

**ADVENTURE** from page 1A

Unfortunately, the future of the program is somewhat in doubt.

Drastic cuts to the block grant that funds the Outdoor Adventure Camp through the "Twilight Education Program" has forced the district to reduce the services offered to students after school. This has led to an elimination of meals and supervised activities for students that wish, or need, to stay at school after classes have ended for the day.

"It costs somewhere between \$10-15,000 dollars to hold the camp, depending on what activities and other things, like meals and transportation, we include," Wells said. "And the school district has some work to do."

Wells will meet with Siuslaw Superintendent Andy Grzeskowiak this summer to discuss possibilities for the program.

"After camp wraps up this year, the planning team is going to look at our finance reserves from our donors and figure our best approach to meet the needs of the students," Grzeskowiak said. "There is quite a bit of interest in the community to return to an outdoor education program that has the overnight component. So many people speak of that week from their middle school days as one of the greatest experiences of their lives."

On the positive side of the ledger, voters approved Measure 99 in 2016, which takes four percent of the state's lottery funds and dedicates them to creating an Outdoor Education Fund. This revenue stream has some restrictions as to its use and while voters overwhelmingly approved measure 99, the specifics of obtaining and utilizing this money is still being worked out.

According to Grzeskowiak,



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS



**Archery, kayaking and canoeing, hiking and learning how to set up a campsite and cook food on an open fire are all lessons taught by qualified volunteers at the Outdoor Adventure Camp. In addition, cooking, beadmaking and tie-dyeing options were available, as well as lessons about native cultures.**

there will more than likely be some changes to the program in the future.

"With the passage of Measure 99, outdoor school funds can be spent for fifth- or sixth-grade students for either a day or overnight educational experience," Grzeskowiak said. "We cannot continue with our current format building relationships between fifth- and seventh-graders to ease the transition to middle school and use the M99 funds to cover all of the program costs."

Historically, Siuslaw's outdoor school has been a sixth-grade activity.

"Since our current fifth-grade

ers have had Outdoor Adventures this year, the program at sixth-grade would not be eligible for M99 funds if we spent any M99 funds this year on camp, since the measure's funds will not cover any costs related to seventh-graders. So, we are caught in the middle of a legislative gap if we move the program back to the middle school," Grzeskowiak said.

He clarified that the program would not necessarily go away.

"The format may change as it moves back to the sixth-grade level. There has been too much work done by staff, students and people in the community

to not bring outdoor camp back for Siuslaw students," Grzeskowiak said. "We are just having to wrestle with the funding requirements of the state and the

possible transition back to the middle school level."

Wells also wants community members to know that they can donate to Siuslaw School Dis-

trict to specifically support the Outdoor Adventure Program.

"People interested in donating to the program can contact me, Mr. Dougherty or Ms. Barnard, the team leaders from the fifth- and seventh-grade," Wells said. "We do a lot of teamwork and they put in a lot of hours to make this happen. There is an Outdoor Adventures account set up at the middle school and we can help them with their donations."

The enthusiasm exhibited by Wells and the teachers and volunteers who participate in the camp is reflected by dozens of students swirling around the adults, laughing, talking and, yes, learning. It is a much different level of energy and excitement than at a typical school function.

Wells believes the reason is simple: people, and especially kids, love being outdoors.

He also wants to thank Florence residents for helping to make this year's camp a success.

"I just want to say thanks. Florence has been so good to us. This our fifth year of Outdoor Adventures and hopefully it won't be our last," Wells said. "And if one student, because of what we did here, has a better or more productive year, it makes all the work, money and time worth it."

**WATERSHED** from page 1A

The islands are the remnants of a more extensive forest that once covered the dunes, which has been lost through erosion over time. The remaining islands are hubs for vegetation and wildlife, including a robust population of fir and spruce trees.

But the tree islands are in danger of being overrun by invasive species like Scotch broom, which are growing on the edges of the islands.

"Sand Dunes Frontier will take the students on sand buggies out to the tree islands and work with campers and forest service folks to remove the invasive species," Terry said. "We'll also have someone doing a history of the dunes and dune ecology."

After learning about and caring for the tree islands, students will be taken to Sand Master Park where they'll be given lessons on sandboarding.

"It's a good experience for them to see recreational opportunities that they haven't had before. And along the way, teach them that if you're going to recreate out here, it's great to keep in good shape," Terry said. "It'll be a heck of a day and really cool."

One day will find the students at lakes south of Florence, such as Siltcoos and Cleawox, where students will discover birdwatching and how the region's delicate ecosystem supports habitats. That will then lead to the dunes, where students will learn about the Western Snowy Plover, a threatened species that is just recently beginning to reestablish its population on the coast.

Another day will find the students at Sutton Lake.

"We'll do invasive species monitoring," Terry said. "We'll walk the creek with some of the kids and actually map where the invasive species are, patches of Japanese knotweed or parrot feather, and we'll be going with a botanist from the National Forest Service."

That day will also include the representatives from the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw

Indians, which will do a canoe pull with the students.

Other activities include paddle boarding and horse rides at C&M Stables.

By doing these activities, Terry hopes that local youth will look beyond the usual summer activities.

"If you're at home in the summer, and you're playing video games, you could also be out there stand up paddle boarding. There's entertainment today outside in the natural environment. They'll be exposed to recreational opportunities in their own backyard that maybe they wouldn't have access to otherwise," he said.

Beyond recreation, Terry hopes that the experiences will give youth the opportunity to explore future employment opportunities in the field of res-

toration.

"The students can see that this is a viable future," he said. "They can say, 'If I enjoy what I'm doing out here, this could be a viable job for me.' There are a lot of jobs in restoration and other fields right here in the Siuslaw region. And it's great for the natural resource specialists to see what rural youth are actually interested in. It's good to introduce those two groups."

The camp, which is being funded by The Ford Family, Western Lane Community and Mapleton Community foundations, will run from Monday, June 25, to Friday, June 29.

The cost of the camp is \$75, but scholarships are available.

For more information, visit [www.siuslaw.org/camps](http://www.siuslaw.org/camps), or call 541-268-3044.

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