



# NEWS

News Release

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## **TPWD CO-OP Awards More Than \$1.5 Million in Grants to Texas Communities**

*Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP) Provides Opportunities for Texans to Connect with Nature*

AUSTIN – Texas children and families will have enhanced opportunities to explore the State’s natural resources, thanks to \$1,585,400 in 36 grants awarded this year through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP). These grants support community-based outdoor recreation programs and activities such as camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, kayaking and more.

This year’s recipients include an innovative outdoor leadership program for San Antonio high school students, citizen science programs monitoring water quality along the Wichita River and the inclusion of archery, angler and kayaking education in Houston ISD P.E. courses.

These and many more CO-OP grant-sponsored programs will explore the best of outdoor Texas from the pristine Devils River, to the footprints of Dinosaur Valley, and the alligators of Brazos Bend. Along the way, participants will discover why life truly is better outside.

CO-OP was established by TPWD in 1996 to help introduce under-represented audiences to environmental education, conservation and outdoor recreation programs. The program is authorized by the Texas Legislature through the department’s budget as a specialized component of the Texas Recreation and Parks Account Program. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 and may be used to pay for supplies, travel, training, food and personnel costs.

CO-OP grant funding is available to tax-exempt organizations within the State of Texas. Over the last 23 years, more than \$20,733,490 awarded around the state to assist in this effort.

The following organizations will receive funding:

### **Austin**

**Austin YMBL Sunshine Camp - \$50,000** – Provides eight sessions of free, overnight summer camps for low income youth to promote knowledge of and appreciation for the natural environment. This program includes canoeing, wildlife lessons, orienteering and incorporates

the TPWD Texas Aquatic Science curriculum to teach campers about the aquatic life found in Zilker Park.

**City of Austin - \$50,000** – The Camacho Activity Center and Austin Park Rangers Cadet Program delivers outdoor adventure and natural science summer camp programs at 20 Austin PARD Recreation Centers. Six hundred youth take part in summer programming to kayak, fish, hike, rock climb and learn about the aquatic ecosystems in their community.

**Explore Austin - \$50,000** – Explore Austin engages 300 youth with over 200 hours of outdoor, nature-based adventures each year. This youth development program offers mentor-led Saturday Challenges and Summer Wilderness Trips, including a weeklong back-country camping experience at Colorado Bend State Park.

**Families in Nature - \$49,498** – The Schools to Parks Campout Program eliminates barriers for families in Title 1 schools to go camping by equipping them with the training and experience needed to continue recreating within their communities. FIN offers a three-part series including camping 101 workshops, campus campouts on school grounds and Texas State Parks camping.

**National Wildlife Federation - \$35,824** – Monarch Heroes engages 2,500 K-12 students in Austin ISD and San Antonio ISD to create milkweed habitat and complete citizen science investigations to assist the monarch butterfly. Field trips to McKinney Falls State Park and Government Canyon State Natural Area engage 500 students as part of their Texas Pollinator BioBlitz explorations.

**Partners for Education Agriculture and Sustainability - \$50,000** – The Connecting with Nature program leads environmental education lessons for three economically disadvantaged schools in Austin. The project includes a pilot program for archery in schools and a Camp Teach Outside program for teachers to learn environmental science curriculum while camping.

**Travis County - \$50,000** – The Youth Outdoor Ambassador Program at 4-H CAPITAL provides 200 urban youth with hands-on, after-school science activities, field trips to the outdoors and guest speaker enrichment opportunities. A two-week Aquatic Science and Sportfishing Summer camp for 50 Del Valle Elementary youth also teaches aquatic science and basic fishing skills.

**Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center - \$41,950** – The Girls Outside program is expanding their outdoor activities to include overnight campouts at McKinney Falls and Pedernales State Parks for 250 girls and their families. Girls Outside is a collaboration between Westcave and Austin ISD to provide environmental science, mentorship and career development in conservation.

## **Brownsville**

**IDEA Public Schools - Camp RIO - \$45,076** – Preserving Native Pollinators project will engage 16,000 students in restoring and creating habitats for South Texas pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and birds. Students will use the area as a living laboratory to observe and study the interactions of wildlife with their environment.

## **Cedar Park**

**Ascend Outdoor Adventures - \$50,000** – The Adventure for a Lifetime program teaches beginner outdoor recreation skills such as rock climbing, camping, caving, canoeing and fishing. Weekend trips to local State Parks will provide a framework for personal growth and leadership development for 250 at-risk youth and their families.

## **College Station**

**Go Outside, Inc. - \$50,000** – The Outside Kids Program partners with Title 1 schools to connect kids to Texas State Parks where they participate in outdoor learning experiences. Stations provide environmental education, teach conservation and promote an appreciation of outdoor recreation such as birding, kayaking, rock climbing and marksmanship.

## **Conroe**

**Woods & Water Kids Adventures, Inc. – \$50,000** -- The WWK Outdoors Project removes obstacles for youth and their families to participate in camping, shooting sports, hunting, fishing and archery. Outdoor excursions include monthly shooting events, Hunter 101 classes, hunting trips, father-daughter campouts at Lake Livingston State Park and Outdoor Kid Adventure Days.

## **Corpus Christi**

**Youth Odyssey - \$49,900** – Engages youth age 10-17 in adventure wilderness trips, advanced multiday excursions to Texas State Parks and 5 summer camp programs. Camps focus on backpacking the Sabine National Forest, canoeing at Caddo Lake State Park and exploring other outdoor recreation activities in Texas.

## **Dallas**

**Sustainable Education Solutions - \$49,934** – Destination Wilderness Youth Clubs provide under-represented youth in South Dallas engaging environmental education and outdoor experiences. Activities include weekly environmental education and outdoor skill building lessons as well as outings to State Parks to observe wildlife, camp, hike, fish, climb and more.

## **Del Rio**

**El Comite Cultural del Pueblo, Inc. - \$36,418** – The Nature and Me program offers outdoor experiences in fishing, kayaking, ecosystem assessment, camping, archery and bat viewing for youth ages 8-17. Over 250 Participants will experience engaging programming at Devils River State Natural Area and Kickapoo Cavern.

## **Fort Worth**

**Botanical Research Institute of Texas - \$49,946** – Green Revolution advances STEM equity and access by providing environmental STEM opportunities that inspire natural curiosities in youth grades 3-12. Programming includes a Nature in Action Summer Camp, an annual outdoor day at Dinosaur Valley State Park and nature exploration programs for homeschool students.

## **Galveston**

**Sea Star Base Galveston - \$48,000** – The SSBG project includes three water-based programs to engage 680 participants in sailing, coastal wildlife viewing and environmental education. Programs include a Youth Sailing Team, adaptive sailing training for disabled athletes and STEM to Stern educational field trips for local schools aboard the BaySmart Express vessel.

## **Georgetown**

**Williamson County - \$30,139** – The GO! Program provides opportunities for 250 youth within the Williamson County juvenile justice system to visit State, City and County parks in the Central Texas area. Youth from the diversionary and prevention programs participate in a variety of outdoor outreach activities and participate in a service project at Mother Neff State Park.

## **Grapevine**

**City of Grapevine - \$43,662** – Grapevine PARD engages Title 1 schools in field trips to City Parks to experience various outdoor recreation activities, identify wildlife species, monitor blue bird nest boxes and test water quality. Schools will also participate in service projects at their campus to create native plant wildscapes and coordinate BioBlitz lessons for students.

## **Houston**

**Forest Lawn Missionary Baptist Church - \$49,990** – FLMBC's program exposes 250 participants from underserved communities to natural resources in the Houston and surrounding areas. All age groups will experience camping, fishing, equestrian programs and other community outdoor activities.

**Houston Independent School District - \$47,874** – Project Adventures provides fun outdoor learning experiences for students in Pk-12. Participating schools will implement the archery, angler, kayaking and family camping education programs through their Physical Education curriculum and teachers will receive extensive professional development certifications through TPWD to teach these skills.

**Nature Heritage Society - \$47,994** – Offers nature hikes, fish events, archery events, field trips and camping experiences to economically disadvantaged residents in South Houston. The experiences teach the skills and attitudes that promote protection, conservation and preservation of our natural resources while enjoying nature.

**Precinct2gether, Inc. - \$49,948** – A Summer Day Camp serving 400 youth, grades 2-12, providing a special programming expansion for outdoor recreation field trips to local State Parks and other natural resource attractions. This includes a Texas Outdoor Family camping experience and a senior citizen service project at Sheldon Lake State Park.

**The Woods Project - \$50,000** – Supports afterschool clubs and weekend trips to engage youth in outdoor awareness and skills such as pitching tents, using cook stoves, basic first aid and character-building activities. Weekend trips provide students the opportunity to spend two nights in wilderness areas near Houston to backpack, mountain bike, fish and kayak.

**University of Houston – Clear Lake - \$43,168** – The Environmental Institute of Houston provides a variety of opportunities to engage youth in STEM activities, archery, fishing and birding. Programs include Becoming an Outdoors Girl trainings, three-day summer camps for girls, monthly youth birding clubs and field trips to local State Parks and Historic Sites.

#### **Laredo**

**Webb County - \$50,000** – Webb County Sheriff's Office conducts educational outdoor recreational activities at Texas State Parks, local ranches and overnight camping facilities. Activities include fishing, hiking, birding, biking, shooting sports, archery and nature photography for 250 youth participants near Laredo.

#### **Los Fresnos**

**Friends of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge - \$11,053** – Partners with Fishing's Future and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to bring free family fish camps at the Bahia Grande Unit of the Laguna Atascosa NWR for Brownsville ISD students and the local community. The events teach current fishing rules, techniques, aquatic ecology and conclude with fishing the Bahia Grande.

## **Nacogdoches**

**Stephen F. Austin State University - \$30,069** – Nacogdoches Naturally offers after-school environmental education, outdoor skills, archery instruction, a summer day camp and weekend family programs to participants from the Nacogdoches Boys and Girls Club. Participants develop a lifetime enjoyment of the outdoors and a commitment to land conservation ethics.

## **New Braunfels**

**Communities in Schools of South-Central Texas - \$50,000** – Project Success provides 5 unique wilderness leadership experiences to at-risk and first-generation CIS students in Texas State Parks. Campers engage in leadership curriculum, learn basic camping skills, experience adventure activities and develop the skills necessary to be good stewards to our environment.

## **San Antonio**

**East Central Independent School District - \$50,000** – Park Place connects Texas public land with current Graduation Endorsement Plans. High school students complete extensive leadership training centered on outdoor recreation, environmental education and conservation activities, then serve as mentors for elementary and middle school students during overnight camping trips at parks.

**Northside Independent School District - \$30,526** – Project ACORN improves environmental literacy for students through hands on, inquiry-based science explorations. Birding activities and camps at 18 elementary and middle schools allow students to collect data, visit local natural areas, assist with bird-banding research and participate in the Great Texas Birding Classic.

**San Antonio River Authority - \$33,796**– SARA Recreation enhances community appreciation of the San Antonio River via a variety of recreation activities at local parks. Activities include kayaking, archery, fishing, bird watching and camping where communities will learn the value of the San Antonio River and remove barriers for residents to better enjoy the river and parks.

## **San Augustine**

**San Augustine Independent School District - \$49,718** – Engages 275 youth from local schools to visit Texas State Parks to enjoy nature. Participants learn the outdoor skills of hunting, fishing, hiking, boating, identification of plants and animals, fire building, outdoor cooking and the preservation of our precious natural resources.

## **San Marcos**

**Texas State University - \$49,969** – The Spring Lake Outdoor Education Program offers outdoor experiences led by University recreation students to put their training to the test. Activities

include after-school and summer programs, outdoor sessions with the Discipline Alternative Education Program, a mountain bike program and a six-day expedition along Texas rivers.

### **Waco**

**Baylor University - \$50,000** – Bear Adventures partners with Waco youth community programs to offer a summer day camp, after-school programs and weekend trips to Texas State Parks. This program provides fun and exciting ways for youth to practice skill building, develop leadership abilities and sharpen character while gaining an appreciation for natural settings.

### **Wichita Falls**

**River Bend Nature Center - \$10,971** – Students in region nine of North Texas become citizen scientists while studying the watershed that drains into the Wichita River. These citizen scientists collect and record river quality data, become familiar with the river's history and monitor invasive plant and animal species within the riparian ecosystem.

To find out more about CO-OP grants, visit the program's website at <http://tpwd.texas.gov/business/grants/recreation-grants/community-outdoor-outreach-program-co-op-grants>.