



# NCEL

National Caucus of  
Environmental Legislators

## Outdoor Engagement

The countless mental and physical health benefits provided by time outside were made even more evident as record numbers of Americans took to the outdoors during the pandemic. This year, 30 states introduced legislation to increase outdoor recreation, with the following states enacting bills and resolutions.

### Enacted legislation in 2021:

- **Colorado** ([HB 21-1318](#)) Creates an Outdoor Equity Grant Program intended to increase access to the outdoors for underserved youth and their families. [HB21-1223](#) formally creates the Outdoor Recreation Industry Office in statute. [SB21-249](#) creates the Keep Colorado Wild Annual Pass.
- **Georgia** ([SR 203](#)) Establishes an Outdoor Learning Committee to look at issues and needs associated with outdoor learning.
- **Illinois** ([HR 0011](#)) Maintains that every child should have the right and opportunity to take part in outdoor recreation.
- **Indiana** ([HR 3](#)) Designates 2021 as “Indiana’s Year of the Trails” and encourages residents to take advantage of and maintain the state’s trail system.
- **Maine** ([LD 1474](#)) Creates pathways for public and private schools to responsibly conduct overnight camping trips.
- **New Hampshire** ([SB 148](#)) Includes provisions to add environmental education skills, environmental science, and outdoor recreation to the state’s education criteria.
- **New Mexico** ([SM 1](#)) Convenes a task force to expand the use of outdoor classrooms for the state’s schools.
- **Nevada** ([AJR 3](#)) - Would formally express the state legislature’s support for a statewide 30x30 goal. [SB 448](#) - Establish an Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Program to support the electric vehicle charging infrastructure and energy needs of the recreation economy in the state.
- **Oklahoma** ([SCR 5](#)) Encourages the incorporation of hunter education courses into middle or high school curriculums as approved by the Department of Wildlife Conservation.
- **Oregon** ([SB 289](#)) Bars those convicted of bias crimes on state waters or publically owned outdoor recreation land from reentering those spaces for up to five years.
- **Rhode Island** ([HB 5259](#)) Creates a voluntary mechanism for municipalities to use to dedicate a park, conservation or other land they own as public trust land in perpetuity to protect and preserve its future use.
- **Virginia** ([SB 1290](#)) Creates a data-driven geographical model to identify potential conservation areas that would provide benefits to Virginia residents.
- **Washington** ([SB 5151](#)) Authorizes the state to license outdoor, nature-based child care programs that enroll preschool or school-age children, teach a nature-based curriculum, and provide daily nature-based learning experiences for at least half of the day.

## Funding for Outdoor Engagement in the 2021 Legislative Session

- **Alaska**
  - The [state budget](#) includes funding for development of the Fairbanks to Seward Multi-Use Recreation Trail.
- **Indiana**
  - \$60 million included for trails in the [state budget](#).
- **Texas**
  - The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department appropriation includes a study to determine the potential for historic, scenic, and/or recreational trails to be created in Texas and to identify potential partners to promote local and regional preservation efforts related to the trails studied.
- **New Mexico**
  - Roughly \$900,000 appropriated for the Outdoor Equity Fund grant program.
- **Washington**
  - A tripling of the investment in the [“No Child Left Inside” program](#), to \$4.5 million, to fund grants connecting underserved youth to nature.
  - Funding and provisions for the “Parks Rx” program at \$200,000, which will enable the Department of Health, parks and recreation providers, public and community health representatives, health care insurers, and others to design preventative health and wellness pilot programs that can take advantage of the no-cost and low-cost offered by public parks and through parks facilities.
  - \$375,000 for the Recreation and Conservation Office to conduct an [equity review](#) for all grants programs;
  - An additional \$4 million in Capital Budget funding for outdoor recreation equity grants, much of which is to be distributed in combination with the above equity review process;
  - A record-matching \$100 million in funding for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP).