

2018

ANNUAL REPORT





MISSION

NatureBridge connects young people to the wonder and science of the natural world, igniting self-discovery and inspiring stewardship of our planet.

VISION

We envision a society transformed by new generations that understand, celebrate and protect the natural world.

2018

ANNUAL REPORT

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Leading The Field

NatureBridge impacts over 35,000 kids each year. And now, thanks to relationships with research institutions like Stanford University and the Residential Environmental Education Partnership, over one million students stand to benefit from our 48-year experience annually.





Leading the Field

OUR MISSION—TO CONNECT YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE WONDER AND SCIENCE OF THE NATURAL WORLD, IGNITING SELF-DISCOVERY AND INSPIRING STEWARDSHIP OF OUR PLANET—HAS NEVER BEEN MORE URGENT. EACH YEAR, ONE MILLION STUDENTS ARE SERVED BY OVER 300 OVERNIGHT ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND NATUREBRIDGE LEADS THE FIELD.

By availing our programs to external evaluation and participating in partner studies with academic institutions like Stanford University, NatureBridge contributes to an important body of academic research that seeks to improve practices across the field of environmental education.

“NatureBridge is this incredible laboratory of opportunity,” said Nicole Ardoin, Ph.D., Chair of NatureBridge’s Education Advisory Council and Associate Professor at Stanford’s Graduate School of Education. **“It is an organization willing to dedicate its resources and its people to a larger research agenda.”**

At NatureBridge, we aren’t afraid to self-evaluate. This commitment to learning about our practices sets the stage for future research and assessment that benefits the entire field of environmental education.

“It allows us to ask ourselves whether or not we are hitting the mark,” said Ardoin. “Where can we do better? NatureBridge has never been content to rest on its laurels, which is what makes it such an amazing learning organization.”

Research on citizen science and stewardship conducted by the Stanford School of Education at NatureBridge, published in 2017, indicates that **“students became more aware of environmental problems and their own impact on the environment; this heightened awareness led to a desire to change their own behaviors and to inform others.”**

Together, NatureBridge and academic institutions like Stanford University have the opportunity to highlight effective practices and disseminate those findings to the broader field. By understanding how and when our programs impact participants, we’re better equipped to design a program that best supports the growth of tomorrow’s environmental stewards.

And with one million students experiencing programs like ours each year, the potential impact is far-reaching—one million kids who are inspired to lead recycling efforts in their schools, one million kids who are determined to decrease their carbon footprint, one million kids who discover a love for our planet and a lifelong commitment to its stewardship. For this reason alone, we are proud to open our doors to research and evaluation, leading the field that seeks to ignite a passion in our young people for the world around them.

Residential Environmental Education Partnership

NatureBridge programs go beyond science. We consistently see the impact of our programs on kids' development—students learn to better understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions. Educators refer to this as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

“Every student is challenged physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. They not only overcome their own individual fears, they learn to work together by building trust with each other. Within two days you see the self-esteem and curiosity beaming from these students.”

—MICHELE, PARENT

With over 300 environmental education providers reaching one million students each year, how do we work together to best engage all students in SEL?

As the convener of 10 organizations in the field of overnight environmental education, NatureBridge is working to do just that. Launched in 2018 with support from the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, the Residential Environmental Education Partnership (REEP) is studying how to best incorporate SEL frameworks, research and practices into outdoor environmental education programs.

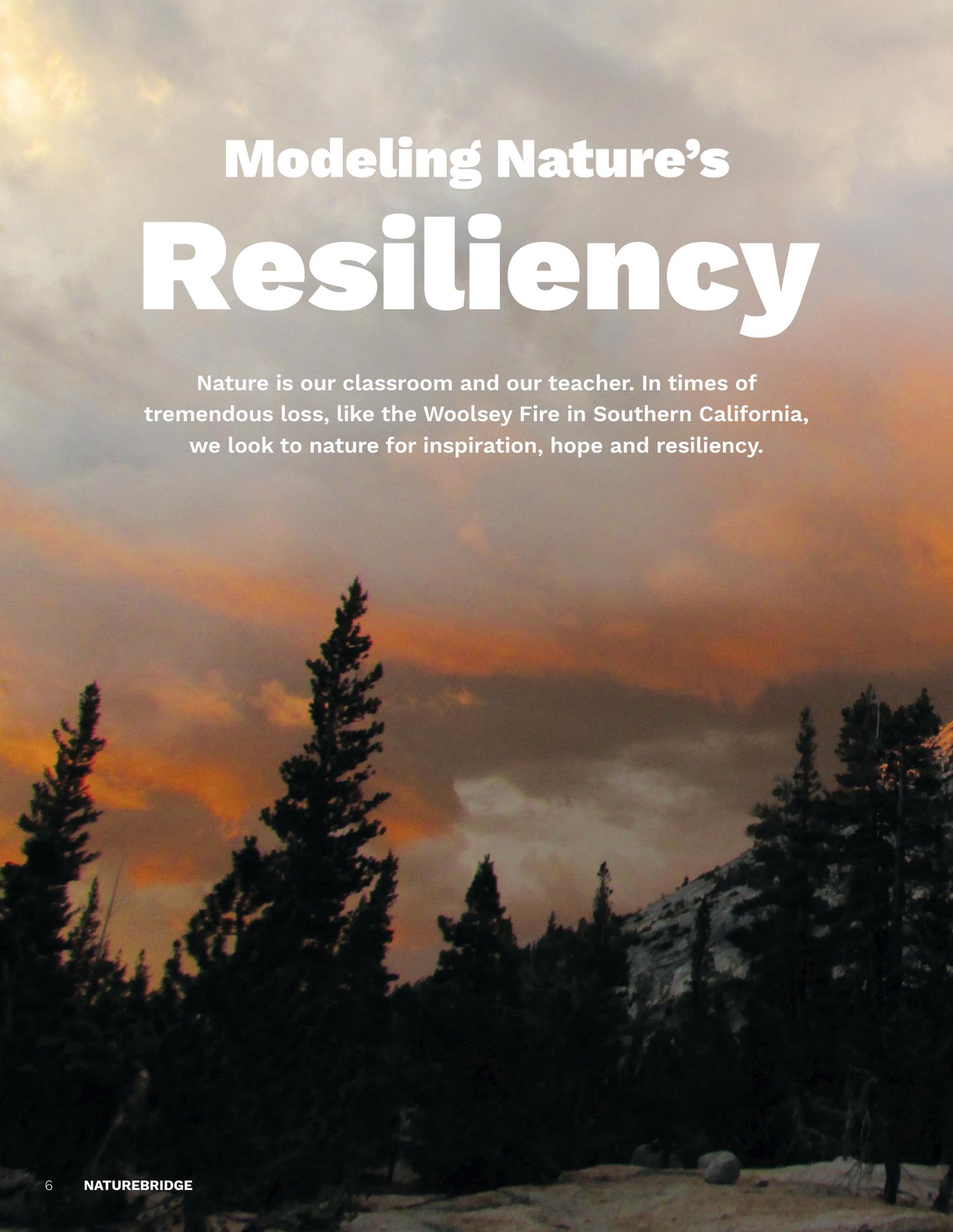
“We know how powerful these immersive experiences



in nature can be. We also know that they can be even more powerful with the right tools and framework,” said Stephen Streufert, NatureBridge Vice President of Education. “There is a real eagerness within our community to showcase the natural fit of SEL within our outdoor learning environments.”

By employing that natural fit, NatureBridge is helping to advance the field of outdoor environmental education, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to discover something beyond science and the natural world—that they have the opportunity to discover themselves.





Modeling Nature's Resiliency

Nature is our classroom and our teacher. In times of tremendous loss, like the Woolsey Fire in Southern California, we look to nature for inspiration, hope and resiliency.





Turning Loss Into Opportunity

While the Santa Monica Mountains still burned in late November of 2018, we made the difficult decision to cancel spring programs at our Santa Monica Mountains campus. The loss of critical campus sites meant a long list of schools prepared to discover the outdoors with NatureBridge were left with nowhere to go. But, thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors, we were able to offer additional financial support for those schools to transition to programs at NatureBridge in Yosemite National Park.

Still, relocations were not easy and for schools like Alliance Judy Ivie Burton Technology Academy High School in South Los Angeles many obstacles remained. NatureBridge collaborated with Alliance Burton's lead teacher, Ms. Garcia, over two weeks to make the impossible, possible.

Obtaining parent permission for students remained difficult, as did collecting hats, gloves and jackets for these Southern California students to stay warm during their winter trip. Thanks to generous gifts from our

community, these first-generation students, many of whom did not speak English, discovered the beauty of one of our nation's most iconic national parks.

When nature takes its course, a healthy fire cleans out an ecosystem and improves its health. Mirroring the resilience of nature in the face of fire, NatureBridge chose to seek opportunity from loss.

"As an organization we can learn a lot from nature," said NatureBridge Yosemite Education Director Reed Schneider. "How are we as an organization being resilient? Just like an ecosystem after a fire, how are we stepping forward? What's our new growth?"

After the Woolsey Fire, the NatureBridge community stepped forward and witnessed the life-changing experience of 70 Alliance Burton students arriving to Yosemite's Curry Village and seeing snow for the very first time.

Teaching Fire Science

Naturally occurring wildland fires are vital to an ecosystem, encouraging biodiversity and rejuvenating nature. Human intervention and the rapidly changing climate of our planet, however, have caused fires to become increasingly hotter, faster spreading and more catastrophic—15 of the 20 largest fires in California’s history have burned since 2000. To address this growing crisis, our Yosemite team is developing and incorporating fire ecology curriculum into NatureBridge programming.

“In California particularly, NatureBridge needs to play a much bigger role in fire ecology,” said Yosemite Education Director Reed Schneider. “It’s happening here and now so NatureBridge must aid future generations in getting up to speed on fire science.”

Fire ecology—the study of fire and the living and non-living environment it interacts with—presents a true experiential learning opportunity. Built by our own education team and supported by our partners at Scott Stephens Fire Lab at UC Berkeley and the FireWorks program of the US Forest Service Missoula Fire Lab in Montana, the curriculum aims to provide students with a deeper understanding of the role fire plays in an ecosystem and how land managers make decisions about current and future fire management.

“We ultimately agree that we need to start the conversation on fire ecology with every kid that comes to NatureBridge at Yosemite,” explained Reed. **“Before students can make informed decisions, they need to better understand the human relationship to fire and its role in a natural ecosystem.”**

With the launch of the fire ecology program, we envision a ripple effect, helping to push fire education and environmental stewardship further afield.

At NatureBridge, students study aspects of the forest that affect how wildfires behave including slope, stand density and down and dead fuel load. By building forest models like the one seen here, students test how a fire would react under various conditions.



Fire plays an important part of our natural ecosystems by shaping our landscapes and maintaining a healthy balance of vegetation.

People in the Sierra Nevada have recognized for thousands of years the importance of fire, but within the last century, land managers began to use full-suppression

tactics to stop all wildland fires because they were viewed as hazardous.



Because of fire suppression, we now have higher fuel loads, denser forests and unbalanced ecosystems that pose a much higher risk of devastating wildland fires.



With the present state of many forests, and the current rate of climate change, fires are becoming hotter, larger, faster spreading and more destructive.

Land managers are beginning to change their management style and are exploring ways to return fire to ecosystems and manage many fires by letting them burn in a controlled way.



By collecting data, modeling and predicting how fire may behave, land managers are able to make decisions on how to manage areas to prepare for and respond to fires.

Inspiring The Next Generation

We connect young people to the wonder and science of the natural world to inspire stewardship of our planet. Year after year, life-changing NatureBridge programs serve as the catalyst for exceptional action in students' schools and communities back home.







Inspiring the Next Generation

“NatureBridge is a place of happiness. It is a place where anyone could be anything. NatureBridge changed the way I look at the Earth, all thanks to my educator and NatureBridge.”

Rylan Mamola

attended NatureBridge at Golden Gate with his sixth grade class from Montessori Elementary & Middle School of Tracy last spring. Upon returning to his home community, Rylan was inspired to help his school reduce its food waste. Today, there is zero trash from lunch and the school garden and compost system are thriving.



“At NatureBridge, I learned that I can take care of myself. As I move through high school and into the real world, I need to be able to take responsibility for my health and the treatments that keep me alive. This trip gave me confidence and hope.”

Kinzie Klein

attended NatureBridge at Yosemite in the fall of 2018. The experience proved to be truly life changing. Despite living with Cystic Fibrosis, Kinzie took on every challenge and adventure that NatureBridge educators had to offer. She defied the odds and left the program with a newfound feeling of independence.



“Here at NatureBridge, I became keenly aware of the life around us and what we could do to preserve the wildlife we all love.”

Satvika Iyer

of Merryhill Elementary School visited our Golden Gate campus with NatureBridge last spring. Moved by the Great Pacific garbage patch harming our oceans, Satvika returned home and adopted a more sustainable lifestyle that emphasizes recycling, repurposing and even veganism.



Student Impact

EACH YEAR, THE NATUREBRIDGE EXPERIENCE PLANTS A SEED IN TENS OF THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS. AND EACH YEAR, WE SEE THAT SEED TAKE ROOT.

Last spring, Tracy, California middle schooler Joshua Velazquez explored hands-on environmental science in the Marin Headlands alongside his sixth-grade classmates. The experience stirred something in Joshua, inspiring an appreciation of the natural world and action back home.

“This experience made me more aware!” he wrote. “I am forever changed. Now, I make sure I take only what I can eat, and I am also more conscious about recycling and not littering. I am motivated to educate others, like my little brothers, on the importance of being eco-friendly.”

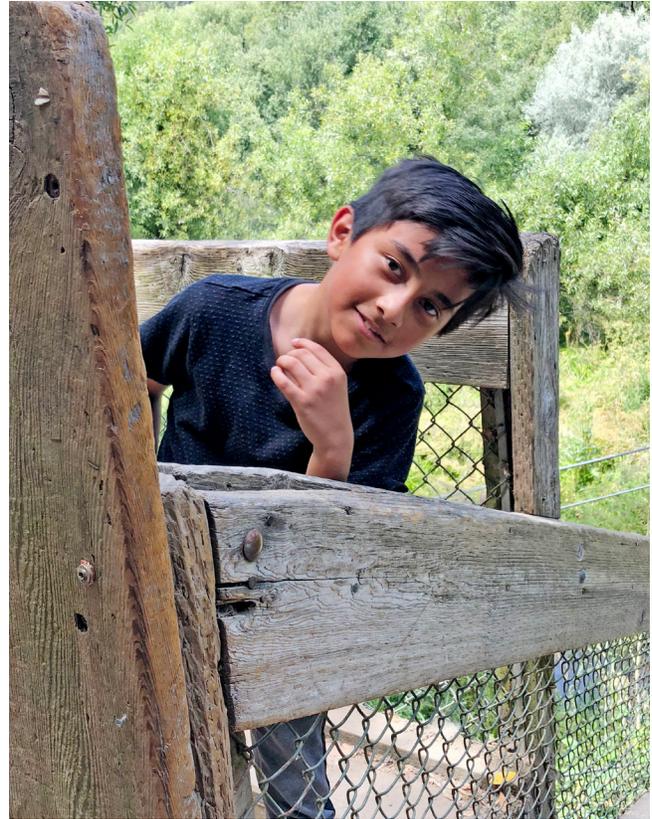
In August 2018, Joshua was an integral part of a school-wide effort to do away with all disposable containers in the school’s lunchroom. The goal? To reduce lunch waste to zero.

In addition to cutting out all waste at lunchtime, Joshua’s school now has an effective compost program. Thoughtful and insightful, Joshua is currently the biggest NatureBridge advocate at his school.

“This was truly a life-changing experience. It created in me a passion to care for the environment and a strong desire for a better tomorrow that I can help to create.”

—JOSHUA

His own program experience provided him a deeper understanding of the environment, as well as the desire to create effective change—an opportunity he wants other students to have for years to come.



In the 2017-18 school year, we served:

715
SCHOOLS

35,534

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

\$1,384,691

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS AWARDED

A watercolor illustration of a camp scene. In the background, a large wooden building with a balcony is nestled among green trees. In the foreground, a group of people, including children and adults, are gathered around a stone fire pit where a fire is burning. Some people are sitting on wooden benches, while others are standing or sitting on the ground. The scene is set in a lush, green outdoor environment.

Building The Future

Creating new stewards takes a special educational experience, one in which our students discover their own interest and passion for the environment. These experiences are made possible at NatureBridge. By building and expanding new and existing campuses, we're increasing our reach so more kids can connect with the outdoors.



The National Environmental Science Center

Located on Henness Ridge, the National Environmental Science Center (NESC) is NatureBridge's new, permanent home in Yosemite National Park. Through hands-on activities, students will study sustainability, investigate fire science and discover the history of Yosemite. Visitors will interface with sustainable building features and universally accessible trails and buildings will allow people of all abilities to enjoy the beauty and wonder of the park.

For generations to come, the National Environmental Science Center will serve as a permanent home for youth—generating curiosity of the natural world and inspiring environmental stewardship.



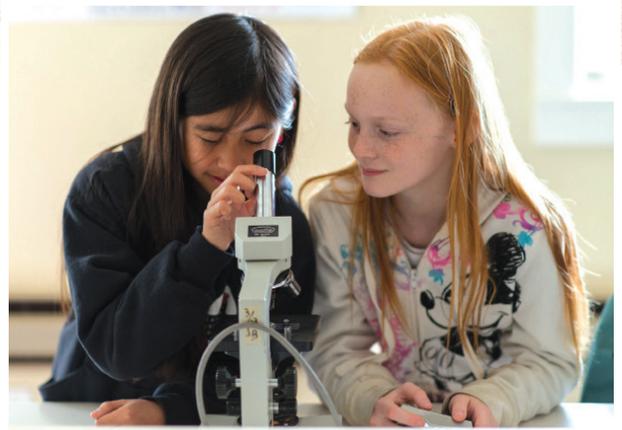
Expanding our Golden Gate Campus

More than just a first night away from home for many of our students, the experience at Golden Gate may be their first visit to a national park, or even their first time seeing the ocean. Never before have these experiences been more vital for the future of the environment.

To meet the growing need for environmental education, we are expanding our Golden Gate campus to serve 30% more students and provide an additional 1,000 scholarships each year.

The expansion will also include a new Climate Science Lab where students can:

1. Develop an understanding, through experiential learning, of changes in weather/landscape locally and globally over time.



2. Participate in inquiry-based activities that enhance their understanding of the science of climate change.
3. Gain insights into the disproportionate impacts of climate change on ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.
4. Be empowered to investigate, create and implement solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change and apply those ideas in their lives and communities.

Thanks to the expansion, we will reach even more young people so they too may foster an appreciation for the natural world.

To learn more about the Golden Gate expansion or the National Environmental Science Center, please contact Aaron Rich at arich@naturebridge.org.

You Make it Possible.

Thank you to our donors who gave \$100 and above between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018.

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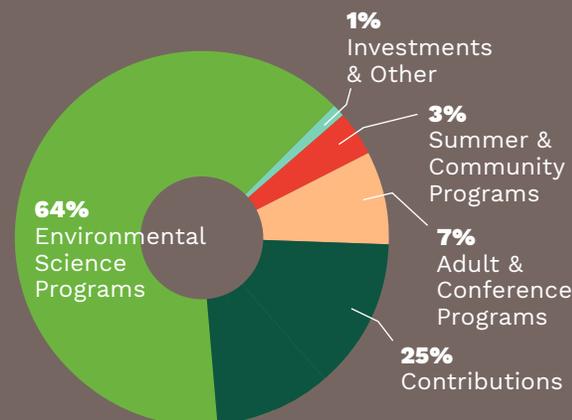
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Environmental Science Programs	11,444,549
Contributions	4,459,661
Adult & Conference Programs	1,335,904
Summer & Community Programs	561,976
Investments & Other	109,191

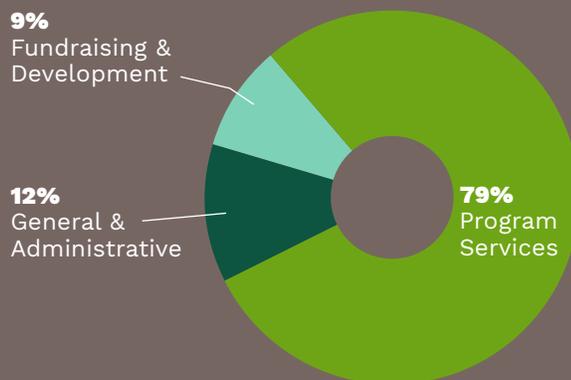
TOTAL 17,911,281



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Program Services	13,963,145
General & Administrative	2,123,307
Fundraising & Development	1,622,593

TOTAL 17,709,045





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