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For Immediate Release

Record Number of Fourth-Graders Got on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail During 2022-23 School Year

Part of Unique "Think Outside" educational program

Cross Plains, Wis. (July 18, 2023)—Thousands of fourth-grade students from around the state not only learned about Wisconsin's glacial history this school year, but got to hike among it. And, it's because of a unique educational program offered by the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

More than 10,000 students were registered in 2022-2023 for the Alliance's *Think Outside* program, which is funded by the National Park Foundation's Open Outdoors for Kids grant. This is a record number for the program, which began in the 2019-2020 school year.

"Students from 151 schools got out on the Ice Age Trail," says Amy Lord, Outreach and Education Manager for the Ice Age Trail Alliance. 108 of the schools participating in 2022-23 were classified as Title One. [Click here to see a map](#) of participating schools.

Think Outside includes a curriculum-based classroom presentation about Wisconsin's glacial history and the effects of the glaciers on the state's landscape, plus a one-day field experience on a segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. Students are led on a hike by an Ice Age Trail Alliance representative—typically a volunteer, who lends their expertise to keep the kids engaged while hiking.

"Students hiked during the fall and spring, which is expected," says Lord. "But, this year saw more than 1,100 students hiking during the winter, too, which was a first."

Schools can choose to hike anywhere along the 1,200-mile Ice Age National Scenic Trail, however a few segments are logistically easier to host students at, including the Lapham Peak segment in Waukesha County, Indian Lake segment in Dane County, and Chippewa Moraine segment in Chippewa County. "Accessible bathrooms, a shelter, and interesting terrain become pretty important when hiking with 9- and 10-year-olds," says Lord.

"We know for some kids, this is the first time they've ever hiked. So, we try to make it a positive experience for them," she says. "It's neat to see how excited they get spotting the yellow blazes (which mark the Ice Age Trail) let alone seeing something like a fawn or badger."

"Think Outside's goal is to educate, inspire an interest in the environment, and leave the students with positive memories of the Ice Age Trail," says Luke Kloberdanz, Executive Director and CEO of the Ice Age Trail Alliance. "It's gratifying to see this program continue to grow each year. It's common that once one class or school in a district participates, the rest will follow. This year, the number of participating schools from the Milwaukee Public School District more than doubled over last year!"

National Park Foundation Funding Covers Transportation Costs

A portion of the funding from the National Park Foundation's Open Outdoors for Kids grant covers 100% of the cost of bussing to get kids to the Trail.

"Being able to cover the cost of transportation is so important," says Lord. "Especially considering many schools and districts don't have money in their budget for field trips. Offering a truly cost-free program enables any and all schools to participate."

National Park Service Provides Every Kid Outdoors Passes

Once a teacher submits their short, post-trip report, the Ice Age Trail Alliance issues Every Kid Outdoors passes to students. This pass grants students and their families a year of free access to National Parks, lands, and waters. In Wisconsin, this includes free access to Interstate State Park in St. Croix Falls, and Devil's Lake State Park in Baraboo (parks which are National Scientific Reserve Units of the National Park Service).

"The students' experience on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail often sparks an interest in exploring the outdoors with their families," says Lord. "By providing the Every Kid Outdoors pass, our partners at the National Park Service encourage them to continue to visit public lands and connect with nature."

To see participating schools, and quotes from students and teachers who hiked, visit <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/06936ad8a5294d3aacd4bbc2ab90ba22>.

Registration for the program is ongoing. And, 750 students from multiple school districts are already registered for the program in the 2023-24 school year.

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About the Ice Age National Scenic Trail:

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is a 1,200-mile footpath contained entirely within Wisconsin. It traverses the state from St. Croix Falls in the west, to Sturgeon Bay in the east, going as far south as Janesville. One of 11 National Scenic Trails, the Ice Age Trail highlights the landscapes that were carved out by ancient glaciers, which happen to be some of the most beautiful areas in the state. Approximately 60% of Wisconsin residents live within 20 miles of the Ice Age Trail.

About the Ice Age Trail Alliance:

The Ice Age Trail Alliance is the non-profit volunteer and member-based organization established in 1958, which conserves, creates, maintains, and promotes the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. For more information about our work, visit IceAgeTrail.org.

About the National Park Service:

More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 424 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at <https://www.nps.gov/iatr/index.htm>.

About the National Park Foundation:

The National Park Foundation works to protect wildlife and park lands, preserve history and culture, educate, and engage youth, and connect people everywhere to the wonder of parks. We do it in collaboration with the National Park Service, the park partner community, and with the

generous support of donors, without whom our work would not be possible. Learn more at www.nationalparks.org.

Since 2011, NPF has engaged more than one million students in educational programs connecting them with national parks across the country. NPF's goal is to connect another one million students to parks by 2024.

The NPF Open OutDoors for Kids is made possible thanks to funding from [Youth Engagement and Education](#) premier partner Union Pacific Railroad, partners Apple, Columbia Sportswear, Humana, Maverik, Parks Project, Sierra, and additional generous donors.