

Colorado Latinos, Youth Call on Obama to Support Great Outdoors

DENVER, Sept. 8, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Denver-based nonprofit [Environmental Learning for Kids](#) and Washington, D.C.-based [Hispanic Access Foundation](#) have launched an education and outreach campaign that has introduced Denver-area Latino youth to the great outdoors, and empowered them to call on President Obama to protect it.

"Latino youth are the next generation of environmental stewards," said Kim Weiss, education coordinator for Environmental Learning for Kids. "These young people have the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence to reach out to the President and ensure he helps to protect our parks, wildlife, and natural resources for future generations."

Environmental Learning for Kids is a nonprofit with expertise in introducing youth to Colorado's natural resources, science, and leadership development opportunities. The nonprofit Hispanic Access Foundation works to promote responsible citizenship, educational attainment, and active engagement in the health, environment, and financial well-being of Latino families.

On the heels of the launch of President Obama's new [America's Great Outdoors](#) initiative, which aims to reconnect people to their public lands, the organizations jointly hosted a July event at the [Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge](#) near Denver. More than 250 Latinos from the Denver area enjoyed a free day of trout fishing, and lessons in aquatic ecology and conservation.

In August, a group of 50 Latino youth and their families gathered at [Rocky Mountain National Park](#) in Estes Park, Colorado, to discuss ways youth families might be further engaged in enjoying and advocating for parks, wildlife habitat, and the outdoors. The discussion was moderated by the organizations and hosted by members of the U.S. Department of the Interior, which oversees the nation's wildlife refuges and national parks.

An issue top of mind for the group are the critical budget cuts proposed by Congress this fall to the 45-year-old [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#); an important program highlighted in the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative. The Fund relies on fees paid by companies drilling offshore instead of taxpayer monies to protect Rocky Mountain and other parks, wildlife refuges, clean water, and open spaces across the country. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar has called the Land and Water Conservation Fund "a keystone of modern day conservation in America."

Recent polling indicates that [9 in 10 Americans](#) want Congress to stop siphoning funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Ninety-five percent of Latinos want it fully funded—a statistic that the Hispanic Access Foundation shared with policy-makers at the [White House Hispanic Policy Conference](#) in June.

Latino families and youth from across Colorado have written letters in Spanish and English to President Obama, requesting that he oppose devastating cuts to the Land and Water Conservation Fund this fall. Representatives of Environmental Learning for Kids and the Hispanic Access Foundation plan to deliver the letters in-person to the White House and Secretary Salazar later this month.

"We realize President Obama and the Administration are committed to learning from and working with young people to build a strong future for Americans to come," said Maite Arce, executive director of the Hispanic Access Foundation. "Protecting our land and water is critical to a healthy future."

About Hispanic Access Foundation

Hispanic Access Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that works with and through faith and community strategic partners to provide **greater access to vital information and community resources** to the U.S. Hispanic population to improve their health and quality of life. For more information visit <http://hispanicaccess.org>.

About Environmental Learning for Kids:

Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK), is a Denver-based, 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to cultivate a

passion in science, leadership, and service in a diverse community of learners. ELK was established in 1996 by two wildlife biologists who saw a growing need to introduce and educate Colorado's urban youth about science, leadership, and careers. For more information visit <http://elkkids.org>.

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