



GUIDE

NONPROFIT AND EDUCATION
OUTDOOR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

A man wearing a blue baseball cap, a light blue button-down shirt, and dark blue jeans is crouching in a forest. He is holding a small amount of soil in his hands and looking down at it with a slight smile. The forest consists of many thin, vertical tree trunks, and the ground is covered with green grass and some brown leaves. The background is slightly blurred, showing more trees and a bright sky.

Pursuing a career in the outdoors can be an amazing opportunity to work while doing what you love and give back to your greater community. There are many career opportunities within the nonprofit and education sectors that will allow you to work in or for the outdoors.

This guide contains detailed descriptions of specific fields within the nonprofit and education sectors including example organizations, as well as education and experience necessary to pursue a career in the nonprofit and education sectors.

NONPROFIT AND EDUCATION SECTOR

There are an abundance of jobs in the nonprofit and education sectors that allow you to work in or for the outdoors. Careers in the outdoors in both education and nonprofit sectors can vary greatly depending on the mission and vision of the organization you choose to work for. For the purpose of this guide, the nonprofit and education sectors will be broken into fields; outdoor recreation, environmental education, outdoor youth development, wilderness therapy, and conservation. The education sector is made up of K-12 schools, colleges and universities which tend to focus primarily on recreation and environmental education.

Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation exposes participants to new and engaging outdoor activities and experiences. This may include learning a new skill such as rock climbing, camping, or white water rafting. Recreation positions include instructors, professional guides, facilitators, and coaches.

Environmental Education

Environmental Education programs facilitate learning that increases knowledge and awareness about the environment and its associated challenges. Environmental Ed positions may include K-12 teachers, naturalists, docents, and non-profit professionals.

Outdoor Youth Development

Youth development programs are those that utilize outdoor activities to purposefully challenge participants with the intention of developing positive attitude and behavior changes in youth.

Therapeutic Programs

Also known as Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare, Wilderness Therapy is the use of experiential education, individual and group therapy in a wilderness setting to treat clients for a range of emotional, developmental, and relational struggles.

Conservation Programs

Conservations programs are focused on the advocacy for and protection of the natural environment. Conservation programs include land trust, conservation corps, and advocacy organizations.

RECREATION PROGRAMS

What is Outdoor Recreation?

Recreation programs serve as a means to expose students to new and engaging experiences in the outdoors. This may include activities such as hiking, biking, climbing, skiing, camping, and many more. While outdoor recreation experiences contain educational components, such as the skills necessary to be successful in a given activity, the primary objective is to engage in outdoor pursuits for the purpose of enjoyment.

What Education is required?

Entry-level positions may accept:

- High School Diploma or GED

Professional Certifications include (not limited to):

- CPR, AED, and First Aid Certification (Wilderness First-Aid Preferred)
- Higher Level Outdoor Recreation Certifications if applicable (American Mountain Guide Association, Wilderness First Responder/EMT, Leave No Trace Master Educator, Swift Water Rescue, etc.)

Undergraduate majors include (but not limited to):

- Recreation and Tourism Management
- Outdoor Recreation/Education
- Adventure Education

Graduate degrees include (but not limited to):

- Masters in Recreation and Tourism
- Masters in Adventure Education
- Environmental Education
- Master of Science in Community Resources and Development

What is an Outdoor Recreation Professional?

Outdoor recreation professionals plan, organize, and facilitate recreation programs, services, and activities in a variety of settings and to diverse audiences. Recreation professionals may work at national, state or local nonprofits and open space areas. In addition, recreation professionals may work in sports centers, resorts, and camps. Recreation professionals must work well with others, demonstrate experience in a variety of outdoor skills, demonstrate knowledge of Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics (LNT), as well as exhibit leadership, creativity and sound decision-making.

Who employs recreation professionals?

Nonprofit Programs:

- Community recreation centers
- Professional Guiding Schools and Services
- Outdoor Recreation Programs
- Local non-profit organizations

Education Programs

- Colleges/Universities
- Summer camps
- After-school programs

Sample Careers

Entry-level

- Camp Counselor
- Afterschool program staff
- Day Camp Leader
- Field Crew
- Program Operations staff

Professional

- Adventure Guide
- Field Instructor
- Outreach Coordinator
- Program Coordinator
- Logistics Coordinator
- Recreation Coordinator
- Recreation Planner
- River Rafting Guide
- Rock Climbing Guide
- Ski / Snowboard Instructor
- Sports Coordinator
- Tour Guide
- Volunteer Coordinator

Management

- Director of Activities
- Director of Education
- Director of Parks, Trails and Recreation
- District Manager
- Summer Camp Director

Administration and Operations

- Office Manager
- Bookkeeping / Accounting
- Fundraising
- Marketing / Communications
- Logistics Manager

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

What is Environmental Education?

Environmental education is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions. The components of environmental education are:

- **Awareness and sensitivity** to the environment and environmental challenges
- **Knowledge and understanding** of the environment and environmental challenges
- **Attitudes** of concern for the environment and motivation to improve or maintain environmental quality
- **Skills** to identify and help resolve environmental challenges
- **Participation** in activities that lead to the resolution of environmental challenges

Environmental education does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. Rather, environmental education teaches individuals how to weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking and it enhances their own problem-solving and decision-making skills.

What Education is required?

Entry-level positions may accept:

- High School Diploma or GED
- Some positions may require a background in teaching or participating in specific outdoor activities or pursuits.

Professional Certifications include (not limited to):

- CPR, AED, and First Aid Certification (Wilderness First-Aid Preferred)

Undergraduate majors include (but not limited to):

- Outdoor Recreation/Education
- Adventure Education
- Forestry
- Life Sciences
- Environmental Studies
- Agricultural Studies
- Conservation

Graduate degrees include (but not limited to):

- Masters in Educational Leadership
- Masters in Adventure Education
- Environmental Education
- Master of Life Sciences

What is an Environmental Education Professional?

Environmental educators work in all segments of society for a broad and diverse audience. Professions in Environmental Education vary from facilitators leading groups in citizen science projects, professors in universities, and environmental science professionals. While “education” traditionally refers to K-12 Schools and Universities, there are many national and regional non-profit programs who make environmental education the focus of their programming. These range from multiday wilderness adventures, to after-school activities in local parks and open spaces. Environmental educators develop and facilitate curriculum in environmental science, leadership, team building in both the classroom and outdoors.

Who employs environmental education professionals?

Nonprofit:

- Regional outdoor and science based organizations
- Conservation organizations
- Land trusts
- Museums, Aquariums, and Zoos

Education:

- K-12 Schools
- After-School programs
- Colleges and Universities

Sample Careers

Entry-level

- Intern/Volunteer
- Education Technician
- Outdoor School Instructor
- Camp Counselor
- AmeriCorps Vista programs

Professional

- Nature Interpreter
- School teacher
- Education Program Manager
- Adventure/Wilderness Instructor
- Logistics Coordinator
- Program Manager
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Curriculum Developer
- Community outreach professionals

Management

- Director of Adventure/Wilderness Programs
- College Professor
- Professional Researcher
- Education Consultant
- K-12 School Director

Administration and Operations

- Office Manager
- Bookkeeping / Accounting
- Marketing / Communications
- Logistics Manager

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

What is Outdoor Youth Development?

Outdoor Youth Development programs are designed to change the way that people feel, think, and behave by increasing positive functional behavior and improving interpersonal/intrapersonal relationships. Youth Development programs often encourage students to engage in new and challenging experiences, give and receive critical feedback, and practice leadership skills. Programs may incorporate facilitated outdoor experiences to reach learning objectives.

What Education is required?

Entry-level positions may accept:

- Demonstrated experience facilitating group dynamics
- Competence in one or more outdoor technical skills (backpacking, rock climbing, kayaking, etc.)
- Demonstrated ability to make safe decisions under challenging circumstances
- Wilderness First Responder and CPR Certification

Professional Certifications and experience include (not limited to):

- Higher Level Outdoor Recreation Certifications if applicable (American Mountain Guide Association, Wilderness First Responder/EMT, Leave No Trace Master Educator, American Canoe Association, Swift Water Rescue, etc.)
- Demonstrated experience in Risk Management
- 5-10 years position related experience

Undergraduate majors include (but not limited to):

- Outdoor Recreation/Education
- Adventure Education
- Peace Studies
- Psychology
- Environmental Studies

Graduate degrees include (but not limited to):

- Masters in Educational Leadership
- Masters in Adventure Education
- Masters in Psychology
- Masters /PhD in Nonprofit management

What is a Youth Development Professional?

Those working in the field of Outdoor Youth Development are focused on creating positive impact on the youth they serve by building supporting relationships and environments through the facilitation of outdoor experiences that are safe, fun and challenging. They can work with diverse demographics of youth that spans a variety of ages and socio-economic status working for a variety of programs from small regional organizations, local schools and larger institutional agencies.

Who employs youth development professionals?

Nonprofit

- Outdoor Education Programs
- Local nonprofit organizations
- National Youth Development Organizations (YMCA, etc.)
- At-risk youth development programs

Education

- Colleges and Universities
- Juvenile Community Court Schools
- After School Programs

Sample Careers

Entry-level

- Intern/Volunteer
- Assistant Instructor
- Development Intern
- AmeriCorps Vista programs

Professional

- Adventure/Wilderness Instructor
- Curriculum Developer
- Logistics Coordinator
- Program Manager
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Curriculum Developer
- Communications/ Development Professional

Management

- Director of Adventure/Wilderness Programs
- College Professor
- Professional Researcher
- Nonprofit Program Director

Administration and Operations

- Office Manager
- Bookkeeping / Accounting
- Marketing / Communications
- Logistics Manager

THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS

What is Wilderness Therapy ?

Wilderness therapy is the use of experiential education, individual and group therapy in a wilderness setting to treat clients for a range of emotional, developmental and relational struggles. Clients range in age from 10-17 for adolescents, and 18-28 for adults. There are a variety of different types of wilderness therapy programs, with the most common models being sustained expedition or base camp models with a typical stay of 8-12 weeks, other single expedition style models involve single 25-35 day trips.

What Education is required?

Entry-level positions may accept:

- 21 Years of age (most programs)
- Demonstrated experience with at-risk youth in professional capacity or experience facilitating/teaching experiential education in the outdoors
- Personal competency in wilderness skills
- Competence in one or more outdoor technical skills (backpacking, rock climbing, kayaking, etc.)
- Current Wilderness First Responder and CPR Certification

Professional Certifications and experience include (not limited to):

- Higher Level Outdoor Recreation Certifications if applicable (LPC, LGPC, Wilderness First Responder/EMT, Leave No Trace Master Educator, Swift Water Rescue, etc.)
- Demonstrated experience in Risk Management
- 5-10 years position related experience

Undergraduate majors include (but not limited to):

- Adventure Education
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Human Development
- Psychology
- Environmental Studies

Graduate degrees include (but not limited to):

- Masters/PHD in Marriage and Family therapy
- Masters in Social Work
- Masters in Psychology
- Professional Counseling Licensure

What is a Wilderness Therapy Professional?

Wilderness Therapy professionals are clinicians, psychiatrists, logistics coordinators, operations and outreach managers, and field mentors. While many professions in Wilderness Therapy require higher levels of education and training, field guides, often entry level employees, run daily group sessions, teach curriculum, and oversee program activities in the field. Wilderness Therapy professionals work to facilitate and support programs aimed at providing a safe and structured experience in the wilderness for (primarily) struggling adolescents.

Who employs parks and recreation education professionals?

Nonprofit:

- Licensed Wilderness Therapy Organizations
- Therapeutic nonprofit organizations
- National Youth Development and Counseling Organizations (YMCA, etc.)
- Live-in Therapeutic programs for youth

Education

- Universities and Colleges
- Educational Consultant Organizations

Sample Careers

Entry-level

- Field Instructor
- Intern/volunteer/resident

Professional

- Licensed Therapist
- Social worker/case manager
- Adventure/Wilderness Therapist
- Property Maintenance Supervisor
- Clinical Professional
- Marriage and Family Therapist
- Licensed Graduate Professional Counselor
- Communications/Development Professional

Management

- Director of Adventure/Wilderness Programs
- College Professor/
- Professional Researcher
- Nonprofit Program Director

Administration and operations

- Office Manager
- Bookkeeping / Accounting
- Marketing / Communications
- Logistics Manager

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

What is Conservation?

Conservation programs are focused on the preservation, protection, or and advocacy for restoration of the natural environment, natural ecosystems, vegetation, and wildlife. Conservation programs aim to positively impact the environments where they work. Conservation programs accomplish their goals through community outreach, advocacy, natural resource management, and much more.

What Education is required?

Entry-level positions may accept:

- Sufficient competency with power tools (chainsaw, hedge cutter, etc.)
- Competence in one or more outdoor technical skills (backpacking, rock climbing, kayaking, etc.)
- Current Wilderness First Responder and CPR Certification
- General understanding of low-impact and conservation practices

Professional Certifications and experience include (not limited to):

- Higher Level Certifications (arborist, landscape contractor, wildfire incident qualification card, licensed herbicide applicator, etc.)
- Demonstrated experience managing groups in the outdoors
- Experience in project management and implementation of natural resource management

Undergraduate majors include (but not limited to):

- Ecology, Biology, Life Sciences
- Agriculture
- Landscape Architecture
- Environmental Studies

Graduate degrees include (but not limited to):

- Masters/PHD in Marriage and Family therapy
- Masters in Social Work
- Masters in Psychology
- Professional Counseling Licensure

What is a Conservation Professional?

Conservation professionals work in a wide variety of environments and conditions including man-made and natural areas such as parks and open space areas.

Conservation organizations vary from land management to advocacy by working with decision makers to support environmental causes. Conservation programs use tools such as land acquisition, conservation concessions and zoning as well as trail maintenance or land development to protect outdoor spaces.

Who employs conservation professionals?

Nonprofits

- Regional land trusts and conservation organizations
- Environmental Advocacy organizations
- Aquariums, Zoos, and Museums

Education

- Colleges and Universities

Sample Careers

Entry-level

- Intern/Docent/Volunteer
- Conservation program staff
- Landscape contractor

Professional

- Program Coordinator/Manager
- Conservation/Environmental Advocate
- Natural Resource Specialist
- Educator/Teacher
- Conservation Group Leader/manager
- Wildlife Biologist
- Community outreach professionals
- Marine Aquarist
- Wildlife Damage Specialist
- Environmental Technician
- Environmental Engineer
- Landscape Architect
- Ecologist
- College Professor/ Professional Researcher

Management

- Executive Director
- Director of Adventure/Wilderness Programs
- Nonprofit Program Director

Administration and

Operations

- Bookkeeping / Accounting
- Marketing / Communications
- Logistics Manager

RESOURCES

The following are a list of resources available for finding jobs in nonprofit and outdoor education.

Source	Link
LinkedIn	https://www.linkedin.com/
The Outdoor Professional's Resource	www.outdoored.com
Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education	www.aore.org
Association for Experiential Education	www.aee.org
Indeed.com "outdoor education"	http://www.indeed.com/jobs?q=outdoor+education&l=San+Diego%2C+CA
National Outdoor Leadership School	www.nols.edu
National Recreation and Park Association	http://www.nrpa.org/careers/
Backdoor Jobs, Short-term job adventures	http://www.backdoorjobs.com
Camp Channel jobs	http://www.campchannel.com/jobboard/
Cool works, Jobs in Great Places	http://www.coolworks.com
National Association for Therapeutic Schools and Programs	https://www.natsap.org/Public/Default.aspx?hkey=3eb162c8-8572-48d6-a4b0-8f77303d1751&WebsiteKey=a6db6176-2e1f-4120-ad6e-c64e14a4337a
Idealist	http://www.idealists.org/

Contact



~TRANSFORMING YOUTH~

TYO

~OUTDOORS~

For further information please visit MyTYO.org



This guide has been created by
TYO: Transforming Youth Outdoors
in partnership with US Fish & Wildlife Service