



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Leilani Clark, Communications Lead

Email: leilani@landpaths.org

Cell: (707) 332-4736

LandPaths receives \$700,000 Outdoor Equity Grants Program grant from California State Parks. The funding will expand access to nature and public lands in southwest Santa Rosa through inclusive, culturally relevant programs and workforce training in land stewardship for teens and young adults.

SANTA ROSA, Calif— LandPaths has been selected to receive a \$700,000 grant from California State Parks' Outdoor Equity Grants Program for our [Vamos Afuera](#), southwest Santa Rosa project. LandPaths is the only Sonoma County-based organization to receive this recognition.

Awarded through the new Outdoor Equity Grants Program, the funding helps establish hubs for local activities and trips to natural areas for underserved communities. The program also empowers youth and families with outdoor leadership education, career pathways, environmental justice engagement, and access to nature.

“LandPaths has been a leader and a trailblazer, locally and nationally, for our pursuit of equity and inclusion as core to our mission to foster a love of the land in Sonoma County,” said Omar Gallardo, New Audiences Manager. “We’ve been committed to this work for the last 15 years, and we’re fortunate to receive this grant from the state of California that shows they value the work we’ve done.”

According to California State Parks, the grant’s purpose is to expand access to outdoor experiences at state parks and other public lands for low-income rural and urban communities in California.

“California State Parks is incredibly proud to announce grant funding to strengthen access to parks and open spaces and contribute to a better quality of life for Californians,” said California State Parks Director Armando Quintero. “These programs will turn parks into outdoor classrooms, inspiring a new generation of environmental leadership in California.”

This large, multi-year grant will allow LandPaths to deepen and expand existing programming like [Let's Read Outside](#), Vamos Afuera Con LandPaths, which creates culturally relevant nature and outdoor programs for Spanish speakers, [Summer at Bayer Farm](#), [Young Stewards](#), and more.

Beyond one-time field trips and outings, the grant allows for year-round, immersive engagement in the outdoors for Spanish-speaking youth, adults, and families. Like Maria and Cornelio Huerta, longtime Bayer Farm volunteers and Vamos Afuera Con LandPaths participants, said in [this interview](#), these outings build comfort, confidence, and a sense of reciprocity, safety, and belonging in nature.

“This grant is a powerful statement of investment in LandPaths’ partnership and engagement in southwest Santa Rosa,” said Programs Director Lee Hackeling. “We’ll be able to increase opportunities for camping trips that build comfort with set-up and meals. We’ll be able to grow the Young Stewards program, which gets teens and young adults outside at both wild nature preserves and their local community gardens, to gain work experience in land stewardship. And we’ll be able to increase outdoor outings to public lands that bring together culturally relevant programming, nature immersion, and mental health support.”

For this first grant cycle of the program, State Parks evaluated 384 grant applications totaling \$167.78 million in requests, and awarded 125 grants. The \$57 million in grants was made available through general funds approved by the California Legislature and Governor Gavin Newsom in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 state budgets.

The full list of projects available online at parks.ca.gov/oep.

To learn more and schedule interviews with Omar Gallardo, Vamos Afuera program participants, or Young Stewards, contact Leilani Clark at leilani@landpaths.org or (707) 332-4736.

About [LandPaths](#)

LandPaths is an environmental education and conservation leader with the mission is to foster a love of the land in Sonoma County. We believe everyone should have access to the awe and inspiration of nature.

Annually, we engage thousands of participants like you in joyful, caring, and transformative relationship with the land. We do this through creative outings led in both English and Spanish, environmental education, nature camps, and people-powered land stewardship of local open spaces. landpaths.org.

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