

National Environmental Education Foundation and Toyota Award Grants to Restore Public Lands Impacted by Natural Disaster

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Extreme weather events have been grabbing headlines with increasing frequency. Whether a hurricane, tornado, or flood, communities face the challenge of recovering from the damage and preparing for potential repeats. Non-profits are taking a larger role in helping communities rebound,* and restoring their access and enjoyment of local public lands is an important component. To support these efforts, the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) and Toyota Motor North America, are awarding \$200,000 in Restoration & Resilience grants to support the work of nonprofit organizations on public lands impacted by natural disasters.

“These grants are part of a sustained effort, which kicked off on National Public Lands Day this year, to restore and fortify public lands affected by natural disasters and extreme weather,” said Meri-Margaret Deoudes, CEO and president of NEEF.

The grants ranged from \$14,000 to \$20,000 per site, and projects were required to mobilize local volunteers and educate them on the impact of their actions on the long-term sustainability of the lands.

“Focusing on the resiliency and sustainability of public lands not only benefits those lands, but also the

surrounding communities,” said Kevin Butt, general manager, Toyota Environmental Sustainability. “For 25 years, we have partnered with NEEF to build capacity and scale up efforts of non-profits conducting this important environmental work throughout the U.S.”

Grants were given to groups recovering from the following weather events:

Hurricanes:

- The **Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust in Kountz, Texas**, received funds to clean up the large debris Hurricane Harvey washed into the bayou that runs through the Big Thicket National Preserve.
- The **Timucuan Trail Parks Foundation in Jacksonville, Florida**, will use the funds to hold service learning projects throughout the Timucuan State and National Parks of Jacksonville focusing on how healthy salt marshes and coastal ecosystems can mitigate impacts of future hurricanes.
- The **Fundacion Amigos de El Yunque in San Juan, Puerto Rico**, will use the funds to restore the **El Toro Trail**, one of only two trails in the **El Yunque National Forest** that has been re-opened to the public since the destruction from Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
- **The Student Conservation Association** will put the funding towards a collaborative project with the Houston Independent School District’s Furr Institute for Innovative Thinking (Furr) to work with students to identify, map and eradicate invasive species that have propagated in the **Herman Brown Park in Houston, Texas** since Hurricane Harvey.

Fires:

- The **Northwest Youth Corps in Eugene, Oregon**, will use funding to expand volunteer efforts to improve nearly 15 miles of trails in the **Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and Mt. Hood National Forest**, damaged by last year’s massive Eagle Creek Fire.
- The **Mountain Studies Institute in Silverton, Colorado**, will use the award to create a resilience action plan, conduct community outreach and organize volunteer activities for the **Hermosa Creek and Animas River areas near Durango, Colorado**, which are recovering from the 416 Fire.

Droughts:

- **The Land Trust of North Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama**, will use funding to restore 2.3 miles of the **Bluff Line Trail** on the **Monte Sano Nature Preserve**, one of the largest urban nature preserves in the US.
- **The Arizona Trail Association in Phoenix, Arizona**, will put funds towards fabricating and installing a 2,500-gallon water catchment system on one of the driest sections of the Arizona Trail near Pinal County, improving local access to public lands and water reliability.

Tornadoes and Floods:

- The **Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. in Golconda, Illinois** will put funds towards a public awareness campaign on the impact of invasive species and the decline of pollinator habitat after a tornado swept through the northwest portion of the **Shawnee National Forest, in Herod, Illinois**.
- The **Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) in Asheville, North Carolina**, will use the funding to support specialized recovery efforts in the **Cohutta Wilderness area**, a remote, rugged section of the **Chattahoochee National Forest, in Sucre, Georgia**, after severe flood damage.

This is the first of two sets of grants NEEF and Toyota will distribute to support the restoration & resilience of

public lands. [The Every Day Events grants](#), totaling \$100,000 in mini-grants of up to \$8,000 each, will be announced later this month.

For more information on the NEEF/Toyota Restoration & Resilience grant requirements, visit <https://www.neefusa.org/nature/land/neef-restoration-and-resilience-grant-announcement>.

* <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/06/23/nonprofits-poised-for-bigger-role-in-disaster-recovery>