



May 12, 2023

Dear Senators Rolfes, Robinson, Wilson, and Gildon and Representatives Ormsby, Bergquist, Gregerson, Macri, Stokesbary, Chambers, and Corry:

On behalf of the 64 undersigned organizations, the No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Coalition extends our sincere thanks for your part in making a historic investment in the NCLI grant program in the 2023-25 Operating Budget to better connect underserved youth to nature across Washington state. The \$2.5 million one-time investment in the program will allow State Parks and the Recreation and Conservation Office to invest \$7 million in the program in 2023-25. This level of funding will support nearly 60% of current proposals, which will allow an estimated 100 organizations to provide 77,000 youth with programming that will facilitate more than 2.6 million hours of outdoor activity.

The NCLI program provides critical support to programs that serve youth who come from low-income and historically marginalized communities across the state, in rural and urban areas alike. With this support, community-based programs can provide invaluable opportunities for youth to come together to learn, connect, and experience the healing and transformative powers of nature. Thank you for your investment in the future leaders, innovators, and advocates of our communities across the state and your commitment to connecting youth to Washington's great outdoors.

Attached to this letter you'll find testimonials from organizations across the state sharing what a difference this program makes in their communities.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Reyes
The Wilderness Society

Ashleigh Shoecraft
Braided Seeds

Jill Scheffer
Kittitas Environmental Education Network
(KEEN)

Alma Busby-Williams
North Cascades Institute

Chevon Powell
Golden Bricks Events

Sarah Exner
Republic School District #309

Julie Hirsch
Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum/Pacific
Shellfish Institute

Barbara Schultheiss
Lopez Island Family Resource Center

Oak Rankin
Glacier Peak Institute

Nikki Klinger
Mount Vernon Parks Foundation

Stacey Hinden
Vashon Wilderness Program

Dorry Foster
Wenatchee Valley YMCA

Amy Brockhaus
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Renee Pieece
Children's Home Society of Washington

Chambliss Keith
Hood Canal BOOTS Program

Laura Hoggatt
Clark County

Ken Salem
Boys & Girls Clubs of Snohomish County

Philip Watkins
Summer Search

Michael Sternberg
Friends of Stonerose Fossils

Julie Griffith
STIX Diabetes Programs

Toni Jones
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe Education
Department

Carrie Clendaniel
Jefferson Land Trust

Alix Lee-Tigner
Trout Unlimited

Andy Basabe
Vamos Outdoors Project

Steph Carpenter
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

Julia Berg
Foss Waterway Seaport

David Dunphy
Y.E.T.I.

Drew Comito
Excelsior Wellness Center

Frederick Davis
WayOut Kids

Jayne Haygood
Kiwanis Camp Wa-Ri-Ki

Jaclyn Haight
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

Andrea Imler
Washington Trails Association

Jeri Mortimore
Lifeline Connections

Nancy Nelson
Chief Leschi Schools

Peggy Lee
Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group

Sonja Wingard
Unbridled Spirit 7

Ed Bronsdon
Outdoors for All Foundation

Emily Kitali
Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group

Nell Aiello
George Pocock Rowing Foundation

Amy Eberling
The Salish Sea School

Annitra Peck
Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association

Brent Mason
Foss Waterway Seaport

Casey Jones
Pgst tribal services

April Katz
The AIROW project

Michael May
Tukwila Parks & Recreation

Toby Syrett
Hood Canal School District 404

Kim Simon
Museum of Northwest Art

Hayes Guay
Columbia Springs

Layla Anane
the Service Board

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director
The Mountaineers

Elizabeth Nelson
Recreation Northwest

Bailey Denmark
Big City Mountaineers

Dave Newell
Children's Home Society of Washington

Sara Leavitt
Sahale Outdoors

Elizabeth Bullard
Seattle PlayGarden

Amanda Martino
Blue Mountain Land Trust

Catherine Collins
Sound Experience (schooner Adventuress)

Haley Lebsack
Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Christina Wolf
Second Chance Outreach

Elsa Watson
Walla Walla Public Schools Foundation

Sibyl Maer-Fillo
Washington Outdoor School

Torren Valdez
Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group

Karleigh Gomez
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

Jaynee Haygood
Kiwanis Camp Wa-Ri-Ki

Testimonials and Gratitude for the No Child Left Inside Grant Program

Below you'll find a series of testimonials and words of gratitude from organizations across the state for the state's investment in the No Child Left Inside Grant Program.

You are helping underserved youth have outdoor opportunities they would never otherwise experience. Thank you!

- Sonja Wingard, **Unbridled Spirit 7**

Thank you for recognizing the importance of outdoor education through this initiative!

- Julie Hirsch, **Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum/Pacific Shellfish Institute**

Outdoor education and outdoor programs saved my family!

- Alma Busby-Williams, **North Cascades Institute**

Lopez Island youth are often isolated because we are an island, a large portion of families have limited funds, we have a high percentage of special needs kids, and COVID has taken a huge toll. NCLI funding and activities are life changing for Lopez youth, to reconnect, have hands-on learning, be connected with our natural environment, and become stewards of our precious resources. You have our deepest gratitude for this important support of youth!!!

- Barbara Schultheiss, **Lopez Island Family Resource Center**

At Glacier Peak Institute, NCLI connects youth, community and ecosystems to grow, play and thrive together. Thank you.

- Oak Rankin, **Glacier Peak Institute**

I am very thankful for the grant that supported our Fifth Grade Hikes on Little Mountain the past two years. Hundreds of local students had the opportunity to visit Little Mountain Park, many for the first time. They learned about local history, plants, trail etiquette and fitness. They were immersed in the beauty of the forest. The five mile hike provided a sense of accomplishment. It is the most significant physical activity many had ever done! It was an incredibly valuable experience for all and so much fun. Thank you for your support!

- Nikki Klinger, **Little Mountain Elementary PE Teacher**, MV school district Fifth Grade Hike Facilitator, Mount Vernon Parks Foundation Board Member, Co- Developer Fifth Grade Hike Program, Co- Grant Writer

This is our first year being involved with NCLI and I have been impressed by the initiatives and program implementations across the State. It is important for youth to be able to experience recreational activities that provide them with life long skills. Being afforded these opportunities open the door to a healthier, stronger and more satisfying life.

- Drew Comito, **Excelsior Wellness Center**

NCLI funding has enabled 480 elementary students 30 minutes weekly access to the fields, woodlands and garden right on their own campus during the school day during the 2022-2023 school year. These funds have supported a unique partnership between the Vashon Island School District and the Vashon Wilderness Program to center equitable access to nature connection for every child.

- Stacey Hiden, **Vashon Wilderness Program**

The NCLI program connects the dots between community and environment. They believe in unified work increasing the chances for a better tomorrow.

- Frederick Davis, **WayOut Kids**

Your funding helps support our outdoor school program. We couldn't do it without you!

- Jaynee Haygood, **Kiwanis Camp Wa-Ri-Ki**

PGST Early Childhood Education Program has benefited from the support of NCLI as we are moving to a land-based indigenous approach to learning for all of our enrolled children 6 weeks to 2nd graders.

- Jaclyn Haight, **Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe**

NCLI has helped us get more children into the outdoors, which has been very successful because the kids are getting out of their comfort zones and learning about nature. Since we received the funding it has helped us break down many barriers that were preventing us from taking trips.

- Renee Pieece, **Children's Home Society of Washington**

I attended the first event we held with NCLI funding with 9-11 year old boys and girls who are impacted by the substance use of a loved one. These kids found new friends as they hiked, learned archery and spent time in nature. As they sat around the campfire the last night having written a Letter to Addiction then reading and burning it, I realized this is the most important work our treatment facility does. No question. Thank you for making it come true. You are changing the futures for these lovely children.

- Jeri Mortimore, **Lifeline Connections**

Due to No Child Left Inside funding, more at risk youth were able to participate in outdoor activities that were both fun and educational. Youth learned the importance of caring for the environment and each other. Support for programs like these have lasting value that have proven to improve self-esteem and greater outcomes. Thank you so much for supporting funding for these incredible programs.

- Laura Hoggatt, **Clark County**

Thanks so much for supporting our programs! It is so important for students to have the opportunity to learn outside, since it is the best way to internalize the importance of caring for the environment. Your advocacy will make a difference in all of our futures!

- Nancy Nelson, **Chief Leschi Schools**

NCLI will enable us to provide our tribal youth from the Wellpinit Boys & Girls Club (Spokane Tribe of Indians) with outdoor experiences which include a variety of fitness, diabetes prevention, heart-healthy initiatives and cultural enrichment activities. Thank you for supporting the NCLI program and helping us take care of our tribal youth.

- Ken Salem, **Boys & Girls Clubs of Snohomish County**

The NCLI program will change the lives of the high poverty schools that we currently serve and allow us to grow and expand that effort. We bring students to the water's edge to see spawning salmon, hear their splashes, observe behavior, but more importantly marvel at their extensive journey and celebrate their homecoming. Students learn to slow down, observe the forest through smell, touch, hearing, and even tasting some native plants which makes most of them squeal. Social emotional learning is vital to these students and we want to teach them that our outdoor spaces around our community are so special and transformative in nature. We are so grateful that this money can fund more buses, more field trips, more students and teachers to learn about the salmon life cycle, see adult salmon in the fall, release their fry from our Salmon in School Program, but also to play games, explore the natural processes around them, and even steward these places by planting trees and removing invasive weeds. When our children leave a legacy like planting trees, they can return to that park or natural space and measure their impact with the growth of that tree (50-70 years from now). If we do our jobs right, these students will not only rely on these green spaces for recharge, recreation, but hopefully they will advocate and continue to steward these places so more people can enjoy these places for many years to come.

- Peggy Lee, **Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group**

Stonerose provides an outdoor opportunity for youth to experience the wonder of discovering fossils and learning about their significance in the history of life and what they can tell us about climate.

- Michael Sternberg, **Friends of Stonerose Fossils**

Thank you! We appreciate your advocacy for children with and without disabilities and other underrepresented populations to ensure that all kids have access to the benefits of being outdoors!

- Ed Bronsdon, **Outdoors for All Foundation**

We are very thankful for the support from NCLI, which allows our organization to get our kids and teens (with diabetes) and their family members outside. This is an important tool to teach our youth the benefits of engaging with the wilderness/outdoors and the relationship to better diabetes management.

- Julie Griffith, **STIX Diabetes Programs**

I was hired as the Outreach and Education Coordinator for LCFEG back in August 2022. Since then, our NCLI grant program "Hope for Salmon" has allowed me to work with, and educate hundreds of local youth - outdoors, and has helped us to forge meaningful partnerships in Clark County. The opportunities and outdoor learning experiences provided through this funding have been amazing for the students, and for all involved. Thank you NCLI!

- Emily Kitali, **Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group**

Rowing in particular is a transformative sport for young athletes because it facilitates social and emotional learning. Every practice demands personal accountability, self-management, and conflict resolution, and these life skills positively impact numerous aspects of life off the water. The connection to nature through rowing is immeasurable and we are so grateful that this grant program will allow more young people to benefit from outdoor recreation.

- Nell Aiello, **George Pocock Rowing Foundation**

The NCLI program has the potential to support the curriculum-enriching local outdoor experience we can provide to our public school partners in the rural school districts we serve. Thank you for supporting this critical work!

- Carrie Clendaniel, **Jefferson Land Trust**

The Salish Sea School would truly not be where we are today with NCLI funding. Thank you for believing so deeply in the power of getting students outside and exploring our beautiful planet.

- Amy Eberling, **The Salish Sea School**

Our students depend and receive huge benefits on so many levels from grant support. THANK YOU!

- Betsey Thoennes, **The Salish Sea School**

NCLI funding allows Vamos to provide programs that connect Latine youth to public lands through backpacking trips. Thanks so much!

- Andy Basabe, **Vamos Outdoors Project**

NCLI has been a great contributing factor to keeping our tribal children more outdoors and has supported outdoor mentoring opportunities with older youth. Being outdoors more often with the supports for the elements holistically benefits our children in many ways.

- Steph Carpenter, **Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe**

This funding helps provide on the water experiences for middle school students many of whom have never been by the water, on the water...and in a kayak! Thank you!

- Brent Mason, **Foss Waterway Seaport**

This program allowed us to bring youth together. Middle and high schoolers were able to learn and mentor with our littles in the ECEP. I remember growing up learning you can always learn from someone younger and older than you. There is always a teaching moment you just have to look for it. Bringing both of our youth programs allowed us to learn from the littles; and the littles learn from us. We came together and had an awesome day at Indian Island. We were able to eat, sing, dance, and gather where our ancestors once did as a community.

- KayLee Jones, **PGST Youth Services**

We are so very grateful for the support of NCLI to bring outdoor, nature based experiences to children with disabilities in our community!

- Elizabeth Bullard, **Seattle PlayGarden**

NCLI funds our 5 major annual K-12 environmental education field experiences as well as STEM summer camps and spring break camp for 21st Century Community Learning Center site school kids in Thurston County. Although each of these programs is also partially funded by other grantors, NCLI funding provides the primary foundational funding for these programs that serve approximately 4,000 K-12 youth every year.

- Paris McClusky, **Puget Sound Estuarium**

"First of all, thank you to our Legislature for the last 6+ years of NCLI funding. Thank you for believing in the NCLI program and putting the funds together to allow so many powerful and positive things to come into existence. I work at a public school with 100% free and reduced lunch and childhood trauma (ACEs) scores that are 2.5 times the WA State average. NCLI resources allow us to maintain an effective, high impact program that uses outdoor experiences to help mitigate trauma, provide learning and exercise, build teamwork and social skills, and create a healthier relationship between students and schools. There are also many other organizations across the State that are doing similar things with these vital resources. Please consider funding NCLI to the maximum extent possible so that community organizations can continue to build and grow capacity to mentor and empower youth to become the healthy citizens we will need for our future."

- Toby Syrett, **Hood Canal School District 404**

The NCLI funding enables our land trust to provide high quality, free and accessible natural resources education programs for children and families in our communities. This valuable funding helps ensure all kids in our communities can participate in and learn about the outdoors in a safe environment.

- Amanda Martino, **Blue Mountain Land Trust**

The NCLI program, while straightforward, has quite the ripple effect. As our young people expand their perspectives, they are better equipped to answer Three Questions: Who are you? Where are you going? How can we get there? Respectively, those questions address Identity, Purpose, and the many Pathways forward. As Mark Twain opined, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." As a child, do you remember how big your room felt? For me, the walk from bed to the bathroom was a marathon . . . especially in the middle of the night! The more Summer Searchers can expand their orbit beyond their rooms, their places of residence, their blocks, their schools, and their cities, the clearer their vision for their own futures comes into focus. With a median family income of \$24,000, Summer Searchers are sophomores in high school when they begin our program. Partnered with their full-time professional mentors, outdoor experiences are crucial to helping expand their perspective. Without NCLI, many young folks will miss out on that opportunity."

- Lance Jones, **Summer Search**

The NCLI program reaches children from families and communities who otherwise could not afford to attend outdoor experiences. These include the Casino Road community in South Everett where children and young adults attend outdoor on-the-water programs to learn about the Salish Sea, experience incredible growth opportunities and participate in caring for the natural environment aboard the schooner Adventuress, Puget Sound's environmental tall ship.

- Catherine Collins, **Sound Experience (Schooner Adventuress)**

This funding will allow us to expand outdoor opportunities for BIPoC and low income youth that will support the health and overall wellness of vulnerable communities. Thank you for investing in our ability to do this work!!

- Layla Anane, **the Service Board**

We work with low-income youth of color and getting them outdoors into Nature is a big part of our program. Thank you for providing the funding to make these programs possible!

- Christina Wolf, **Second Chance Outreach**

The Mountaineers is an outdoor education nonprofit that helps people across the Puget Sound region explore, conserve, learn about, and enjoy public lands and waters. One of the ways we help the area's youth explore and connect to nature is through our NCLI-supported Mountain Workshops program. Mountain Workshops are single or multi-day adventure-based programs co-created with local youth-serving organizations in the Seattle, Tacoma, and Olympia areas. NCLI funding allows us to provide low-cost programming and scholarships. This work is critically important because it exposes youth to transferable outdoor skills and helps cultivate an appreciation for the natural world and conserving it.

- Betsy Robblee, Conservation & Advocacy Director, **The Mountaineers**

NCLI has provided funding to our program that allows us to reach more students year round, during and after the school day and throughout the summer months to get outside to have meaningful, hands-on experiences immersed in the natural world in Kittitas county and beyond. We have helped young people see themselves as a part of nature not apart from it, to care about their world and learn how to take care of it and each other as part of an interconnected community. We are learning and growing with our students every day and look forward to continuing our work well into the future.

- Sibyl Maer-Fillo, **Washington Outdoor School**

The NCLI program is incredibly important for Big City Mountaineers. Our mission is to provide transformative experiences outdoors for youth from disinvested communities to build skills, community, and a long-lasting relationship with the outdoors. Without NCLI funding, we couldn't ensure our programming remained free of cost for all youth participants.

- Bailey Denmark, **Big City Mountaineers**

Thank you for your ongoing support of outdoor education. The importance of getting children into nature is of immense urgency. We greatly appreciate your efforts.

- Jaynee Haygood, **Kiwanis Camp Wa-Ri-Ki**