



14 Councils Win Linking Girls to the Land Grants

Fourteen Girl Scout councils around the nation were awarded grants of up to \$2,500 to complete a yearlong collaborative project in partnership with a federal or state natural resource agency. The projects will offer more than 5,000 Girl Scouts opportunities to participate in environmental education, volunteer conservation service or outdoor skills development, and will also serve as opportunities for girls to learn about environmental science and natural resource career options. The 2006 grants, totaling \$34,881 are being funded by the GSUSA's Elliott Wildlife Values Project, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Linking Girls to the Land partnership. Grants were awarded to the following Girl Scout councils:

Girl Scouts of the Black Hills Council

This summer, the Girl Scouts of the Black Hill Council will begin their land and water resource management stewardship project, "Ecotones in U-Pods." Girls will attend camp in the Black Hills National Forest at Sheridan Lake, where they will team up with members of the U.S. Forest Service for training and presentations. They'll learn about ecotones—transition areas between ecosystems—then plan and put into practice their land management and conservation skills.

Girl Scouts of the Broward County

Rebecca Schultz, a 16-year-old Girl Scout from Broward County who is working on her Gold Award, received the grant money for her program to construct and install artificial reefs off the coast of Southeast Florida to provide a thriving habitat for fish, coral, and sea plants. She is now partnering with the Broward County and Tropical Florida Councils, the Department of Environmental Resource Management, members of her community, and high school SCUBA divers to get the artificial reef program afloat. Working with a local concrete company to design and cast concrete reef balls, girls will deploy 23 reefs, ranging from 300 to 2,000 pounds in weight, from two sites off the Atlantic Coast on March 25. After the initial deployment, there will be an educational phase to monitor and evaluate the progress and growth of the reefs, and Girl Scouts of all ages will participate.

Girl Scout Council of the Catawba Valley Area

Girl Scout Council of the Catawba Valley Area is collaborating with the USDA Forest Service to steward the "Green Invaders" program. Green Invaders will teach Girl Scouts, ages 5–17, about invasive species in North Carolina, and will serve as a career exploration of forest management. Participants will learn about five species of green invaders (including the ubiquitous kudzu), why they're bad for the environment, and what native plants they can use to replace the invaders. They will then start removing various "green invaders" from Girl Scout properties and federal land. Events will include a one-day seminar, a father-daughter day, summer camp, and a regional camporee for Girl Scouts of all age levels, and will be taught by staff from the North Carolina Museum of Natural Science, Catawba Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and the USDA Forest Service.

Girl Scouts, Connecticut Trails Council

"Parks Matter" is a project aimed at encouraging people to use Connecticut's state parks. While attending Camp Murray in the New Haven area this summer, Girl Scouts in grades 7-10 will team up with DEP Kellogg Environmental Center in Derby and make trips to two DEP sites for research. Older girls will be creating a program for younger girls—researching different elements at various parks and developing a "badge lab" in which girls can earn assorted badges. The program is expected to remain in place for years to come, as girls participate in "Parks Matter" activities to earn badges.

Girl Scouts of the Mississippi Valley

The once-dominant tallgrass prairie, now less than 0.1% of the original region, is the most endangered habitat within Iowa, so Girl Scouts of the Mississippi Valley (GSMV) developed "Restoring Iowa Prairies—Phase 2," a sustainable management plan to ensure the health and growth of the recently restored two-acre prairie habitat at Girl Scouts of the Mississippi Valley's Camp Conestoga. Girls will work with the U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service Rock Island Field Office (FWS) to develop a prairie/environmental education curriculum that will be delivered to nearly 1,000 girls, ages 5–17, and adults attending resident camp in summer 2006, and will be available to troops or groups participating in year-round camping. Through hands-on environmental education activities and service projects, girls will become leaders and stewards of conservation and natural resource issues. They will also network with agency staff to explore careers in science, environmental science, and the outdoors, and learn the importance of safeguarding native habitats.

Girl Scouts of the North Country

The "Discover the Dragonflies" program will utilize the North Country council's access to some of the most diverse wildlife in the Adirondacks and its contacts among academic and wildlife specialists at the Adirondack All Taxa Biological Inventory (AATBI). One hundred fifty girls, their parents, and members of the council will work alongside dedicated professionals to examine and document the order Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies). Girl Scouts will learn how to use dichotomous keys to identify dragonflies and damselflies in the field, and will submit their identifications and findings to a statewide database. The experience will give the girls exposure to scientists who are actively engaged in research and service in careers that involve protecting Adirondack Park's resources.

Girl Scouts of the Piedmont Area Council

"Linking Girls to the Land at Camp Mary Elizabeth" aims to increase protection of watershed environments, primarily Holston Creek, which runs through Camp Mary Elizabeth—60 wooded urban acres serving as the council's largest and primary outdoor program facility. Partnering with several local organizations—including the Spartanburg Soil and Water Conservation District (a division of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service), the Business and Professional Women's Club of Spartanburg, and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control—the girls will do field studies and water testing to monitor the water quality of the creeks and habitats along this watershed. Camp Mary Elizabeth offers a great outdoor lab environment where girls can see firsthand the effects of pollution and the benefits of preserving and protecting natural resources. Sharing this project with the community is a critical element, and the results of the girls' water-quality tests will be publicly posted for both the benefit of local residents and visitors.

Girl Scouts of Sakakawea Council

In the "Following in the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark" program, Girl Scouts of Sakakawea Council will trace the Missouri River, beginning where the two explorers met their guide Sakakawea. Girls will camp, learn about the life of the river, and expand on their knowledge by "river mucking," to help them understand the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Girls will learn from interpretive experts about the lives of the Native Americans and their existence on the Missouri. The project concludes with an outreach program held for two six-week sessions on the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation, where girl members of the tribe will learn how their ancestors were connected to the river, and how they can maintain that connection. At each location, garbage pick-up will be part of the girls' community service project.

Girl Scouts of San Geronio Council

Outdoor Explorer, an intensive weekend program scheduled for September, will offer a diverse group of girls ages 8-17 outdoor skills and environmental stewardship knowledge. Girls must complete a series of activities to reach the Intermediate and Advanced levels of the council's Outdoor Living Skills patch program and work toward an outdoor skills/environmental stewardship badge being developed by girls and council staff as an extension of this program. Outdoor Explorer will be planned and run by a girl-led planning committee supported by volunteers, council staff, and natural resource agency collaborators.

Girl Scouts Susitna Council

Girl Scouts Susitna Council will work with the USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest and Glacier Ranger District to complete their "Linking Girls to the Chugach National Forest through Recreation, Fisheries and Ecology Field Projects." 100 girls, over a one-week period this summer, will earn their Linking Girls to the Land patch at the Chugach National Forest. There they will assist forest service technicians and scientists in a variety of land stewardship projects, including clearing brush along the Trail of Blue Ice and Byron Glacier Trail, pulling invasive plants at the Moose Flats Day Use Area, and planting native trees, shrubs and grasses at Granite Creek Recreation Area. The girls will be trained on how to use appropriate tools, and after completing their tasks, will learn how their project has helped to maintain a healthy ecosystem and provide stewardship for that portion of the Chugach National Forest.

Thousand Islands Girl Scout Council

"ECO-SQUAD: Plant Patrol," an environmental stewardship project, will recruit and train a total of 200 Girl Scouts, ages 7–17, and adult volunteers to identify, map and help eradicate non-native, invasive plants in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties in New York. Girls will attend age-appropriate workshops, and learn about careers in environmental conservation from students at the State University of New York's Ranger School at Wanakena. Project work may be shown subsequently to local landowners and township/municipality officials at public forums.

Girl Scouts of Trailways Council

As part of the program "Field of Dreams," a collaboration with Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Park, in Wilmington, Ill., girls will visit this ecological wonder to participate in plant propagation, removal of invasive species, avian ecology, aquatic plant and animal monitoring, and landscape genealogy. The park employs many women in nontraditional occupations, so the project will also be an opportunity for career exploration.

Girl Scouts of Tribal Trails Council

The "Rock and Wildlife at Wildwood" program will help expand an interpretive nature trail, including the clearing and development of three new spurs. Girls will collaborate with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Tippecanoe County Park and Recreation Board to remove invasive plant species and replace them with native plants, identify local woodland wildlife habitats, and explore geology concepts. Girl Scouts will also post signage and create environmental patch program boxes to improve the trail.

Girl Scouts of Western Massachusetts

Girl Scouts of Western Massachusetts will partner with USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, Children's Museum at Holyoke/Heritage State Park to conduct the "Our Watershed- Our Life!" program. As part of this a border-to-border Connecticut River project, girls will participate in the Source to Sea Cleanup, conduct water monitoring in conjunction with World Water Monitoring Day, meet female naturalists, and learn about the importance of the watershed and how to protect it.