



COTTONWOOD INSTITUTE

→ The Colorado Wildfire Project





THE COLORADO WILDFIRE PROJECT

During this trip, we will camp in cabins or tents for the week and take a deep dive into learning about wildfires in Colorado. We will explore healthy and unhealthy forests, check out new and old wildfire burn areas, and complete wildfire mitigation Action Projects to help reduce unnaturally destructive wildfires. We will also learn how to navigate the outdoors safely and practice survival skills, including proper fire-building techniques and signal fires. Finally, we will partner with local partners in the area and learn about their fire mitigation practices and the history of the area.

PROGRAM GOALS

- **Relationship Building:** Foster strong relationships with peers and adults
- **Nature Awareness:** Create a sense of belonging and personal connection to the natural world
- **Environmental Literacy:** Deepen student understanding of local and global environmental issues
- **Leadership & Civic Engagement:** Build civic agency to create change in their communities
- **Outdoor Skills:** Develop skills and tools to safely explore the outdoors

GROUP DETAILS

- Group size: 20 students (Can vary)
- School chaperones: 2-3 (Can vary)
- Grades: Middle or High School
- Length: Can vary, field day and overnight options available

program description

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Example Scope and Sequence

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Theme	Connecting People & Place	Wildfire: Past & Present	Ecosystems & Us	Outdoor Skills	Action & Empowerment
Overview	Our first day will set the tone for the week by building connections between students and place. We'll focus on activities that promote relationship building and positive group identity, while also orienting students to the amazing land where we'll be spending the next week.	Today, we'll explore our own stories about wildfires. What is our cultural relationship with fire, and how has that shaped our forests? We'll engage in hands-on experiences that help us understand the historical context of our forest management and the present-day implications for our forest health.	On our third day, we'll examine the necessary role of "good fire" in our ecosystems. How do animals and plants live with fire? How can we? We'll talk about fire adaptations as we explore the aftermath of the Cal-Wood fire and investigate signs of succession and restoration as the landscape regenerates.	On day four, we'll take what we've learned and apply it as we learn how to safely build fires of our own! Students will learn outdoor and survival skills like one-match fires, shelter building, and signaling. We'll develop relationships with the land as we learn how we might live off and with it.	Our last day brings together everything we've learned, and asks the question: what can we do as stewards of the places we care about? Students will engage in service learning and reflection as they conduct a fire mitigation project on site. We'll close out an impactful week together by reflecting on what we've learned about our home and each other!
Possible Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening Circle - Teambuilding - Shelter Set Up - Sit Spot - Leave No Trace - Introduction to Forest Ecology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teambuilding - Wildfire Tag - Wildfire Matchstick Forest Lab - Burn Scar Hike 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teambuilding - Fire Adaptations - Fire Succession Scavenger Hunt - Fire Restoration Service Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teambuilding - Fire-building Stations - Outdoor Skills Stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fire Mitigation Service Project - Program Evaluation - Closing Circle



Example PROGRAM ACTIVITY



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ACTIVITY:

Wildfire Matchstick Forest Lab

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to analyze the impact of human and other factors on forest health and resilience.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

In this lab, we'll explore the impacts of fire management practices in the American West by comparing and contrasting historical forest ecosystems with modern forests to answer the question: how and why have wildfires changed over time? We'll make connections to our personal experience with fire, practice our observational skills as we examine the health of ecosystems around us, and develop predictions about the fire resilience of our present-day forests. Students will then create their own models of historical, indigenous-managed forests and modern, government managed forests using match sticks and fire pans. They'll make guesses and evaluate data as they see firsthand how wildfires move through different forest systems.

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT



READING, WRITING, & COMMUNICATING

a. Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully; pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others; and contribute ideas to further the group's attainment of an objective.



SOCIAL STUDIES

4. Examine the characteristics of places and regions, and the changing nature among geographic and human interactions.



SCIENCE

10. Students can use the full range of science and engineering practices to make sense of natural phenomena and solve problems that require understanding how living systems interact with the biotic and abiotic environment.

6. Students can use the full range of science and engineering practices to make sense of natural phenomena and solve problems that require understanding how human activities and the Earth's surface processes interact.



PHYSICAL EDUCATION

5. Exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.