

Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK)



History and Timeline:

Youth in Natural Resources (YNR) and Denver Youth Naturally (DYN)

History of Environmental Learning for Kids

ELK was founded in 1996, and incorporated in August 1997. ELK was founded by two wildlife biologists whose goal was to educate youth about natural resources, environmental education, and science related career paths to broaden their educational opportunities. For the past 13 years, ELK has provided year-round educational programs to children and families from low-income, diverse communities.

Timeline

- June 1991** Youth in Natural Resources (YNR) and Denver Youth Naturally (DYN) are created by Ken Salazar, during his tenure as Executive Director at the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. YNR provides college and high school students summer positions within the Department to learn about science and careers options in the natural resource field. These YNR jobs are three month summer seasonal positions. DYN is created as a recruitment program for middle school students to introduce them science based educational opportunities and give them chance explore careers in natural resources.
- May 1993** Scott Gilmore works for YNR as a crew leader at Chatfield State Park in a wetlands mitigation program.
- May 1994** Scott Gilmore begins working for the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) Angler Education Program teaching inner-city youth skills to become successful anglers.
- August 1994** Stacie Dardanes begins working at the Colorado Department of Natural Resources managing the YNR and DYN Programs. DYN begins the expansion from a summer only program to a year round program.
- September 1996** Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) is formed in partnership with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources by Stacie Dardanes Gilmore and Scott Gilmore, to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of YNR and DYN.
- ELK secures donated office space within the Colorado Division of Wildlife Denver Headquarters.
- January 1997** The DYN and YNR program begins operating *year-round* educational field activities for Denver youth. ELK cultivates partnerships with community organizations
- August 1997** ELK volunteers begin process to incorporate as a nonprofit organization.
- August 1998** ELK receives incorporation notification from the IRS. ELK will be responsible for the administration, fundraising, and development of the DYN program. ELK begins to solicit donations from a broad range of donors.
- ELK receives first U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant.
- ELK begins employing high school and college students through YNR. Students work for the CO Division of Wildlife's Angler Education Program.
- 2002** **The Colorado Department of Natural Resources ends its support of the YNR Program.**

For the fifth year, ELK students are employed with the CO Division of Wildlife Angler Education program. Student salaries are paid for by Denver's Safe City Office and other funding sources.

2005

ELK trademarks the names: Youth in Natural Resources (YNR), Denver Youth Naturally (DYN), and Learning Environmental Activities for Families (LEAF) with the Colorado Secretary of State.

2007

ELK receives U.S. Forest Service grant of \$50,000, largest in the nation, for "More Kids in the Woods" proposal supporting work of DYN.

ELK is Finalist in El Pomar's Award for Excellence; Founders of ELK awarded a Simply Taking Action Recognition (STAR) Award by Mayor Hickenlooper and the Child & Youth Friendly City Coalition. ELK awarded the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education Nonprofit Award.

2008

Twelfth Anniversary of ELK – More than 78,000 youth and families served through ELK programs to date!

Five ELK students and staff travel to Washington D.C. to participate in annual National Park Service diversity recruitment conference.

To date ELK has raised over \$70,000 in educational scholarships for our high school grads to pursue college.

Over the last five years six ELK youth have been awarded the Hutton Jr. Fisheries Biology Scholarship which is a summer internship with an Aquatic Biologist to study fisheries biology. These students have received a total of \$27,000 in scholarship money for college tuition.

ELK students continue to be employed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife Angler Education Program through the Denver's Safe City Office and other funding sources. Since the inception of the summer employment program, ELK has helped 58 high school students and 13 college students find employment in the science and natural resources fields.

2009

Thirteenth Anniversary of ELK – We served more than 20,000 youth and families in 2009. More than 95,700 youth and many families served through ELK programs to date!

ELK continues to successfully diversify funding to include foundation, corporate, individual, and government support as well as fees for service.

5th Cast a Line Family Fishing Event and 4th annual "Put a Little Wildlife in a Child's Life Golf Tournament" held at the Green Valley Ranch Golf Course, including silent auction.

3rd Daniels Scholar – Richard Nuygen, freshman at School of Mines majoring in Mechanical Engineering and was also a National Hutton Jr. Fisheries Biology scholar.

ELK students are employed with the CO Division of Wildlife through the Mile High Youth Corps and Adams County Workforce Development for the 12th year; since inception of summer employment program ELK has had 65 high school students and 13 college students employed.

Currently, over 45 ELK alumni are in college, have graduated, or have joined the military. Over 72% who are in college or have graduated are in a science related field. To date ELK has raised over \$70,800 in educational scholarships and through the Daniels Scholars another \$326,048 in college scholarships for our high school grads to pursue college.