

2013

SUMMARY REPORT

NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL



PURPOSE

Mountain School is North Cascades Institute's flagship youth program, serving nearly 25,000 youth since 1990. The goal of the program is to connect students to the natural world through an immersive interdisciplinary study of ecosystems that works to:

Develop
student skills
of observation
and inquiry



Support
class cohesion
through cooperative
learning



Instill
an appreciation
for the value of
public land



Apply
principles of
conservation
in daily life



The Institute is committed to ensuring students from all backgrounds can attend Mountain School and subsidizes the cost of tuition for schools with a high percentage of underserved students.

FORMAT

Mountain School is a nationally recognized residential environmental education program offered in cooperation with North Cascades National Park. Students visit the Institute's Environmental Learning Center with their teachers, classmates and parent chaperones for three to five days to learn about the natural and cultural history of the mountains. Pre- and post-trip visits prepare students for the concepts they will learn and support the application of conservation principles into their daily lives. Many post-trip visits include stewardship work in public green spaces near schools.

Ecosystems Explorations (Grades 4-6): A strong focus on science and the natural and cultural history of the North Cascades provides the academic foundation of this Mountain School curriculum. Students are introduced to mountain ecosystems while hiking along trails and benefit from an up-close look at diverse ecological communities in the North Cascades. The educational experience continues at the Learning Center in our fully equipped labs. Topics of study include wildlife of the North Cascades, biodiversity, food webs, glaciers and geology, watersheds, cultural history, ethnobotany, and forest ecology. Students bond as they work, learn, reflect and play games together in a wilderness classroom.

Field Science and Leadership (Grades 7-12): Students gain firsthand experience with scientific equipment and field study techniques while learning how National Park Service researchers design field research projects and make land management decisions in our national parks. Working in small groups, students complete a field investigation about the forested or aquatic communities surrounding the Learning Center. On the final day of the program students present their findings and make conclusions about their research in a symposium-style discussion with their peers, teachers and National Park representatives.

2013 AT A GLANCE

2,592

participants served

55

participating schools

75%

of schools participating were public

67%

of schools qualified for reduced tuition

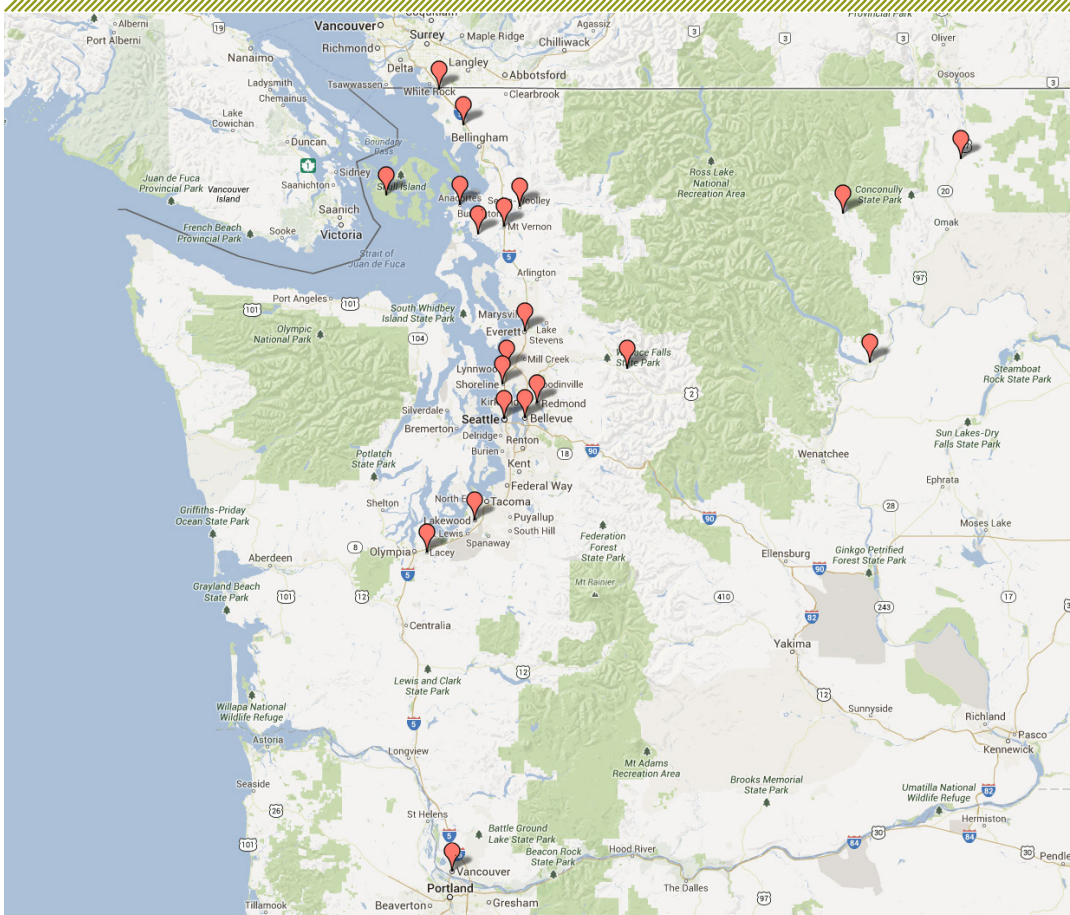
\$125-\$325

cost per child to participate for: 3 days and 2 nights

38%

were first time visitors to any National Park

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES



Anacortes
Bellingham
Bellevue
Blaine
Chelan
Darrington
Everett
Ferndale
Index
La Conner
Lacey
Lakewood
Lopez Island
Lynnwood
Mount Vernon
Redmond
San Juan Island
Seattle
Sedro-Woolley
Shoreline
Tonasket
Vancouver
Winthrop

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A partnership with Bellingham

Parks and Recreation created an opportunity for 673 students to engage in 13 hands-on stewardship projects within walking distance of their schools. Work to remove invasive species and maintain and rehabilitate trails benefitted the following public spaces in Bellingham:

Connelly Creek Nature Area, Cornwall Park, Cozier Community Forest, Euclid Park, Laurelwood Trail, Lowell Park, Memorial Park, Northridge Park, Old Village Trail

HANDS-ON STEWARDSHIP

637 students

13 projects

637 students engaged in 13 hands-on stewardship projects

EVALUATION



Assessments show Mountain School makes a difference. Students consistently report a greater:
Interest in learning about plants and animals
Excitement about getting outside
Desire to return to the North Cascades



As a result of Mountain School, more students also reported feeling like:
People and nature are connected
They can make a difference in taking care of the environment
Spending time in nature is fun



Teachers consistently report increased positive student behavior, including:
Respect for each other
Group cohesion as a class
Better attitudes toward learning

FROM THE PARTICIPANTS



“While at Mountain School, I learned so much about the outdoors and cooperation. I learned about rocks, plants, silence, etc. Overall, I learned a lot about our ecosystem and what my role is within it.”

– 5th grader, Northern Heights Elementary

“Mountain School is a great experience for many who cannot afford or have the privilege to experience the beauty of creation and a National Park.”

– Roosevelt Elementary Chaperone

“I don’t think we can understate the value of “hands-on” fieldwork. When students are in the field, working together, using problem-solving skills, they are learning so much. The learning-by-doing in the field was the most valuable piece of our field experience.”

– Chelan Middle School Teacher

“Students will come away with a very strong sense of the scientific method and ability to identify the most common trees and plants found here. The presentation of material was very enjoyable.”

– Overlake High School Chaperone

2013 PARTNERS

Mountain School is made possible with the generous support from individuals and organizations, including:



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More information:
www.ncascades.org/signup/youth/mountain-school
Contact: (360) 854-2599 or nci@ncascades.org