



COTTONWOOD INSTITUTE

→ Colorado Watershed Project





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Colorado Watershed Project

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Who We Are

COTTONWOOD INSTITUTE



COLORADO WATERSHED PROJECT

OUR MISSION: Cottonwood Institute is on a mission to connect middle and high school students to nature and inspire them to protect it.

Cottonwood Institute collaborates with schools and youth organizations along the Colorado Front Range to provide high quality, high impact environmental education and service-learning programs.

During Cottonwood Institute programs, students:

- Build positive peer relationships
- Practice empowering outdoor skills
- Learn about environmental issues in their community
- Develop a sense of belonging in the natural world
- Create change in their communities

Cottonwood Institute is one of the only local non-profits along the Colorado Front Range that blends environmental education, service learning, and outdoor experiences. By connecting deeply with the world around them, students develop confidence and connection to become changemakers in their communities.

Our programs inspire students to ignite change, not just talk about it. Cottonwood Institute's change theory is that every student has a gift--when they apply that gift to an issue they are passionate about, they will change themselves, their communities, the environment, and the world.



COLORADO WATERSHED PROJECT

From the summits of mountains to the bottom of canyons, water connects everything in the American west. During this action-packed 5-day, 4-night trip, we will take a deep dive into learning about our watersheds here in Colorado, and the increasingly critical role they play in our lives. We'll explore riparian ecosystems, evaluate river health, and complete a river-based Action Project to help support a healthy watershed. We'll also build our confidence outside as we practice low-impact camping skills, develop fun outdoor skills, and engage in place-based activities that connect us with the natural world.

GROUP DETAILS

- Group size: 12-14 students
- School chaperones: 1-2
- Grades: Middle and High School
- Length: 5 days, 4 nights
- Offered June-August



PROGRAM GOALS

Through Cottonwood Institute's unique blend of service learning, hands-on experience, and intentional group development, Colorado Watershed Project inspires students to:

- Understand basic content-related concepts including: the function of the water cycle, the interconnected role of watersheds, and the complex and dependent relationships that make up riparian ecosystems
- Deepen their understanding of local and global environmental issues
- Build perceptions of personal agency to create change in their communities
- Build skills and tools to feel comfortable exploring outdoors
- Develop strong and supportive relationships with peers and adults
- Develop a sense of belonging and personal connection to the natural world

Program Description

COLORADO WATERSHED PROJECT



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Sample Scope & Sequence



	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
Objectives	<p>Orient students to the land and each other</p> <p>Prepare students with skills to comfortably navigate camp life</p> <p>Develop strong routines and rituals</p>	<p>Evaluate biotic and abiotic factors affecting water quality and ecosystem health</p> <p>Test hypotheses and evaluate qualities of a healthy river ecosystem</p>	<p>Understand the role of humans in maintaining healthy waterways</p> <p>Execute a service project to give back to our river ecosystems</p>	<p>Consider our own relationships with water</p> <p>Build team by working together to accomplish a shared goal</p>	<p>Reflect on our collective experience</p> <p>Identify key takeaways for personal action</p>
Overview	<p>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.</p>	<p>Today, we'll explore the big picture of water in the American west to set context for the rest of our week. We'll talk about water ecosystems and evaluate the health of our rivers through hands-on citizen science. We'll then learn from how we can read the river to catch our own fish!</p>	<p>On our third day, we'll take what we've learned and move into action. How can we be stewards of our rivers and waterways? We'll explore the concept of reciprocity by engaging in and reflecting on a service project.</p>	<p>On day four, we'll be exploring our own stories about water. We'll build connections with nature through our relationship with water and water ecosystems by engaging in observation and sensory awareness. We'll finish off the day with whitewater rafting!</p>	<p>On day five, we'll end our program by reflecting and making meaning of our experience as a group. We'll talk about ways that we can be thoughtful stewards of water in our own lives, and close with an appreciation circle before heading back to school!</p>
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teambuilding • Comfort zones • Camp set up • Outdoor skills rotations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teambuilding • Fish Hatchery tour • Water quality testing • Fishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teambuilding • Service project • Group game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teambuilding • Sit spots • Sensory awareness • Whitewater rafting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teambuilding • Camp take down • Closing & appreciation circle

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT



High impact curriculum utilizes best practices in education, 21st Century Skills, Environmental Education, Service Learning, & Leadership Development.

The Colorado Watershed Project can be tailored to meet curriculum needs through use of a custom student journal and guide, including exercises for before, during, and after the program. Curriculum reinforces Colorado academic standards, such as:

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- ✓ **SC10-GR.8-S.2-GLE.1:**
Human activities can deliberately or inadvertently alter ecosystems and their resiliency

 - ✓ **RWC10-GR.12-S.1-GLE.2:**
Effective collaborative groups accomplish goals

 - ✓ **PE09-GR.7-S.3-GLE.:**
Demonstrate inclusiveness in and out of classroom settings

 - ✓ **PE09-GR.HS-S.1-GLE.3:**
Apply rules, principles, problem-solving skills, and concepts to traditional and nontraditional movement settings



OUR STAFF



FORD CHURCH

(He/Him)

Founder and Executive Director
ford@cottonwoodinstitute.org



TEAGAN PAPKE

(She/Her/Ella)

Director of Strategic Partnerships
teagan@cottonwoodinstitute.org



MAEVE O'MEARA

(She/Her)

Operations Manager
maeve@cottonwoodinstitute.org



ERIN ANGEL

(She/Her)

Senior Instructor, Changemakers & Alumni Coordinator
erin@cottonwoodinstitute.org



HARMONY ESQUEDA

(She/Her/Ella)

AXL Academy CAP Instructor & Social Media Coordinator
harmony@cottonwoodinstitute.org



LORI POWELL

(She/Her)

Admin & Communications Coordinator
lori@cottonwoodinstitute.org



SARA GRILLO

(She/Her/Ella)

Angevine Middle School CAP Instructor & Events Coordinator
sara@cottonwoodinstitute.org



SADIE NORTON

(She/Her/They/Them)

Risk Management
sadie@cottonwoodinstitute.org
