



## Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council

PO Box 899 | Jacksonville, OR 97530 | (541) 899-9982

February 11, 2026

As the Program Director of Applegate Outdoor School, **I am expressing my strong support for HB 4112**, which will restore funding to the Outdoor School Program. **This bill will help restore financial security for providers statewide, support impactful outdoor experiences for students, and protect the legacy of Outdoor School in Oregon.**

AOS is a 4-day, day-only ODS program in Ruch, Oregon. During their time at AOS, students test water quality and sample macroinvertebrates in the beautiful Applegate River. They explore soil science, use forestry tools, and model fire behavior on the landscape, all while growing both inwardly and interpersonally. Feedback from a statewide Outdoor School Student Outcomes Evaluation Survey showed that **AOS participants reported particularly high outcomes in environmental learning, sense of belonging, enjoyment, and environmental stewardship.**

The 20% budget reduction to Outdoor School funds has already had a profound impact on the Applegate Outdoor School program (AOS). **The confusion that this cut sowed among school districts resulted in the cancellation of our first scheduled fall session, during which we planned to serve 260 students from Oakdale Middle School of the Medford School District.** This additional season was an exciting expansion for our young program, and the budget cut halted our momentum.

This news was a major blow. I had to tell our instructor candidates that we no longer had positions available, and I had to let down our dedicated team of returning instructors who had chosen AOS over other fall work opportunities.

Since then, more information has been communicated to schools about how funding cuts will impact them. Each school now has a reimbursement request cap, which is calculated based on number of students, among many other factors. When broken down into funding allotment per student, these figures vary, but all are significantly lower than AOS's relatively low fee per student. **The most impacted schools have been allotted only half of AOS's relatively low registration fee per student.**

Because school districts are experiencing their own funding restrictions, **the absorption of this financial burden has been placed upon ODS providers.** Given that the alternative is to host no schools at all, we will be offering our services unchanged to our partner schools at the rate that they are able to pay. **We are now in the process of reworking our budget to accommodate this drastic decrease in revenue. Casualties will include our burgeoning high school leadership program, administrative time, and potentially, student lunches.**



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In summary, this unexpected and devastating cut has halted the momentum of our growing program, taken work away from skilled field instructors, and called into question the job security of permanent education staff. It kept excited 6th graders from experiencing Applegate Outdoor School in fall 2025, and it will have adverse impacts on student experiences this spring by precluding our high school leadership program and potentially, hot lunches.

I acknowledge the challenging budget environment across the state, and I remain optimistic that there is a path forward for Outdoor School. However, **I believe that lawmakers are ultimately responsible for upholding the wishes of the voters who enthusiastically supported the creation of the Oregon Outdoor School Fund, and I urge them to find a way to restore its full budget.**

Sincerely,

Charlotte Hyde

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*Education & Outreach Program Director*

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