



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statewide Outdoor School funded for Oregon's 5th - 6th graders Lawmakers approve state budget including \$24 million for outdoor school

Portland, Ore. – July 17, 2017 – The Gray Family Foundation, a consistent champion of the value of environmental and outdoor education throughout Oregon, celebrates the passage of another milestone in ensuring Oregon students have access to hands-on outdoor education. On Friday, July 7, 2017, the Oregon Legislature formally approved the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) 2017-2019 biennial budget, which includes \$24 million in lottery funds for Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service to administer a statewide Outdoor School program over the next two years.

This was a major step forward in providing a full week of Outdoor School for all fifth- or sixth-grade students enrolled in Oregon schools. Gray Family Foundation's Executive Director Nancy Bales said, "I am proud of Oregon's role as a leader in outdoor education. This commitment to funding will support all students having the opportunity to learn at outdoor school – an experience that we know helps students develop critical thinking skills and connect with nature."

Gov. Kate Brown will consider this budget package and the Gray Family Foundation anticipates the HECC budget will be signed as approved by the Legislature. Last fall, Gov. Brown announced her enthusiastic support for Outdoor School funding (Measure 99).

Ballot measure 99, passed by voters in November, 2016, directed \$44 million per biennium (\$22 million annually) from the Oregon Lottery to be dedicated to the new statewide Outdoor School program. All state programs faced serious cuts as lawmakers worked to bridge a \$1.6 billion budget gap during its 2017 legislative session. Early proposals included delaying implementation of the Outdoor School program and only funding students in the second year of the biennium.

Advocates worked hard to help the Legislature understand that OSU Extension Service is ready for the 2017-2018 school year and that the program should begin immediately. The approved budget of \$24 million for the next biennium allows this to happen.

"We are ready to move forward," said Scott Reed, vice provost for University Outreach and Engagement and director of the OSU Extension Service. "Oregonians voted to build this program on the foundation of OSU Extension, an established and successful statewide educational organization. We are bringing our resources and expertise together with our advisory committee and partners to ensure Oregon students have access to high-quality, equitable, and inclusive Outdoor School experiences."

The Gray Family Foundation, Friends of Outdoor School and other partners hope that \$24 million will provide sufficient funding for OSU Extension Service to administer and successfully launch the new state program, funding all schools that wish to participate in the next two years.

About Gray Family Foundation:

Launched in 2007 as the Gray Family Fund of The Oregon Community Foundation, the Gray Family Foundation's Environmental Education program seeks to institutionalize a series of age appropriate experiences for students, teachers, and citizens that build a sense of place and responsibility toward Oregon and the region. Since 2007, the Gray Family Foundation has awarded more than \$8.6 million in grants statewide. <http://grayff.org>

About OSU Extension:

The Oregon State University Extension Service shares research-based knowledge with people and communities in Oregon's 36 counties. OSU Extension addresses issues that matter to urban and rural Oregonians. OSU Extension's partnerships and programs contribute to a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for Oregon. <http://oelp.oregonstate.edu/outdoorschool>