

Maine Wilderness Guides Org.

An Association of Registered Maine Guides



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Teens to Trails: Connecting High School Students to Life Changing Outdoor Experiences by Jeanne Christie, MWGO Board Member

My Day Job. Like many registered guides, I have a day job. Mine is working as Program Manager at [Teens to Trails](#). Teens to Trails is a Maine-based organization with a mission of [connecting high school students to life-changing outdoor experiences](#). It does this primarily by supporting the creation and sustainability of high school outing clubs. Our reasoning is simple. We all need nature. Time outside offers the opportunity for life-changing experiences. In an outing club, time spent with peers playing and problem solving allows teenagers to grow and mature emotionally. It provides the space for them to learn how to love and care for each other and the planet.

Why is outdoor time important? Research shows time outside boosts the immune system, reduces stress and anxiety, evokes positive emotions, improves learning, develops interpersonal skills and supports responsible decision-making. Research findings on these and other benefits can be found on the [Children and Nature Network](#). However, the majority of experiential and outdoor programs in schools are directed to younger age groups. In grades 9-12, these opportunities during the school day are scarce which is, at least in part, a reflection of the changing focus of teens who are planning for life after high school. The unintended consequence is that play, unstructured time, and opportunities to be outside and enjoy friends are also limited. High School Outing Clubs have the capacity to fill this role.

Teens to Trails Programs. My principal role at teens to trails is to support the outing club advisors who organize the individual high school outing clubs. I, along with the rest of the staff, accomplish this by providing resources and services and turnkey programs that make it easier for outing club advisors to provide high quality outdoor experiences to teenagers. Programs and outreach include:

1. spring and fall trip lotteries,
2. grants to clubs,
3. recommendations for activities and partners to work with close to their high schools, and
4. programs where many high schools can participate together.

In a typical year these would include an overnight at Acadia National Park, a midwinter skill-building overnight, an outdoor leadership conference, and a weekend of hiking and rafting on the Kennebec River.

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Short Bytes:

Wolfden Resources' Pickett Mountain Project by Melanie Sturm

In January 2020, Wolfden Resources (Wolfden) submitted a rezoning petition to the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) to allow a metal mine at Pickett Mountain (primarily zinc, lead, and copper) on 528 acres near Mount Chase, not far from Baxter State Park and Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument. Unfortunately, on July 27, LUPC deemed Wolfden's application complete for processing in spite of its many flaws.

The type of ore processing Wolfden is proposing is a very dangerous process because it creates toxic mine tailings that need storage in perpetuity. When sulfur in mining waste or ore is exposed to air and water, it creates acid that can contaminate streams, killing fish and other wildlife that live in them. It also releases toxic metals, such as lead and arsenic. Wolfden has failed to prove it can treat polluted wastewater adequately, has proposed disposing of mine waste in violation of Maine's mining law, and has not documented sufficient financial capacity to operate a mine of this type. LUPC staff have repeatedly asked Wolfden to clarify its application, but the company continues to refuse to provide honest and timely responses.

The LUPC is still considering the petition as it waits for more information from Wolfden. There will likely be a public hearing on the rezoning this fall.

Up Your Game through Training and Education by Reid Anderson

Whether you are seeking to become a Registered Maine Guide, to gain or renew wilderness first aid and CPR certifications, or to improve your Swiftwater Rescue skills in an effort to keep a bad day on the river from becoming a really bad day on the river there is no shortage of courses available to help you avoid and be better prepared to handle challenging situations in the field. With a focus on hands-on, practical, scenario-focused training, MWGO Business Member Northeast Whitewater turns what could be a long few days in a traditional classroom environment into an exciting few days practicing skills in modeled real-life situations. The 2021 Training Schedule for Northeast Whitewater has recently been announced and can be found here: [Northeast Whitewater Training](#)

Looking for professional development opportunities on a national and international level? Check out the annual NOLS Wilderness Risk Management Conference (WRMC), being held virtually this year Oct 19-23: [NOLS WRMC](#)

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COVID-19. Of course, this is not a typical year. Most high schools are not able to host outing clubs, and, in the interim, Teens to Trails has adapted by providing ideas for on-site or family activities as well as guidance on how to create outdoor classrooms and assistance finding new resources and partnerships that will be available for outing clubs when schools can operate in person and after-school curricular activities can occur on an ongoing basis.

Outing Club Advisors: Who are they? There are 206 high schools in Maine, made up of 134 public schools and 72 private schools. According to our database, about 80% of these have or have had outing clubs. The existence of an outing club advisor is a prerequisite for any high school outing club. Outing School Advisors carry out the administrative tasks. They recruit and inspire students, organize trips, lead trips, address the concerns of school officials, parents and students. They are usually teachers and most often science teachers-- but also principals and guidance counselors, Ed. Techs, physical education, wellness, math and English teachers. They generally coach a sport or some other after school activity in addition to leading the outing club. But what every outing club advisor I've talked to has in common is a deep desire to nurture and support their students in their journey towards maturity. Plus, they love the outdoors.

How do Outing Clubs operate? There is a lot of variability among outing clubs. The number of students in a club varies from six to greater than 20. Membership is usually pretty loose—any student can sign up for a trip and become a member of a club. The number of outings vary: anywhere from 2-3 to 20+ annually. The types of outings range from day hikes and overnight camping to skill building, sledding, skating, canoeing, sea kayaking, service projects and more. Most clubs have very limited financing. Just covering transportation costs is often challenging. Group gear is essential; but most clubs have limited resources and the students and their families often have limited resources as well. A trip that costs \$5 is too much for some students, and \$40 for a trip is about the max any club member can contribute for an event. Outdoor experience varies widely among teenagers, and a surprising number have never left the town they live in. Our state in all its extraordinary beauty is unknown to them. An outing club may be their first opportunity to explore and learn all that Maine has to offer.

MWGO and Teens to Trails have a history. I've been cleaning out old files at the office and a couple days ago I came across the agenda for the Winter Skills Rendezvous '09 held by Teens to Trails and MWGO at Chewonki. There were over a dozen workshops covering winter camping, camp cooking on a budget, junior Maine Guide skills, navigating the woods and much more. It was great to see that two of my favorite organizations had combined to co-host a day to teach teens the skills they needed to be outside in the winter safely. Maybe we can do that again!

Interested in supporting High School Outing Clubs? There are many ways registered Maine Guides can help. Become a co-advisor at your local high school. Sign up with Teens to Trails as a skill builder in your area. Teach skills or lead trips at one of the Teens to Trails hosted events. Donate gently used gear through our gear donation program. Offer to host outing clubs for free or reduced prices at your camp. Offer an outing for one of our trip lotteries. If you are interested in exploring any of these ideas or maybe one of your own, please contact me at my day job at jeanne@teentotrails.org or fill out this [form](#)—and I will be in touch!

Quick Links

- [Massachusetts now exempt from COVID-19 travel restrictions, testing requirement](#)
- [Drought conditions in Maine have led to over 900 wildfires this summer](#)
- [Piscataquis River's water level is the lowest it has been in 117 years](#)
- ['This is certainly an anomaly': Three helicopter rescues in the same week at Katahdin](#)
- [Commissioner Camuso Honors Outstanding MDIFW Employees](#)
- [Many of you are convinced you've seen mountain lions in Maine](#)

Upcoming Events and Dates

- Oct 23-24: [Wilderness First Aid \(WFA\) Course](#) taught by John Tierney through Wilderness Medical Associates, hosted by Mahoosuc Lodge, Newry, ME. For more info, contact Polly: (207) 824-2073 or mahoosucguides@gmail.com
- Oct 23-25: [Open Recertification Course](#) taught by John Tierney through Wilderness Medical Associates, hosted by Mahoosuc Lodge, Newry, ME. For more info, contact Polly: (207) 824-2073 or mahoosucguides@gmail.com
- Nov 1: MWGO Annual Meeting at 2pm (Board Meeting at 1pm) held virtually via Zoom. Registration information will be sent out in the coming week.

MWGO Professional Members are eligible for a \$50 reimbursement (\$25 for Supporting Members) for WFA, WAFAs, WFR, WEMT or Recertification Courses.

From the Field



How are we already at or past peak foliage? Time sure flies!
Near the South Arm on the East Side of Lower Richardson Lake
(Photo credit: Nick Leadley)

Do you have an article, link, event, or photo that you would like to share in the next eNews?

Send your submission to: newsletter@mwgo.org!