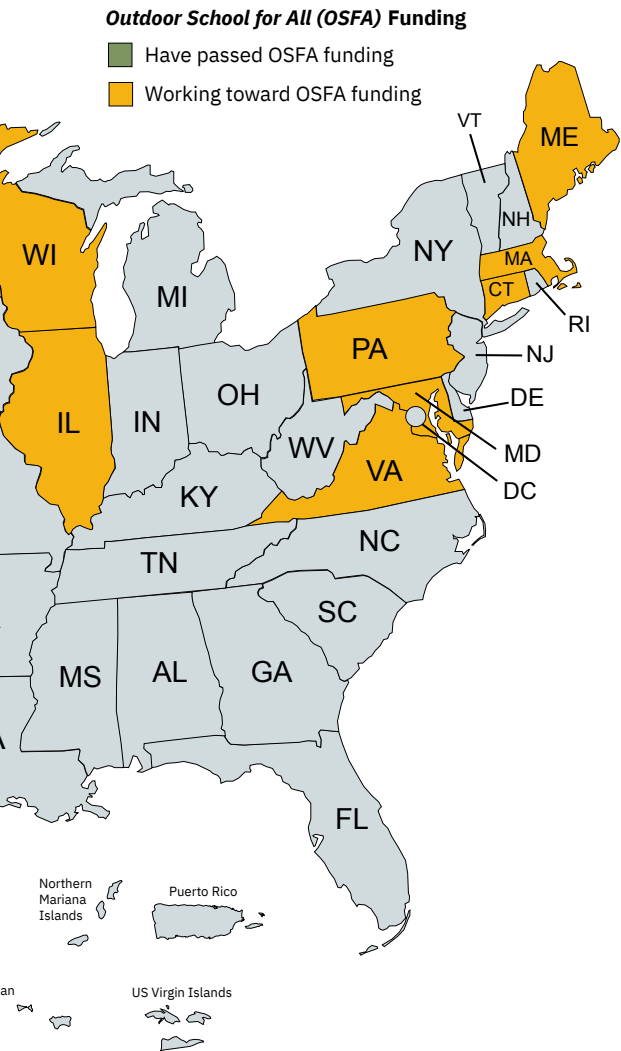
We are now looking to get more organizations involved and continue building coalitions. If you are interested in engaging in the Outdoor School For All movement, [please complete this form](#) to help identify outdoor schools and express your interest.

We look forward to the work ahead, and to building new systems that will truly make outdoor schools accessible to all.





Students at the North Cascades Institute.



“I don’t think that five years ago, we would have thought we’d be here,” Giesen says. “Even the fact that we’re talking about it ... it’s pretty amazing.”

Schmitt is optimistic about the broader movement as well, especially now that both Oregon and Washington have established statewide programs. These examples allow more recent campaigns to learn from others’ successes and challenges.

“States that want to try and create an outdoor school program in their state, they have models to look at, they have people, they have mentors,” she says. “So is this [national movement] possible? Yes, I think absolutely it is.”

CENTERING JOY AND PURPOSE IN THE WORK

While the journey to national Outdoor School for All will require significant time, energy, and resources, the road ahead does not need to be drudgery. Schmitt acknowledges that this advocacy work can be intense, but maintains that it’s productive to focus on the joy that the work brings.

“There’s so much joy in connecting folks that are all passionate about the same thing and looking for different people to learn from and grow from this experience,” she says. “I’m just excited to see where it goes.”

After all, we have reason to invest this much effort, asserts Giesen.

“It’s for the good of all,” he says. “We know that more kids outdoors is better for this world.”

How to Become a Media Darling

A primer on connecting with media outlets in your community.



Amber Parker,
Executive Director
of Ijams Nature Center

We love what the media can do *FOR* our organizations and hate what it can do *TO* them. For the benefit of your organization, it's important to know how mainstream media works and how to cultivate relationships with them in order to get the happy news out and handle when things go off the rails.

Of course, it's all about relationships. The media is your marketing partner, which means you both have to be willing to give something to the partnership. Mainstream media, like TV news, newspapers, and online news outlets operate on deadlines. They have a set amount of time or space to fill and need to do it quickly. Often they need fast stories. So, if you are willing to give your time/be available at the drop of a hat to provide good content for that filler, you will quickly become someone upon whom the media will count and will return over and over again. That's because they know you're reliably good on camera and provide smart, concise points that benefit their viewers.

An example: a reporter calls you at 9:45am for a story on fall color that they want to use on the noon and 5pm news. They need to film this content by no later than 10:30am in order to get it into editing. They have a general idea or theme for the

story; where to see the best fall color, for instance, but it usually isn't much more. So, you have to immediately decide if you agree to do this story and prepare for an interview in 30 minutes.

You want to say no, because you don't have time. However, because you are media savvy, you know that this is relationship building and it also gives you the chance to get your organization's message out. Also, because you are media savvy, you have a nice, dark shirt hanging on the back of your office door just for times like this. So, you say yes. Then the strategizing begins, because it's your job to plan your talking points prior to the reporter's arrival. If you prep correctly, the news folks get their fall content and you get points in about fall on your trails, fall programs you're offering, and how to become a member or donate to your organization.

If you are really good at it, you'll have your talking points honed down to as few words as possible. The more you talk during an interview, the more content they get, which means they may edit out the most important parts and keep the fluff (this happens more times than not). However, if you stick to a very spare (but upbeat!) message, they don't have much latitude to edit. So, you get most of your points in. The more you do this, the easier it gets. The better your messaging gets, the more the media wants to work with you. They know you are consistent. They know the interview will always be fast,



ASK ANCA

Do you have a question for leaders in the nature & environmental learning center field? Ask the Discussion Forums! One forum is for all nature centers and another is for residential environmental learning centers (RELCS). Anyone can join — you don't need to be a member of ANCA. [Learn about the forums here.](#)

factual and good. Which means they can be out of there and in the editing room in a heartbeat. Congratulations! You are now a media darling, which means you will be driven nuts with calls for stories, which is awesome for your organization (get some more dark shirts).

The above goes for any type of media. Be there for them and they may be there for you when things go south — for the time when there's a story you really don't want to become a bad story. The media is bound by their conscience to report. They will come calling. This is when you can use your rapport with your media partners to provide a positive direction for the story. If you have a good relationship with a reporter, you can ask to give context off the record so that they understand your perspective.

Having a working relationship with all the professional media outlets in your area allows your organization to share your story. They will follow up on press releases, show up at your ribbon cuttings, promote your programs, and work with you to make sure the community is kept in the loop. They may also help you as you navigate tricky issues. Building those relationships is as important as building relationships with Board members, because reporters are also representing your organization to the community. Consistency regarding availability, messaging, and brand are key to having the media working with you. 🌱

Amber L. Parker is Executive Director of Ijams Nature Center, a 318-acre nonprofit nature center in Knoxville, Tenn.



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ANCA SUMMIT 2023

Community Resilience: The Maine Coast Summit

• Aug 21-25 at The Ecology School in Saco, Maine •

We're gearing up for the 2023 ANCA Annual Summit in August, and we hope you'll join us there. We especially look forward to the experience of The Ecology School's campus at River Bend Farm, a historic 105-acre farm located on a scenic bend in the Saco River, just twenty minutes from the Maine coast.

Below we quickly cover some FAQs about the Summit, but you can [head to our website](#) to learn more about this unique and transformative event.

WHO IS THE SUMMIT FOR?

Leaders and aspiring leaders at nature centers, outdoor schools, and environmental learning centers. This includes executive directors, CEOs, board members, and managers, as well as staff who are interested in leadership within the nature center profession.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO LEARN ABOUT?

All things pertaining to the management of nature centers and related organizations, as well as trends in our profession. Program topics are specific to leaders and aspiring leaders of these organizations, and you will find answers to both big-picture and nuts-and-bolts questions in these programs.

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND?

If you're part of the nature center field, there is no better space for your professional growth. The variety of programs allows you to engage with both experts and peers who understand the challenges you face and have insights to offer. Beyond programs, too, you have the opportunity to visit multiple nature education sites and see their operations firsthand.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ATTEND?

Typically 100-200 people.

HOW IS THE SUMMIT DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CONFERENCES?

The Summit contains programming that is exclusive to an audience of organizational leaders. While other conferences may lightly touch on such programming topics, the ANCA Summit dives deep into the logistics of organizational management.

The event contains traditional conference elements such as workshops, but it also features an emphasis on peer-to-peer learning and connection. Because each participant is a leader (or aspiring leader) at their organization, they already bring with them expertise and experience that they can share. As such, program formats like Facilitated Discussions and Open Space are designed specifically for collaboration and exchange, rather than presentation of a single viewpoint.



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