



# PA WILDS CENTER

FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## *Educational Improvement Organization (EIO) Program Offerings 2022-23*

*Programs dependent on available funding.*



*PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship (PA Wilds Center) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to integrate conservation and economic development in a way that strengthens and inspires communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds. The official registration and financial information of the PA Wilds Center may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

*PAwilds.com -- PAwildscenter.org -- WildsCoPA.org.*

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## *PA WILDS OUTDOOR INDUSTRY EXPLORATION SERIES*

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The 'PA Wilds Outdoor Industry Exploration Series is geared toward high school students in Warren and McKean counties interested in working in the region's growing outdoor recreation industry, those interested in professional backpacking, climbing and kayak instruction, or those interested in learning more about local history, geography, health and safety, and ecosystems through a hands-on experience in these disciplines in the Pennsylvania Wilds.

This series consists of a mixture of classroom and hands-on training sessions that last eight hours each (8:30am to 4:30pm), over three days. All participants will be responsible for providing their own transportation to/from each session. For 2022-23, sessions are located between Allegheny Outfitters (AO) Outdoors Store and Goat Fort Climbing (20 Clark Street, Warren). There is one session at the YMCA pool. AO will provide van transportation to and from our location to the YMCA.

The outdoor recreation economy is an \$862 billion annual industry in the United States, accounting for 1.9% of GDP and more than 4.5 million jobs in fields that include everything from guide and outfitting services to developing and manufacturing outdoor products such as kayaks, backpacks, tents and cook stoves. Public lands are at the heart of the outdoor recreation economy. For the last 20 years, local partners from the public and private sectors have been working to grow this sector of the economy in the Pennsylvania Wilds. The region is uniquely positioned to do this as it is home to more than 2 million acres of public land – more than Yellowstone National Park – and 16,000 miles of waterways.

Outfitters and guides are linchpin businesses in this economic development effort. They help visitors safely access and experience the region's biggest draw – its public lands and waterways – often passing their foot traffic to other businesses such as restaurants, lodges and retail stores, which helps these businesses grow and rural communities thrive.

Just as in the other vibrant niche industries, not just anyone can start or buy and operate a successful outfitting business. Not only are these lifestyle businesses, but they are also highly technical, requiring a deep understanding of the activities and gear at hand, the landscape on which these things are operated and the customer service and risk assessments that go with each.

The PA Wilds Outdoor Industry Exploration Series helps support and grow the outfitter and guide sector in the Pennsylvania Wilds by building awareness for the industry among the next

generation, who may want to work at, start or one day purchase and operate such a business. Participating students will get a better understanding of the unique role such businesses play in their communities, the importance of safety and preparation on wilderness trips, and stewardship of the natural resources utilized.

PA Wilds Outdoor Industry Exploration Series classes are designed to build this awareness while teaching the students about a recreation activity that is popular in the region. This engages the students in developing new skills in an activity that is healthy, an opportunity to learn about local public lands/waterways and their historical significance, while also getting an opportunity to see the guide/outfitter “in action” at work.

Outdoor Industry Exploration Series classes combine coursework and fieldwork. Classes include interactive discussions about industry topics, including: 1. Challenges to operating an outfitter/guide business; 2. Age, skills, certifications and other requirements for getting hired at an outfitting/guide operation; 3. Pay and perks of working in the industry; 4. How the outfitter reaches customers; 5. Importance of Stewardship/real life ways company engages in this; 6. Ways company impresses the importance of safety on customers. 7. How a company passes foot traffic to other businesses.

Students enrolled will also be required to complete at least one online multimedia education module, which will conclude with a test-your-knowledge Q&A. After completing the module, students articulate to the rest of their class what they learned from the module, providing a great opportunity for further digestion of the materials and to do public speaking. Modules are designed to provide an example of real-world local applications of core curriculum subject areas and also add depth to the student’s understanding of how outfitters/guides relate to the Pennsylvania Wilds landscape. Modules to choose from include:

- Geography: The Pennsylvania Wilds’ role as one of the state’s 11 official tourism regions and one of its eight Conservation Landscapes; its rural nature (covers 25 percent of PA but only has 4 percent of its population); counties that comprise the region; and its unique topography.
- History, Environment & Ecology: An overview of the early environmental devastation and recovery of the Pennsylvania Wilds landscape, its wildlife, tremendous public land holdings (more than Yellowstone National Park) and present-day stewardship efforts.
- Economics: The Pennsylvania Wilds effort has been called “one of the greatest natural-resource based economic development programs in the United States” by a national expert. This module

looks at the economic opportunity of growing the region's nature and heritage tourism industry, how visitor spending has grown over time, the multiplying effect of local spending and how place-based tourism investments are unique in that they also improve quality of life for a community.

- Business & Entrepreneurship: This module looks at the emerging entrepreneurial ecosystem around the Pennsylvania Wilds effort, how businesses are using the regional brand to expand their products and services, resources available to entrepreneurs in PA and examples of how young people moved back to rural PA to start businesses.
- Arts & Humanities: This module looks at how arts and culture are incorporated into the Pennsylvania Wilds effort and how they help distinguish the region as a destination and build community pride.
- Civics & Government: This module looks at how citizens, nonprofits, businesses and local, state and federal government work together to advance the ground-breaking Pennsylvania Wilds effort.
- Science & Technology: As part of the effort to grow nature tourism in the Pennsylvania Wilds, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) built several new high-performance conservation destination facilities to orient and educate visitors. This module provides an overview of these facilities and their green building features.
- Computer & Information Technology: PA Wilds Center is a virtual organization that must connect a lot of different kinds of stakeholders across a large rural landscape. This module looks at key platforms/software the nonprofit uses to do this (Wild Apricot, WordPress, Quickbooks, Google Docs, Canva and Social Media), and the basic functionality of each.

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## ***PLANNING A RIVER EXPEDITION***

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This particular PA Wilds Outdoor Industry Exploration Series class will be led by an experienced area outfitter. Classes will toggle between a classroom setting and a water setting.

In the classroom setting students will learn through visual presentations and small group activities about navigable waterways in the area; how to identify the features of a river; to better "read the river" while paddling; an understanding of US Geological Survey creek water level monitoring devices and US Army Corps of Engineers outflow, and how those levels affect the paddling experience; an overview of water safety, to include safety gear, local caution areas unique to each waterway, what to do in an emergency situation, weather threats, common hazards while paddling (sweepers, deadheads and strainers), and the importance of filing a float plan.

In the water setting, students will get a breakdown of personal equipment (types of kayak, paddle and Personal Flotation Device) and experience effectively using a throw rope, kayak carries, loading and unloading, and land and water etiquette. They will also practice entry-level kayaking maneuvers, such as launching/landing from land and dock, controlled capsize/wet exit, and emptying a kayak. Other maneuvers will include spin, abeam, forward and stopping. Strokes will include forward, back, draw, sculling draw, sweep, reverse sweep, rudder and low brace.

Students will utilize topographic maps and local resources to complete a three-day float plan on the waterway of their choice, and will learn how to efficiently load a kayak for their proposed overnight expedition (class will not actually take the overnight expedition).

High Schools Eligible: Warren, Sheffield, Eisenhower, Youngsville, Kane

Duration: Sessions available in June, July or August

Locations: Warren

Cost to Students/School: Free (maximum 8 students per class)

Other: Students/parents provide transportation. Permission slips/liability waivers required from parents to have students participate.

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## ***PLANNING A BACKCOUNTRY WILDERNESS EXPEDITION***

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This particular PA Wilds Outdoor Industry Exploration Series class will be led by an area outfitter who is also a Leave No Trace Master Educator and National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) graduate.

Students will get an understanding of the hiking trail system in the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) to include connector trails, designated wilderness areas, multi-use trails and the North Country National Scenic Trail (emphasizing the 96-mile portion of the NCNST that is within the ANF).

Students will also learn necessary gear to safely set off on a backpacking trip – backpacks (types, sizes, fitting, weight), sleep systems (tents, hammocks, sleeping pads, sleeping bags), stoves (with and without fuel lines, cleaning, maintaining), water filtration (types and filter systems, where to pull water from), and safety gear (emergency locaters, satellite phones).

Instruction will also cover what to do in emergency situations (wildlife encounters, severe weather, basic survival skills in the event of equipment loss); how to calculate rations; camp kitchen etiquette (where to cook, proper storage when on trail and camp, hanging a bear bag, bear canister use); hands-on demonstrations on how to use various kinds of cook stoves; and how to properly pack equipment into a backpack.

Students will get hands-on field instruction on how to use a map and compass to navigate, how to identify and understand trail blazes, and how to carry a backpack. Students will utilize topographic maps and local resources to complete a three-day backpacking itinerary on the trail of their choice in the ANF, to include daily mileage, elevation change, water sources, all necessary gear and rations, and efficiently pack all the gear for their proposed overnight expedition in their pack. Rental gear will be provided free of charge to the students for these exercises and there will be an emphasis on Leave No Trace practices.

High Schools Eligible: Warren, Sheffield, Eisenhower, Youngsville, Kane

Duration: Sessions available in June, July or August

Location: Allegheny Outfitters, downtown Warren; area trails (Warren County)

Cost to Students/School: Free (maximum 8 students per class)

Other: Students/parents provide transportation. Permission slips/liability waivers required from parents to have students participate.

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## ***ROCK CLIMBING***

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This particular PA Wilds Outdoor Industry Exploration Series class will be led by an experienced area outfitter. Classes will toggle between a classroom setting and a gym setting.

In addition to this overview of the region's outdoor recreation industry as noted in the introduction, students enrolled in this class will also be introduced to the basic rock climbing skills. Topics will include proper utilization of an indoor climbing facility, climbing wall safety, knots, belay techniques, effective climbing movements, wellness and recreation activities, and a general history of rock climbing. After completing the course, students will be able to understand: a basic rock climbing terminology; the difference between climbing grading scales; the difference between climbing disciplines, styles and ascent types; characteristics of various climbing terrain (features/rock types); and the health and wellness benefits of climbing. Students will be able to identify and demonstrate: basic hold types; climbing techniques; the proper use of appropriate apparel, safety equipment, knots, communication; and techniques necessary for basic top rope climbing indoors.

No prior climbing experience is necessary.

**High Schools Eligible:** Warren, Sheffield, Eisenhower, Youngsville, Kane, Bradford

**Duration:** Sessions available in June, July or August

**Location:** The Goat Fort climbing gym in downtown Warren (maximum 8 students per class)

**Other:** Students/parents provide transportation. Visitor agreements and liability waivers required from parents to have students participate.