

## Linking Girls To the Land

(Narrator) The Girl Scouts have always been associated with the outdoors. In fact, For much of the organization's history, Girl Scouting was synonymous with canoeing, Camping and cookouts. But there's a new twist to the Girl Scouts' time-honored involvement with the outdoors. Today, Girl Scouts have an opportunity to develop a deeper and more Hands-on connection with the outdoors and environment than ever before. That's thanks to a special Girl Scout initiative, Called... "Linking girls to the land."

Linking Girls to the Land is a national initiative that aims to partner federal natural resource agencies with Girl Scouts of all ages all over the nation, On both a national and local level. When Girl Scout councils partner with federal agencies, They gain the opportunity to work first-hand with experts in the field of natural resource conservation.

This will give girls the opportunities for environmental education, For outdoor recreation, For volunteer service and for experiencing career awareness.

(Narrator) Environmental education partnerships take a variety of forms. Girl scouts might partner with an agency that manages parks, Forests or other public lands and plan a series of educational activities on that agency's or on Girl Scout property.

Who can tell me one fact about Sage?"

(Narrator) A botanist might introduce Girl Scouts to the wonders of the plant world. A geologist could help them understand the forces that shaped a dramatic landscape.

Does it feel slimy or dry?

Dry.

Everybody thinks snakes are slimy.

(Narrator) A wildlife biologist might help counter common misperceptions about the creatures with whom we share the natural world. Lakes, Streams and rivers are also natural classrooms that are magnets for curious girls. And several agencies offer programs to help young people monitor water quality and learn about aquatic life. In some cases, It isn't even necessary for the girls to visit a stream. Agency professionals can bring stream inhabitants to the girls at their own site or to an environmental fair.

We bring actual macro invertebrates, Bugs, Critters out to meet

With some of the girls. And some of them have taken a real strong interest in them. And i see that they are interested in science and monitoring, And their faces just kind of light up and it's been a lot of fun.

(Narrator) Life in the ocean is the focus of another environmental education project organized under the Linking Girls to the Land umbrella.

The Linking Girls to the Land initiative has partnered with noaa, The national oceanic and atmospheric administration, In order to give six girls who were nationally selected the opportunity to spend five days with the florida keys national marine sanctuary in key largo, Florida. This included coral reef exploration as well as coral reef restoration. It included understanding and learning how to identify tropical fish species as well as a visit down to the aquarius the world's only underwater laboratory.

What I enjoy the most about Linking Girls to the Land partnership is the fun that the girls have with conservation issues.

(Narrator) For example, An ecology hike in Grand Teton National Park left an indelible impression.

We hiked up to Coyote Rock. And walking through the forest there, It was just an aspen grove, With beautiful flowers. And at the top of Coyote Rock, It was a 360 degree view. Everywhere you looked, It was beautiful!

(Narrator) And many girls find that observing birds and animals in their natural environments is an unforgettable experience.

We looked at many animals that I've never seen before in the wild, Except on TV. But that doesn't count.

(Narrator) These experiences are enriched by the chance to interact with people who are experts in the outdoors.

You can just ask them... What you think is a really difficult question, And off the top of their head They answer you. It's just amazing all the knowledge that they know.

Not only that, They made it fun through games or activities. And they related it to me on my level.

(Narrator) In addition to environmental education, Girl Scout leaders work with natural resource agencies to offer outdoor recreation experiences. These might include anything from canoe trips and white-water rafting adventures, To hikes and horseback rides. One goal is to help girls become more comfortable in the outdoors.

I used to be like a person who didn't... Who like to be outdoors a lot, Because I didn't like bugs too much. They scare me, Especially things with stingers, And especially spiders. And I'm not as scared anymore.

(Narrator) At the same time, Outdoor activities teach important life skills.

(Anne Fegé) When girls have opportunities to do outdoor recreation, They learn the skills that it takes to be independent, To work as a team. There are a lot of...Of things you cannot learn any other way except just being in the outdoors.

(Narrator) Linking girls to the land also offers opportunities for volunteer service.

(Anne Fegé) They could help revegetate a stream. They could help keep an area clean, They may be able to do some simple painting, Any number of things that gets them involved in the land and the facilities and gives them pride in the work that they've done as a team.

(Narrator) Along with helping out the public land agency, These volunteer projects build pride. Girls actually get to see that they have made a difference. They've made a difference in habitat. They've made a difference in cleaning up. And they've made a difference in so many different ways.

(Narrator) Teenage girls are eligible to apply for a special volunteer opportunity at several national park service

Sites around the country-- the chance to serve as a Girl Scout Park Guide.

One of the participating parks is the Martin Luther King National Historic Site in Atlanta. After reviewing the life of the famous civil rights leader, and learning more about the park's mission, the girls assist park staff with various activities and programs.

There, the girls are afforded the opportunity to work at the visitor's center, To provide tours of martin luther king's home, And of his church, And also of the fire hall. The girls also work behind the information desk passing out maps. And as visitors come off the bus, They also pass out brochures on the park.

(Narrator) One of the many benefits of

Experiences like these is that they give girls a close-up look at natural resource career possibilities.

(Anne Fege) Girls have the opportunity to meet professionals, Get an idea of what they do for a living, Get an idea about how much they care about their jobs. Even when they're as young as six and eight years old, They can look up to the resource professional in a uniform and say, "I'd like to be a park ranger. "I'd like to be a biologist." "I'd like to be a geologist. I'd like to be a firefighter someday."

(Narrator) And even if girls don't pursue a natural resource career, Linking girls to the land helps them recognize the value of the natural world to their lives.

Our media puts a lot of emphasis on girls looking pretty and wearing makeup and being mrs. Brittany spears. Well i think that it's important for girls to see that there's more to life than just make-up and pretty hair. There's trees and mountains and wildlife, And everything else.

(Narrator) And for some girls, The exposure to nature can mark the beginning of a love affair with the outdoors.

I've always liked the outdoors. But after coming here, I feel that i love the outdoors.

(Narrator) But the benefits of Linking Girls to the Land aren't limited just to Girl Scouts. Natural resource agencies also

Have much to gain from participating in the initiative.

We are able to provide Girl Scouts from all over the u.S., From rural areas, Cities and urban locations, The opportunities to work on our lands and learn more about who we are, What we do and why we do it.

They become ambassadors, If you will, For our mission and for the public land values that we wish to spread and share with the people.

(Narrator) Girl scout groups that are interested in learning more about Linking Girls to the Land should call the Girl Scouts' local council or national office. Or contact a nearby natural resource agency. Agencies can provide natural resource professionals to help lead

activities and facilitate visits to a natural area. They may also be able to provide booklets, Videos and internet resources on the areas or activities of interest. As an added incentive to establish partnerships, The Girl Scouts of the USA, through its Elliott Wildlife Values Project, provides grants to support

Linking girls to the land projects.

(Mariclare Krzyzewski) Through the Linking Girls to the Land initiative both federal natural resource

agencies and Girl Scouts of the USA are able to unite and help each other achieve our common mission of preserving natural resources and offering opportunities in outdoors and science to every girl everywhere.

Let's be part of it as professionals in natural resource agencies and as leaders and professionals in Girl Scouting.