

Summary of Grants for 2015

Presented at the 2017 National Convening



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY programs contribute to the development of awareness, knowledge, and attitudes about nature and environmental issues that lead to positive personal and collective decisions and actions.

AUDIENCE

- Early Childhood (ages 0–5)
- School Age (grades K–12)
- University
- Adult

IMPACT AREAS



Conservation

Conservation outcomes include those that increase environmental knowledge, improve environmental awareness and attitudes, and inspire positive environmental actions that lead to improvements in environmental quality.



Education

Education outcomes encompass improved academic performance, broadly defined. Specific outcomes can include greater STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) literacy, higher standardized test scores, and increased school engagement for students. Education outcomes may be achieved through programs that support teacher professional development and improve school grounds and other outdoor learning spaces.



Health & Wellness

Health outcomes are improvements in physical, mental, emotional, and social health and wellness. Specific outcomes can include improved nutrition and physical fitness, reduced stress and anxiety, recovery from physical or psychological trauma, and greater awareness and understanding of personal and environmental health.



Social Justice

Social justice outcomes expand access and opportunity for underserved communities and underrepresented populations. These outcomes can include more equitable access to outdoor experiences, greater cultural relevancy of outdoor programs, improved parks and public spaces, and leadership development opportunities for individuals from underrepresented populations.



Youth Development

Youth development outcomes support young people as they grow into responsible, engaged community members who care for the environment and future generations. These outcomes may be achieved through professional or character development, outdoor experiences, and/or community service.

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2014 as a working group of the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), the Blue Sky Funders Forum (Blue Sky) is a collaborative of funders that inspires, deepens, and expands philanthropy to advance opportunities that connect people and nature and promote environmental literacy. A historically underfunded field in environmental philanthropy, the intersection of people and nature is a critical area where grantmakers have the opportunity to educate and empower future generations to be thoughtful, informed stewards of our planet.

In 2016, Blue Sky undertook an exciting project with EGA to better understand and track grantmaking for environmental literacy. Blue Sky worked with EGA's *Tracking the Field* program to collect and tag Blue Sky and EGA members' environmental literacy grants according to a number of categories, including grantmaking strategy, geographic region, and issue area.

In addition to EGA's existing *Tracking the Field* taxonomy, Blue Sky worked with members and advisors to develop an additional taxonomy specific to environmental literacy. Each environmental literacy grant is tagged with one or more of four target audiences and one of five impact areas. This report seeks to provide a more complete picture of funding for environmental literacy and also to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities in the landscape of funding that connects people and nature.

This report reflects Blue Sky's and EGA's findings about funders' 2015 environmental literacy giving. Blue Sky and EGA hope that the findings in this report will inform funders' individual grantmaking and allow Blue Sky members and partners to align their efforts to ensure that all communities have access to nature and its benefits.

BLUE SKY 2015 FUNDING SNAPSHOT

THE GRANT POOL

140

140 funders awarded environmental literacy grants to 1,272 grantees.

**\$72.5
MILLION**

\$72.5 million was given to environmental literacy in 2015 across 1,579 grants.

AUDIENCE



School-age children received the most funding of any single audience group (43%).

28% of funding targeted all four audience groups, reaching early childhood, school-age, and university audiences, as well as adults.



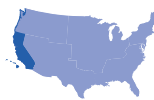
Early childhood programs received the least funding, making up only 1% of environmental literacy grantmaking, while university and adult programs accounted for 11% and 17%, respectively.

IMPACT AREA



Grants with primary impact areas of "Conservation" and "Education" made up the majority of environmental literacy funding, accounting for nearly three-quarters of total grantmaking.

GEOGRAPHIC REGION



The Pacific Coast received 31% of the total funding, followed by Federal Level, which received 22% of the total funding.

ISSUE AREA



"Terrestrial Ecosystems & Land Use" and "Freshwater & Inland Water Ecosystems" were the most common issue areas.

STRATEGY



"Education / Youth Organizing" was the most common strategy.

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

KEY FINDINGS

- Blue Sky and EGA members made 1,579 environmental literacy grants in the United States in 2015, worth a total of \$72.5 million, nearly triple the amount of EGA “Education / Youth Organizing” grants in 2011.
- Half of the more than 1,500 grants analyzed in this report were less than \$10,000; however, these grants made up only 5% of the total funding in grant dollars.
- A small number (16) of larger grants—more than \$500,000—accounted for 20% of the total environmental literacy funding.



Environmental literacy grants made by Blue Sky and EGA members amounted to \$72.5 million in 2015. 2015 is the first year that EGA has tracked environmental literacy beyond the Blue Sky membership; between 2014 and 2015, grantmaking by Blue Sky members stayed relatively consistent at about \$40 million. Though EGA has not historically tracked environmental literacy grantmaking, Figure 1 shows an increase in grantmaking tagged with the “Education / Youth Organizing” strategy (a category in EGA’s existing strategy taxonomy). “Education / Youth Organizing” giving has tripled

since 2011, from approximately \$30 million to \$90 million in 2015, showing a steady increase each year.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of 2015 environmental literacy grants by dollar amount. The majority of grants made to environmental literacy were less than \$50,000, and approximately half of the grants made were less than \$10,000. However, grants that were less than \$10,000 accounted for only 5% of the total funding. Nearly 40% of grant dollars were distributed in grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$500,000. There were two environmental literacy grants greater than \$1 million awarded in 2015.

FIGURE 1. Environmental Education / Youth Organizing Grantmaking, 2011-2015 *

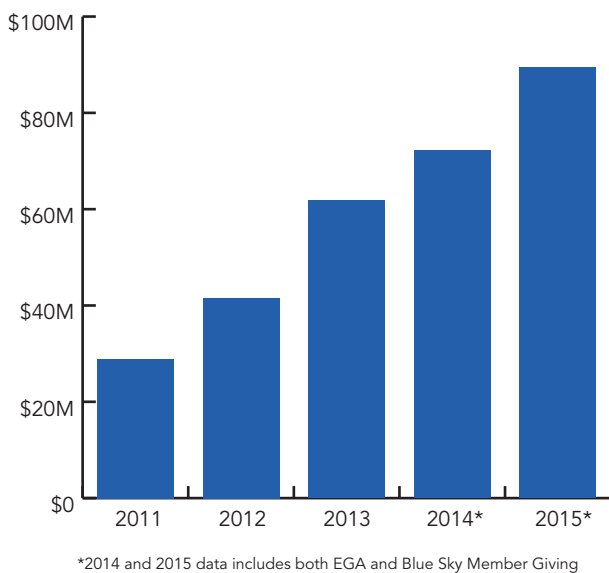
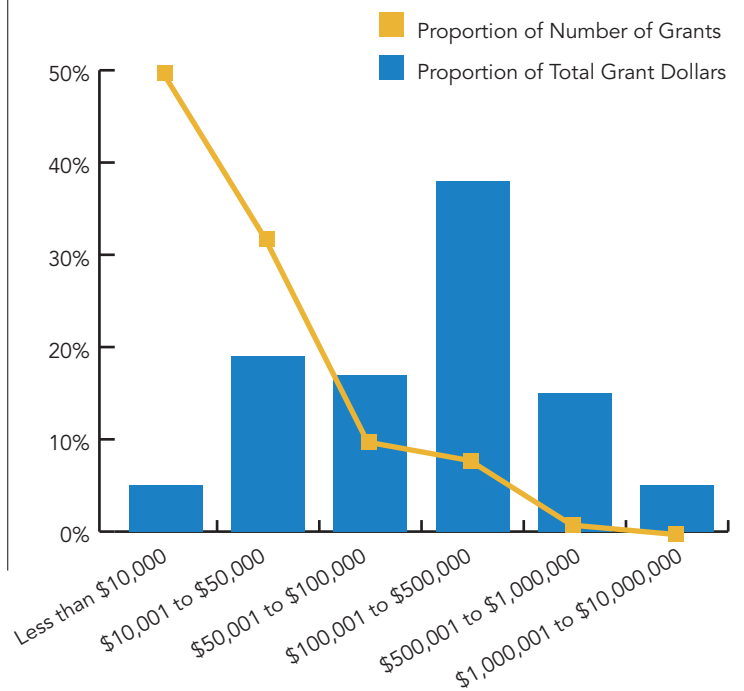


FIGURE 2. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Grant Size, 2015



SECTION 2: ISSUE AREAS

KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly a quarter of environmental literacy grantmaking, totaling more than \$25 million, identified “Sustainable Communities” as a primary or secondary issue area.
- More than 50% of environmental literacy grants were related to a traditional conservation issue area. These include: “Terrestrial Ecosystems & Land Use,” “Coastal & Marine Ecosystems,” “Biodiversity & Species Preservation,” and “Freshwater & Inland Water Ecosystems.”

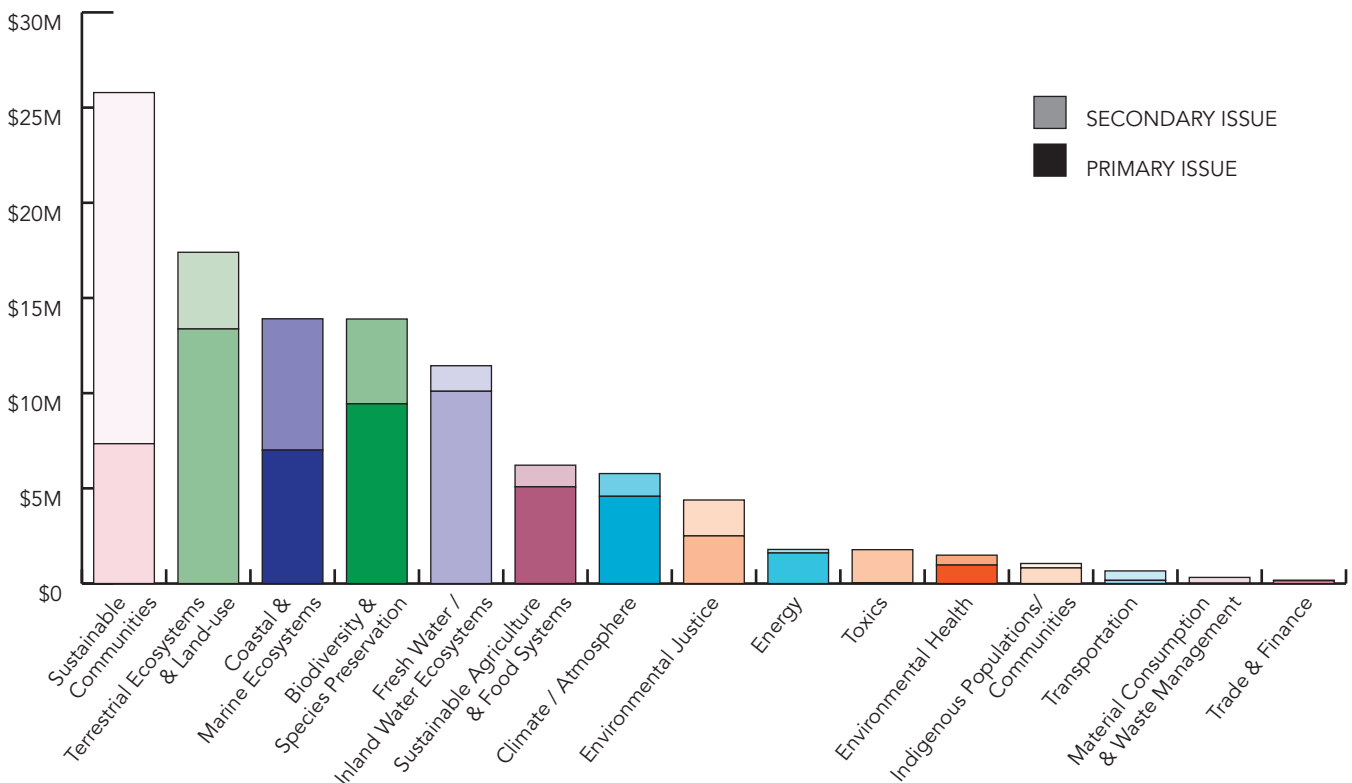
EGA has defined 15 issue areas that attempt to capture the range of environmental giving by environmental funders. To cover the cross-cutting nature of most grantmaking, researchers designate a primary and a secondary issue area for each grant, with the primary issue representing the most important or most specific issue identified in the grant and the secondary issue being another component of the grant or the more general background issue the grant seeks to address.

Blue Sky and EGA found that the most common primary issue areas in environmental literacy giving were “Terrestrial

Ecosystems & Land Use” and “Freshwater & Inland Water Ecosystems.” The least common primary issue areas were “Material Consumption & Waste Management” and “Toxics.” The most common secondary issues were “Sustainable Communities” and “Coastal & Marine Ecosystems.” The most common primary issue and secondary issue combination was “Terrestrial Ecosystems & Land Use” and “Sustainable Communities,” which accounted for a total of 12%, or \$9 million, of the total environmental literacy grantmaking and included grants for outdoor education, National Parks, and public lands. Another common issue combination was “Biodiversity & Species Preservation” and “Coastal & Marine Ecosystems.” These types of grants made up 11% of environmental literacy grantmaking, or \$8 million, and included support for museums and aquariums.

It should be noted that the largest share of environmental literacy grantmaking, at 13% of the total, went to multi-issue or general environmental literacy purposes. These types of grants included activities such as improving or promoting STEM education for school-age children, as well as university environmental programs. Most outdoor education grants are included here as well, unless the grant description or organizational mission mentioned a specific place or ecosystem.

FIGURE 3. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Primary and Secondary Issue, 2015



SECTION 3: AUDIENCE

Section 3 breaks down environmental literacy funding by audience and highlights organizations that reach each of the defined target audiences. The following examples showcase the range of programs supported by environmental literacy giving and exemplify programs that provide environmental learning opportunities to specific audiences.

1% EARLY CHILDHOOD (AGES 0–5)

Common types of grants targeting children up to five years old include grants to museums or science centers, as well as preschool environmental literacy programs. Examples of these include marine science programs and natural science programs hosted by museums, discovery centers, and nature centers.



TINY TREES is a nature preschool in Seattle, Washington that provides students with an affordable pre-kindergarten education and enriching experiences in nature. Through daily outdoor play and exploration in parks and natural spaces, Tiny Trees supports social and emotional development for children ages three to five and helps children cultivate a love for nature during these critical, formative years. In addition, Tiny Trees provides instruction in reading, math, and science, utilizing opportunities afforded by outdoor classrooms.

11% UNIVERSITY

Funding reaching university students and commonly includes grants for undergraduate level environmental study/research programs, marine science and freshwater science, leadership development and internship



NATURAL LEADERS is an initiative of the Network that supports emerging leaders in their communities with nature. Natural Leaders aims to advance health and wellness through nature, facilitate outdoor experiences in urban communities, address environmental and social justice, and promote conservation, and outdoor recreation. Through training, community action, and leadership development, the program has equipped more than 300 youth to advance equitable access to nature and

43% SCHOOL-AGE (GRADES K–12)

Funding reaching school-age students commonly includes grants to K–12 environmental science and STEM education programs. These programs include freshwater and marine science education, outdoor youth development programs, and school garden programs.



FOODCORPS is a national organization that reaches more than 100,000 students across the United States each year. FoodCorps places instructors in high-need schools, where they deliver hands-on lessons about gardening, cooking, and nutrition and partner with cafeteria staff to source and serve healthy, more sustainably grown school meals. A recent evaluation by Columbia University found that students in mature FoodCorps schools eat triple the fruits and vegetables compared to what their peers in low-implementation schools eat.

and young adults
duate- or graduate-
grams, especially
as well as conservation
programs.



the Children & Nature
working to connect
readers are empowered
nature connections,
communities, work for
pursue careers in science,
through mentorship,
ship development, this
young adults nationwide
and its benefits.

17% ADULTS

Funding reaching adults includes grants for adult education and advocacy programs that promote climate and energy awareness, sustainable agriculture, and land and freshwater conservation.



GRIST is a nonprofit environmental news organization that reaches millions of readers every month. Often wielding an irreverent and entertaining style, Grist advances environmental literacy, environmental justice, and climate solutions by making the issues accessible and connecting them to the daily lives of its broad readership. In on-site surveys, 65% of readers report taking action based on Grist content, from joining a community planning committee to sharing information with friends and family to joining a march for climate justice. Grist and its community of engaged readers are working toward “a planet that doesn’t burn and a future that doesn’t suck.”

28% ALL AUDIENCES

Funding reaching audiences of all ages includes grants to aquariums, museums, nature centers, and National Parks.



LINCOLN PARK ZOO is located in Chicago, Illinois, and offers families and visitors of all ages opportunities to learn from and connect with wildlife. The zoo provides a natural environment in the middle of a busy city for people to encounter animals from around the world, while inspiring people to be stewards of their own local environments.

SECTION 4: PRIMARY IMPACT AREAS

KEY FINDINGS:

- “Conservation” was the top funded impact area, making up 40% of grantmaking.
- Grants to the Northeast were more evenly distributed among the five impact areas than in any other region.
- Four of the five impact areas included keywords related to food, gardens, or agriculture.

Experiences in nature can lead to a host of outcomes, including academic achievement, increased conservation behaviors, and improved physical and mental health. Blue Sky’s leaders and advisors identified and defined five impact areas to encompass these outcomes and reflect the wide range and diversity of programs at the intersection of people and nature. While most grants address multiple impact areas, researchers selected the primary impact area for each environmental literacy grant.

In order to better understand the makeup of these five impact areas, Blue Sky and EGA identified the most frequently

occurring words or phrases in available grant descriptions. While not all grants included grant descriptions, and grant descriptions varied in length, these frequently occurring keywords illustrate and enhance our understanding of each impact area, pointing to particularly prevalent themes and specific programs. Grants tagged with “Education” as the impact area contained keywords including School Garden, STEM, Curriculum, and Teacher / Professional Development. Keywords such as School Garden and STEM reveal specific student-facing educational programs supported by these grants, while Curriculum and Teacher / Professional Development reflect strategies for strengthening and advancing environmental literacy through education. The most common keywords found within “Social Justice” grant descriptions shed light on communities that are reached by these grants. Native American, Low-income / Underserved, and Urban were among the most common keywords within “Social Justice” grant descriptions. Low-income populations were referenced in about 17% of “Social Justice” grants’ descriptions (24 out of a total of 142 grants), followed by references to underserved populations (15%) and indigenous populations (12%).

FIGURE 4. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Primary Impact Areas and Keywords, 2015

 \$28,868,395 CONSERVATION	 \$23,218,131 EDUCATION	 \$1,673,970 HEALTH & WELLNESS	 \$6,059,258 SOCIAL JUSTICE	 \$12,637,310 YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
Park / Public Lands	Garden / School Garden / Project Learning Garden	School	Native American	Leadership
Every Kid in a Park	STEM / Science / Greening STEM	Youth	Low-income / Underserved	Community
National Public Lands Day	Curriculum	Food	Urban	Food
Water Quality	Outdoor School / Camp	Garden	Food Justice / Environmental Justice	Camp
Climate Change	Geography Education	Farm	Urban Agriculture / Urban Farming	Summer
U.S. Forest Service	Teacher / Professional Development	Nutrition	Green Infrastructure	Continuing Education

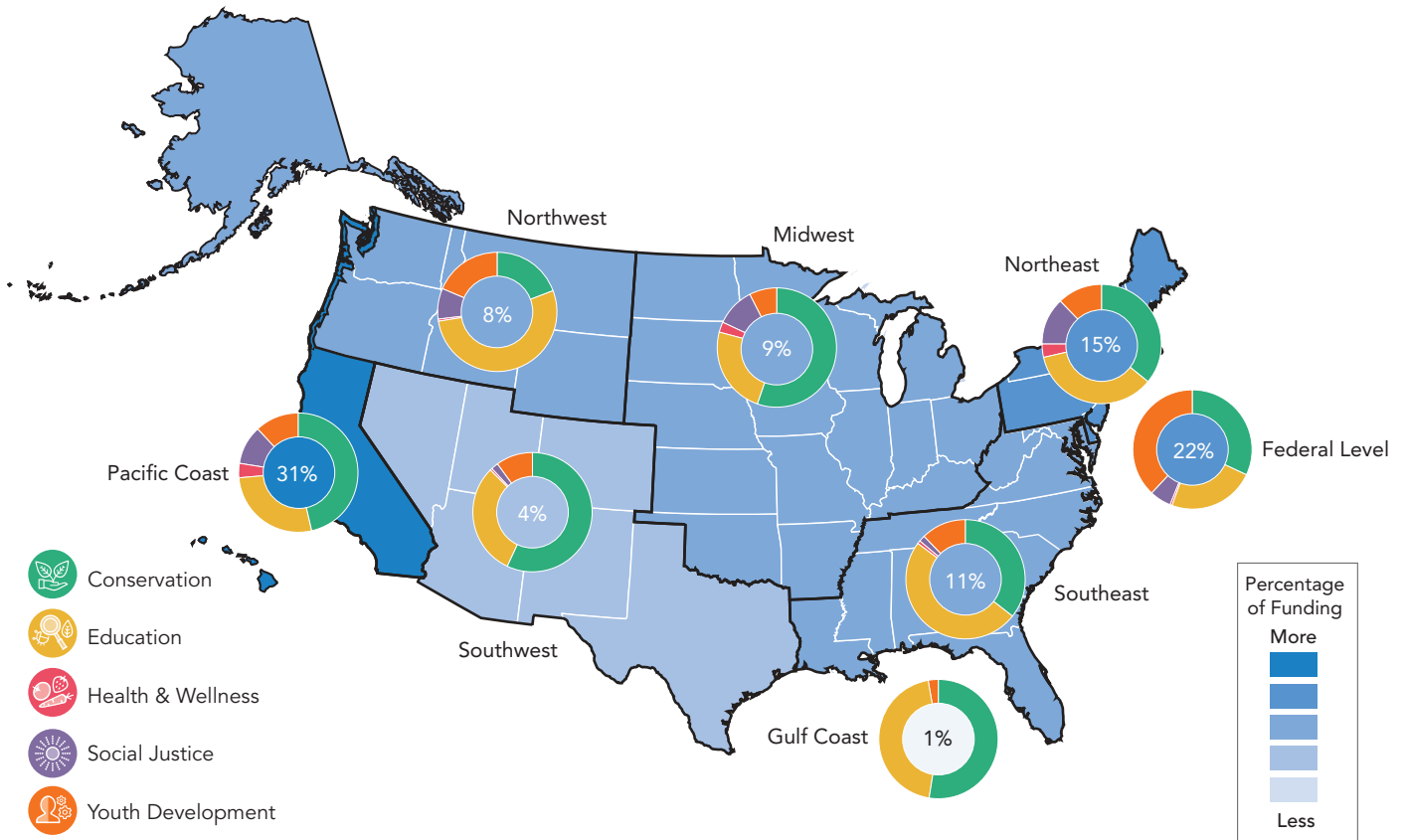
Similarities and overlap between impact areas' keywords indicate points of intersection between impact areas. For example, School and Youth appear as common keywords for "Health & Wellness" grants, suggesting that these grants may also contribute to "Education" and "Youth Development" outcomes. The frequency of food and agriculture related keywords points to the prominence of programs that connect people and nature through gardening or food in this field. Every impact area had a variation of Food, Garden, or Agriculture, except for "Conservation."

In terms of overall grantmaking, "Conservation" and "Education" represent the top two most-funded primary impact areas, with 40% and 32% of grantmaking going to each, respectively. "Social Justice" and "Health & Wellness" accounted for a smaller share of environmental literacy grantmaking overall, at 8% and 2%, respectively. Combining impact areas with audience shows that "Conservation" was the most common primary impact area for grants reaching adults, while "Education" and "Youth Development" were most common for school-age children.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of grantmaking by region, as well as grantmaking in each region by primary impact area. The Pacific Coast was the highest-funded region, with 31% of funding; the Gulf Coast was the least-funded region, with 1% of funding. The Federal Level and Northeast were the second and third highest-funded regions, respectively, at 22% and 15% of the total.

"Conservation" received the largest share of funding in the Northeast, Midwest, Gulf Coast, Southwest, and Pacific Coast regions. "Education" was the highest-funded primary impact area in the Northwest and Southeast regions. "Youth Development" received the largest share of funding at the Federal Level. The distribution of grants across the five impact areas was most uniform in the Northeast, where a greater proportion of funding went to "Social Justice" (13%) and "Health & Wellness" (4%) than in any other region. "Health & Wellness" was the least common primary impact area overall, receiving less than 1% of funding in the Gulf Coast, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast, and the Federal Level.

FIGURE 5. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Region and Primary Impact Area, 2015



SECTION 5: GOVERNMENT FUNDING

KEY FINDINGS

- NOAA awarded \$10.5 million in grants in 2015, more than any other funder. EPA ranked fifth among grantmakers, awarding \$3.3 million. Together, NOAA and EPA accounted for 19% of all environmental literacy giving in 2015.
- The Southeast received more funding from these agencies than did any other region (\$3.5 million, or 26% of NOAA and EPA funding), while receiving less than 11% of the total funding pool. The Southeast region had the highest ratio of public to private funding.

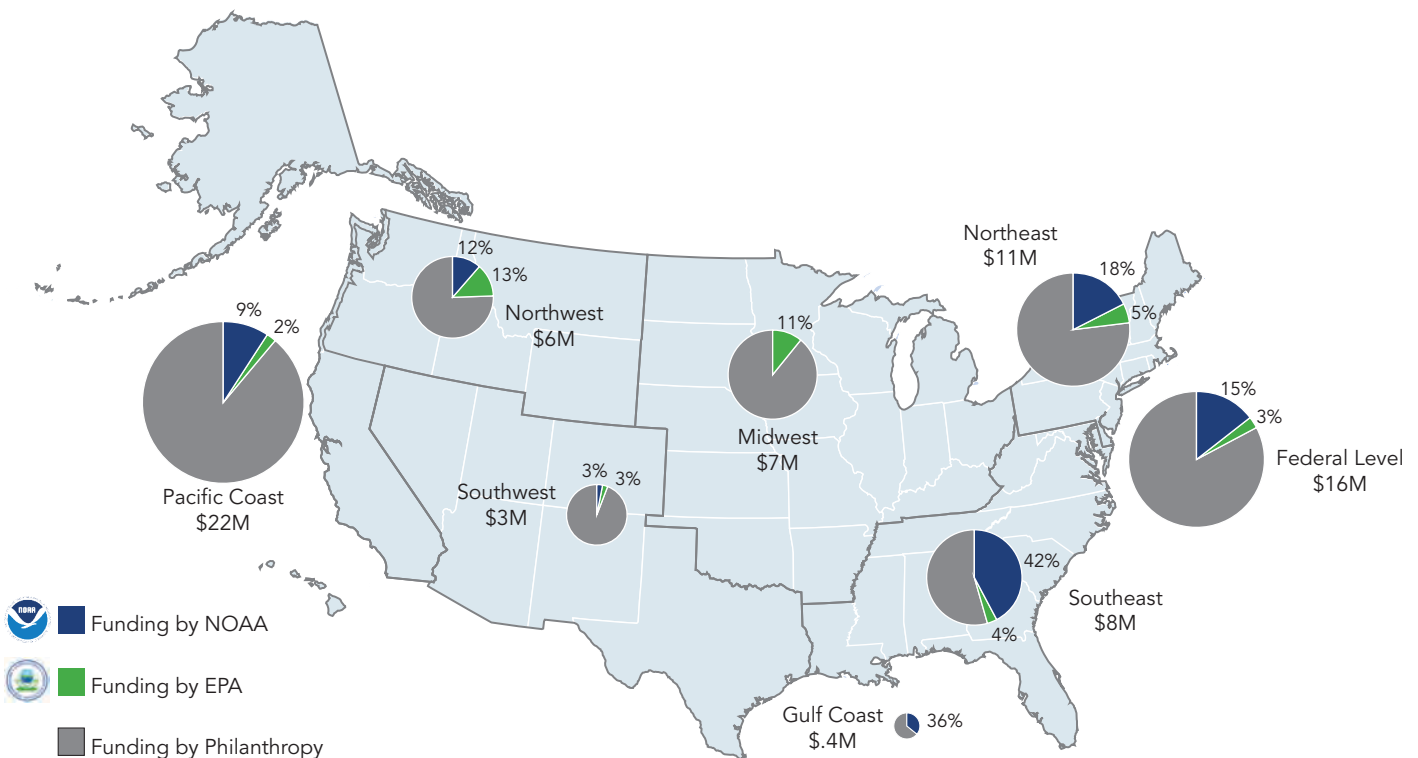
In addition to private funders, the federal government accounts for a large proportion of funding to support connecting people and nature. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)¹ make significant contributions to environmental literacy throughout the country through a number of grant programs. In order to account for these funding streams, Blue Sky partners with EPA and NOAA to track funding from their largest environmental literacy grantmaking programs, which include NOAA’s Bay Watershed Education and Training

(B-WET) awards, providing funds for experiential watershed education for K–12 students and educators, and EPA’s environmental literacy grants, awarded annually through the agency’s Environmental Education Grants Program.

In 2015, NOAA and EPA gave \$10.5 million and \$3.3 million, respectively, to environmental literacy, accounting for 19% of the total environmental literacy giving tracked by Blue Sky and EGA. In terms of grant dollars, NOAA was the largest funder, while EPA ranked fifth among the 140 funders included in the data.

Although NOAA and EPA operate as agencies of the federal government, much of their work is done at the regional or local levels. As with many environmental literacy funders, NOAA’s and EPA’s grants often support place-based programs. With only 13% of EPA funding and 22% of NOAA funding going to support work at the Federal Level, the remaining \$11 million in funding between the two agencies was distributed regionally. Figure 6 shows the distribution of NOAA and EPA funding by region, and it also shows the proportion of the total funding in each region awarded by these government funders. While combined funding from NOAA and EPA made up nearly a fifth of the total environmental literacy funding across the country, NOAA and EPA funding accounted for more than 20% of the funding in four regions: the Northeast (23%), the Northwest (25%), the Gulf Coast (36%), and the Southeast (46%).

FIGURE 6. Environmental Literacy Government Funding by Region, 2015



SECTION 6: METHODOLOGY

In partnership with the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), the data for this report was collected and coded by a small and cohesive research team rather than by each foundation or agency individually. Considerable effort has been applied to ensure consistency when tagging grants by reviewing each grant after it has been collected and coded.

The data-collection team referred to members' websites to obtain a list of grants for the 2015 calendar year. For those foundations for which researchers were unable to find grant data, the foundation was contacted directly to obtain a list of grants from 2015. The 140 funders reflected in this report include Blue Sky members and EGA members.

Before inputting a grant, a profile for the grantor and grantee was created (if not already existing) in the CiviCRM database, with information such as the organization's website, address, and mission statement recorded under each profile. Upon entering each grant, information including the grant year, grant amount, grantee's name, and the grant's description was inputted. Based on the grant description and the grantee's mission, each grant

was then tagged with a primary and secondary issue area, the grant strategy, and the geographic region where the grant initiatives were to take place. If a grant was identified as being relevant to environmental literacy, the grant was also tagged with additional fields, including the primary impact area and target audience. Only grants identified as environmental literacy grants were included in this report.

In most cases, if the grant description did not contain enough information to identify the appropriate issue area, the researcher was able to determine the information necessary to categorize the grants based on the grantee's mission statement and program areas as described on the grantee's website. Researchers also referred to the grantor's mission statement and program areas to help identify the general focus of a grant. However, if the information found was too broad or if a grant was focused on general / multi-issue environmental work, the grant was categorized with "General Environment / Multi-issue" as the issue area. A second research consultant reviewed each grant before it was added into the searchable grants database.

SEARCH THE BLUE SKY TRACKING THE FIELD DATABASE:

Blue Sky members can log on to <https://blueskyfundersforum.org/connect/ttf> to search and view the grants included in this report. For assistance logging on to the Blue Sky website, contact Christina James at christina@blueskyfundersforum.org.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Photos courtesy of Children & Nature Network, FoodCorps, Grist, Latino Outdoors, Lincoln Park Zoo, Outdoor Afro, Teton Science Schools, and Tiny Trees.

Endnote

1. There are several other NOAA environmental literacy grant programs, though they are not administered by the agency's Office of Education. These include the Marine Debris Prevention program, Ocean Guardian Schools, and Climate Stewards program. Together these programs total less than \$1 million in funding annually, and are not reflected in this report.



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