



## 12 Outdoor Classroom Grants Awarded

2025 was another successful year for our Outdoor Classroom grant program! Grants were awarded to 12 Maine schools, most of which were in the Acadia region. These grants support the creation of outdoor learning spaces on Maine's public school campuses so that students benefit from time spent in nature and curriculum that builds connections to Acadia National Park. Research has shown that outdoor learning can improve emotional regulation and lead to higher academic outcomes.



"National parks are amazing outdoor classrooms, and school campuses can be, too!" said Paige Steele, FOA's Acadia for All director and facilitator of the Outdoor Classroom grants. "A big part of having an outdoor classroom is teaching students how to engage with the outdoors and helping them learn foundational skills. That might include how to dress for the weather, Leave No Trace principles, and the appropriate responses to outdoor stimuli—particularly for students who have not previously had much exposure to the outdoors."

We are now accepting applications for 2026 Outdoor Classroom grant funding. [Click here to learn more and apply.](#)

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## Winter Trails Update

The ski season in Acadia is off to a great start! Volunteer groomers have been getting out any chance they can.

Please remember to share the trails! Permitted recreational uses include walking, running, bicycling, snowshoeing, and skiing, so please be respectful of other users and avoid trampling groomed ski tracks.



As the season continues, please check [Friends of Acadia's website](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook page](#) for grooming updates, and use the hashtag #SkiAcadia to share your conditions reports. Happy trails!

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## Seasonal Employment Opportunities at Friends of Acadia and Acadia National Park

Join our team! We're currently hiring for the following seasonal positions:

- [Digital Content Creator](#)
- [Lead Summit Steward](#)
- [Membership Outreach Assistants](#)
- [Photographer & Videographer](#)
- [Recreation Technicians](#)
- [Stewardship Crew Members](#)
- [Summit Stewards](#)
- [Wild Gardens of Acadia Intern](#)



Acadia National Park is also hiring multiple seasonal positions including trail crew members, maintenance workers, and preventative search and rescue rangers. [Learn more about these roles and how to apply here.](#)

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## Lisa Horsch Clark Named FOA's First VP of Gift Planning

Friends of Acadia has named Lisa Horsch Clark as its first vice president of gift planning, recognizing her leadership in building the organization's planned giving program and positioning it to support Acadia National Park for generations to come.

In this new role, Horsch Clark will lead the continued growth of FOA's planned giving efforts, including the George B. Dorr Society, which honors supporters who have made a legacy commitment to



Acadia. Planned gifts provide long-term, sustaining funding that helps ensure the park's trails, carriage roads, wildlife habitats, and historic landscapes are protected well into the future.

"Planned giving is about love for this place and a belief in its future," said Horsch Clark. "I'm incredibly honored to step into this newly created role and to build on the generosity and vision of our supporters."

[Read more about Lisa's new role on our website.](#)

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### **Apply to be a 2026 Acadia Teacher Fellow by January 24**

The Acadia Teacher Fellows program is a unique professional development opportunity for K-12 educators to gain hands-on experience in Acadia National Park. Teacher fellows work side-by-side with interpreters, researchers, patrol rangers, resource managers, trail crews, and other specialists. The 2026 program will run from July 5 - August 1.



Teacher fellows develop lesson plans based on their park experience and, when they return to their schools in the fall, share their projects with students and colleagues.

Friends of Acadia helped expand the Acadia Teacher Fellows program in 2013 and continues to support this valuable learning experience for teachers, schools, and the park.

[Learn more about the program and apply here.](#)

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### **Advocacy Update**

On January 8, the House passed a bipartisan "minibus" appropriations package, advancing the Fiscal Year 2026 Interior and Environment bill toward a final Senate vote. This compromise provides \$3.27 billion in flat funding for National Park Service operations, successfully blocking a proposed \$1 billion cut from the administration.



The legislation includes directives for the National Park Service to prioritize staff retention following a 24% loss in the permanent workforce last year. It also mandates congressional notification for any mass firings or agency reorganizations. While securing \$900 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and increasing transparency for infrastructure repairs, the final text omits language prohibiting the sale of federal parklands. Congressional leaders now aim to finalize the package before the January 30 funding deadline to avert a shutdown.

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## Double Your Impact for Acadia on February 24

Friends of Acadia will be kicking off our first matching e-challenge of the year, and you're invited to make a big difference! Thanks to a group of generous donors, every gift will be matched dollar for dollar until we reach our \$25,000 goal.



Your support helps protect Acadia's trails, wildlife, and visitor programs, and now your impact can go twice as far. Watch for the launch email on Tuesday, February 24, and find the giving link on our website and social media.

Let's start 2026 strong and show what we can accomplish when we work together!

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### Park Updates:

- The National Park Service has **updated its annual pass and entrance fee pricing**. Pricing for U.S. residents remains unchanged, while non-U.S. residents are subject to a new surcharge. [Visit the park's website for a full list of fees](#).
- The National Park Service has updated its [fee-free day schedule for 2026](#).
- **Most of the Park Loop Road is now closed until the spring**, but it remains open to winter activities, such as walking, cross-country skiing, biking, and snowmobiling.
- **The Park Loop Road will remain open to motor vehicles between Jordan Pond Road in Seal Harbor and the Jordan Pond parking lot** and between Schooner Head Road and Otter Cliffs Road in Bar Harbor.
- When visiting Acadia in winter, **being prepared for cold weather, early darkness, and icy conditions** will help ensure a safe and enjoyable experience. Visit the park's website to see the most up-to-date [information on closures](#), [winter activities](#), and [tips for how to prepare](#).



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### In Case You Missed It:

- FOA's Wild Acadia Coordinator [Lauren Gibson featured in Schoodic Institute's Sea to Trees podcast](#).
- Travel back in time with Acadia's curator Marie Yarborough [in this video of the park's very first register of visitors](#). Think you can guess who the first visitor was?
- ["Q&A: FOA's Eric Stiles on budget, major projects at Acadia"](#) (*Acadia National Park On My Mind*)
- [Check out this video highlighting and celebrating progress in seasonal housing](#), filmed and edited by 2025 seasonal photographer and videographer Rhiannon Johnston.
- [Watch this video featuring Acadia's trail foreman Dave Schlag](#) as he talks about important work done to improve the Bubbles Divide Trail.

Until next month,



Header Photo: Ice skaters enjoy an evening skate on The Bowl in January 2021 (Ashley Conti/Friends of Acadia).



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