



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The Gray Family Foundation Announces Outdoor Education is Big Business for Oregon's Statewide Economies**

**Portland, Ore. — June 11, 2015** — The Gray Family Foundation recently commissioned a comprehensive analysis of the economic impacts of traditional camp-based outdoor school programs. The results of the study show that Outdoor School programs provide communities with significant numbers of interesting and high quality jobs in rural areas.

The study utilizes current information from two existing programs and scales those job functions statewide, providing an analysis of the impact if every Oregon fifth or sixth grader had the opportunity to attend a full week of Outdoor School. The potential economic impact is substantial; the program could reasonably expect to generate more than 1,000 FTE jobs and more than \$28 million in income in Oregon. Many of the newly created jobs would be primarily located in rural areas where structural unemployment is particularly acute.

Outdoor school programs play a legacy role in many communities, providing multiple generations of families with deep connections to Oregon's natural areas. Programs take place outdoors, usually in rural camp settings: in forests, fields, mountains, deserts, rivers, streams, tidepools, and next to the Pacific Ocean. Living and working in these spaces foster health and wellbeing but at the same time many rural communities struggle to stay economically viable.

"Outdoor education is potentially a big business for Oregon's economy. Investing in the business of outdoor and environmental literacy allows multiple generations of Oregonians to participate in our landscapes in ways that encourage local economies to thrive. By investing in an outdoor education sector the state would also be investing in creating family wage jobs in the education, natural resources, and food services sectors, as well as the working lands sectors of agriculture, ranching, farming, fisheries, and forestry," stated Lara Christensen, program director for the Gray Family Foundation.

In addition to the economic impacts, Outdoor school provides a high quality education program for students. The Gray Family Foundation regularly receives feedback from teachers who report that students who attend Outdoor School perform better on science, math, and reading tests than students who do not attend.

"The Gray Family Foundation was founded on the belief that fostering an understanding and appreciation for the natural world is a crucial part of a child's education, so this is an ideal area of

focus for us,” said Nancy Bales, executive director of the Gray Family Foundation. “Now the hard work begins to fund this program and make week-long outdoor education experiences a reality in every Oregon middle school student’s education.”

The IMPLAN model for the Oregon economy was used to derive the relevant employment and income expenditure multipliers needed in the analysis. The full report is available on the Gray Family Foundation website: <http://grayff.org/outdoor-school-for-everyone/>

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### **About the Gray Family Foundation**

Launched in 2007 as the Gray Family Fund of The Oregon Community Foundation, the mission of Gray Family Foundation is to engage the people of Oregon to become active stewards of their natural and built communities. We do this by championing accessible, experiential education programs that encourage integrated understanding of community and natural systems and inspiring action to enhance our natural and built communities. Since 2007, the Gray Family Foundation has awarded more than \$7.8 million in grants statewide. <http://grayff.org/>