

THE CITY OF HELENA

2020 YOUTH PARTICIPATION PROGRAM PLAN

PREPARED BY: PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST



**PRICKLY PEAR
LAND TRUST**
CONNECTING LAND AND PEOPLE



**City of
Helena**

OVERVIEW

The following plan outlines the steps Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT) will take to fulfill commitments outlined in the 2020 open lands system contract signed between the City of Helena and PPLT.

“Contractor (PPLT) shall develop a youth participation program for the South Hills trails system and conduct outreach efforts with schools occurring in the greater Helena, MT area. Additionally, Contractor (PPLT) shall facilitate 3 youth focused events related to the South Hills trail system.”

The information herein describes the structure and timeline of PPLT’s youth participation program for 2020.



PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Prickly Pear Land Trust's South Hills Youth Participation Program aims to educate area youth on the local trails system in hopes of increasing the next generation's connection to conservation in their community, passion for stewardship, and understanding of our cities' rich history. PPLT will work with a cohort of 25 committed professional volunteers to lead students on educational trips to the South Hills. During these trips we hope to ignite a sense of exploration and inspire the next generation of conservationists in the greater Helena community.

PPLT's education coordinator will train professional volunteers to lead highschool students on field trips to the South Hills trails system, coordinate class field trips with area high school teachers, and organize the transportation and other logistical needs of the students. Using material presented in Appendix 1-3, PPLT's education coordinator will assess the efficacy of the program and continually implement improvements based on teacher and student feedback.

PROGRAM GOALS

The main goal of the youth participation program is to engage the next generation of conservationists in the Helena community, by connecting local students with conservation professionals and empowering them to explore the local South Trails system with increased knowledge and perspective during their free time. There are 2,140 acres of public land within the city of Helena and nearly 1,000,000 acres of contiguous national forest land just outside the city. Access to public lands is not logistically difficult in the Helena community, but exposure and education is another story. Many of the kids who we plan to engage with our education program are either "at-risk" students who attend the local alternative high school or native youth, both communities are underrepresented in conservation professions and recreation activities. The youth participation program is so important because of the potential for these kids, once empowered in a controlled setting, to confidently and independently explore the wilderness a stone's throw away.

2020 GOALS

05 SOUTH HILLS
TRIPS

80 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
HOURS

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

PPLT has developed a set of 5 professional lesson plans to be used in educational excursions to the South Hills Trails system. The lessons are specifically designed to increase student knowledge on the history of the South Hills Trails System, actions they can take to be better stewards of the trails system, conservation efforts undertaken by PPLT and the city of Helena, and their rights as citizens of Helena to safely and legally utilize the trails system.

The developed lesson plans are outlined here (click on the lesson title to see the lesson):

Conservation Easement Lesson Plan

Students are taken on a hike through the South Hills where they are taught about the conservation history of Mt. Ascension and the different conservation tools used to preserve open space in the community. Once back in the classroom students pretend they are land trusts and prioritize a set of selected parcels for conservation based on established conservation objectives.

Invasive Species Lesson Plan

Students are taken on a hike through the South Hills where they are taught about the different native and invasive plant species in the Helena area. In an open field, students then play a game where they model the spread of invasive species in an ecosystem and learn how to limit their spread.

Habitat Loss Lesson Plan

Students are taken on a hike through the South Hills where they are taught about the importance of continuous habitat for animal migration. In an open field, students then play a game where they model the impact of human development on grizzly bear habitat.

Property Rights Lesson Plan

Students start in the classroom where they play a game to learn about the tragedy of the commons and importance of property rights. Students are then taken on a hike through the South Hills with a set of trail maps. During the hike students are tasked with identifying different land owners and learn about the restrictions and rights they have to enjoy different public and private lands.

Lessons to be Developed

South Hills History Lesson Plan

PPLT is currently working to develop a lesson aimed at teaching students about the history of trails, commerce, and conservation in the South Hills.

Trail Etiquette Lesson Plan

PPLT is currently working to develop a lesson aimed at teaching students about safe and courteous recreation on the South Hills trails system.

PARTNERS

The section below outlines the partnership agreements PPLT has established to provide outdoor youth education on the South Trails in the coming year. PPLT plans on taking children, in partnership with the following institutions, on 5 outdoor excursions in 2020.

HELENA INDIAN ALLIANCE

Helena Indian Alliance exists to advocate for and to responsibly serve the mental, physical, spiritual, and social welfare of the Native American population in the Helena community. PPLT has partnered with the Helena Indian Alliance to provide outdoor education to native youth. Through a partnership with Helena Indiana Alliance, Prickly Pear Land Trust plans on providing education and outdoor adventures to the after-school and summer program children involved with HIA. This is an exciting opportunity to increase an underrepresented group's engagement with the South Hills trails system.

Age Range: 10-18

PROJECT FOR ALTERNATIVE LEARNING

PPLT has a working partnership with Project for Alternative Learning (PAL), a high school that serves "at-risk" youth in the community. Through engagement on the South Hills System, PPLT hopes to spark a passion for conservation. The teachers and students at PAL thrive in a non-traditional setting, making on-hands field lessons fun, engaging, and rewarding for everyone involved.

Age Range: 13-18

HELENA , CAPITAL & EAST HELENA HIGH

PPLT has relationships with many science teachers at Helena, Capital and East Helena High. The youth participation program plans to leverage these relationships to provide classes with educational field trips to the South Hills Trails system. As the inaugural class begins their educational journey through East Helena High School, Prickly Pear Land Trust hopes to be involved in getting these students engaged in conservation from the start and throughout their highschool experience.

Age Range: 13-18

ACCESS FOR SUCCESS

PPLT has an existing relationship with Access for Success. Access to Success is a high school diploma completion program. All coursework is provided in an adult learning environment. The program is housed on the Helena College campus. PPLT will continue to work with Access for Success to provide these students with enriching hands on environmental education.

Age Range: 13-18

YOUTH OUTREACH PLAN

The following section outlines the steps PPLT will take to establish connections between area youth and the South Hills Trail system.

WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

PPLT's education coordinator will continue connections with the schools and organizations listed under "partnerships" to conduct a bulk of its youth outreach activities under the South Hills Youth Participation Program. During a 2019 assessment of environmental education in the Helena area, PPLT found a gap in environmental education services being provided to Helena area high school students. The South Hills Youth Participation Program targets these underserved groups to close this gap. Furthermore, PPLT has prioritized partnerships with Helena Indian Alliance and Project for Alternative Learning to increase opportunity for native and "at-risk" youth to explore the beauty of nature in their own backyard.

DIGITAL OUTREACH

PPLT will offer a series of educational materials to encourage youth engagement on the South Hills System and share these materials through social media and via PPLT's website. These materials fall outside of the core South Hills Youth Participation Program and offer an opportunity for a wider audience to participate in PPLT activities on the South Hills Trails System.

COLORING BOOK PAGES

PPLT is continually developing a set of coloring book pages to encourage young children to get excited about the outdoors in their backyard. Future pages will highlight sections of the South Hills Trails System and encourage youth engagement. [The pages can be found on the PPLT website.](#)

BIRDS OF THE VALLEY INFORMATION

PPLT has developed and will continue to share a set of informative posts regarding birds individuals can find in the area. The "Birds of the Valley" posts are regularly featured on social media and have been made into a physical brochure to distribute at events.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information of the Youth Outreach Program reach out to PPLT's education coordinator at:

Education@pricklypearlt.org

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Student Feedback

Student Feedback

Directions: Circle the appropriate numbers and then respond to the open answer questions.
We are looking for good honest feedback!

5 – Strongly agree

4 – Somewhat agree

3 – Neutral, neither agree nor disagree

2 – Somewhat disagree

1 – Strongly disagree

I understood the purpose of today's program

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

I learned something cool/interesting that I did not know before

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

What was your least favorite part? What would you change to make it better?

What was your favorite part?

Would you tell a friend about today's program?

Appendix 2: Teacher Feedback

Teacher Feedback

Was this program easy to plan for and include in your class?

Logistically was there anything you would change?

Would you change any of the content?

Would you recommend this program to other teachers?

Any other comments, suggestions, or concerns?

Appendix 3: Volunteer Feedback

Volunteer Feedback

Did you have enough background information to comfortably lead this lesson?

What other activities or materials do you think would have made this program better?

What would you change?

What did you like?

Any other comments or suggestions?