



WEA

WILDERNESS  
EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION



*Paul Petzoldt*  
PAUL PETZOLDT

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

# A Message from the Past President

**A**s I look back at the nearly two years I served as your president, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude. When I stepped into this role, I was acutely aware of the progress we made under the guidance of previous presidents and active boards. I am grateful that you trusted me to continue the work we started. Of course, I was not working alone. The rest of the board has also dedicated their time, energy, and brain space for strategic conversations. They believe in the mission and are excellent stewards of our association. I want to especially thank Kelli McMahan and Francois Guilleux; both have been on the board more than five years, each serving in the role of president. **They guided our association through challenges and victories, and used their expertise and ingenuity to better meet the needs of our industry and fulfill our mission.** Thank you both!



We have accomplished a lot in the past few years. **I am proud of the work done to advance our credentialing and accreditation programs. We continue to make connections with international programs and find ways to work together and support their specific needs.** We had several successful conferences; each provided the board with fresh momentum to tackle new problems, fill identified niches, and further communicate with our membership and industry partners.

**Now we face a global pandemic that threatens our industry while simultaneously reinforcing the irreplaceable value of what we do.** Additionally, our country is confronting issues of racism and inequality, and we are reminded of our role in these conversations and our commitment to equality and justice in all spaces, and especially in the outdoors. We look forward to the opportunities for reflection and action toward a better future for our field.

Speaking of looking forward, I am eager to see the growth of our credentialing and accreditation programs, I am excited about our opportunities for work with industry partners, and **I am hopeful about the possibility of a more sustainable model that allows us to increase our impact on the field and continue to meet the needs of our membership.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emily McKenzie'.

Emily McKenzie, Ph.D.



# From the President

**W**hat a crazy time to produce our first Annual Report in years! We should talk about decision-making some time. In many ways, this report is an indicator of how far the association has come, how much we have learned, and how much more work there is to do. As I move through my fourth year serving on the Board and 20th year affiliated with the WEA, I'm struck by how much our last year as an association - and indeed the last few years - can be outlined using Jack Drury's SPEC model of education.



**Student-centered:** Our revisions process on the accreditation standards and student learning outcomes have been driven by our desire to train and develop better, more effective outdoor professionals. Clear, precise, and concise standards will provide our students with easy-to-comprehend (and challenging-to-master) goals and objectives to guide their learning and development. The Certified Outdoor Leader credential (COL) meets the demand for a meaningful and marketable testament of skill competence in wilderness leadership.

**Problem-based:** WEA accreditation was designed to address a consistency problem identified in the WEA affiliate system. We continue to develop our overarching Credentialing Program to address this concern, e.g., the new Certified Outdoor Educator Clinic. Experienced outdoor professionals have long asked for access to the COE credential from outside a WEA-accredited program. The Board - and in particular Kelli McMahan and Cameron Potter - has worked diligently to address this problem. The Clinic and the COE Professional Path is the result.

**Experiential:** More than just doing, the Board has spent countless hours reflecting on the last 40-plus years, noting our gains and lessons learned, and responding to the emerging the challenges.

**Collaborative:** This is a big win for the WEA this year! We have been very intentional about not only inviting our organizational and individual members to work together on standards, outcomes, and committees, but also seeking input from industry partners (AORE, AEE, state outdoor recreation offices, and more) and non-WEA experts. The ad hoc Standards Working Group was comprised of educators, field leaders, and academics from a range of backgrounds.

We have so many projects and initiatives in the pipeline! There is much more to do. But our current position and trajectory are the result of the hard work over the last 43 years; we are stronger now because of the difficulties and challenges we have faced. Join us and continue the work to improve our field and live out our passion!

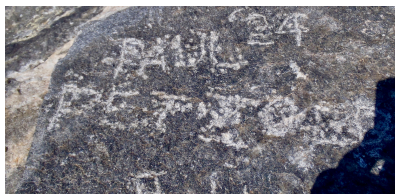
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Hobbs'.

Will Hobbs, Ph.D

# A New Executive Director

Our most exciting news is in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, but we're sharing it now. Through the generous support of donors, we have been able to hire a new executive director, the fourth individual to serve the WEA in this capacity.

Ryan Carlson emerged from the dozens of applicants for this position. We were fortunate to have a strong pool of candidates and our decision was not easy! Ryan's experience with WEA-accredited Coalition for Christian Outreach, his years of launching and building Black Mountain Expeditions, and his passion for the outdoor industry and the WEA have equipped him well to lead us forward. We are excited about Ryan coming onboard and we are confident that he will serve you, the membership, well. Read on for a few words from Ryan!



I looked down and read "Paul Petzoldt, 1924" scribed on the summit block of the Grand Teton shortly after instructing my first WEA course in the Wind River Range of Wyoming. Two decades ago marks the launch of my career as a professional outdoor leader. This is the same summit that the WEA's founder Paul Petzoldt stood at the age of 16 and began to see the future need for trained outdoor leaders. This vision inspired the WEA's creation 42 years ago.

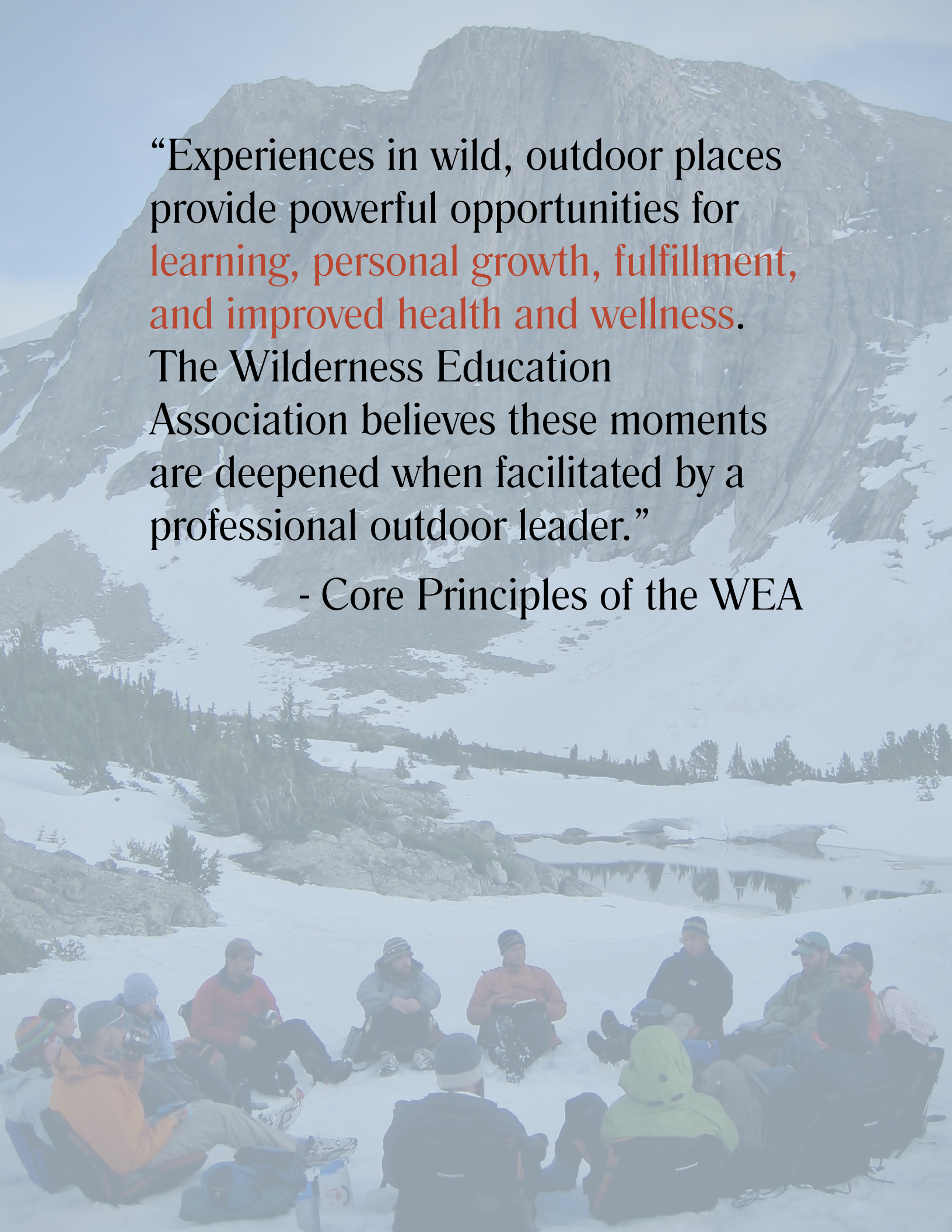
The outdoor leadership profession has grown up since its birth. **One thing has not changed in these years: the need for training and a standard that guides and directs outdoor leaders today!**

This year, the WEA reaffirmed its commitment to this need, drafting the Core Principles of the WEA statement. It begins, **"We believe that experiences in wild, outdoor places provide powerful opportunities for learning, personal growth, fulfillment, and improved health and wellness. The WEA believes these moments are deepened when facilitated by a professional outdoor leader."**

It is with excitement, anticipation, and knowledge that we are forever innovating to handle the challenges, adventures, and opportunities ahead. As WEA's newest executive director, I look forward to continuing the journey of excellence the WEA delivers to all who participate. **And I look forward to sharing that journey with you, the people who make WEA be the leader in our field.**

Ryan Carlson  
Executive Director





“Experiences in wild, outdoor places provide powerful opportunities for learning, personal growth, fulfillment, and improved health and wellness.

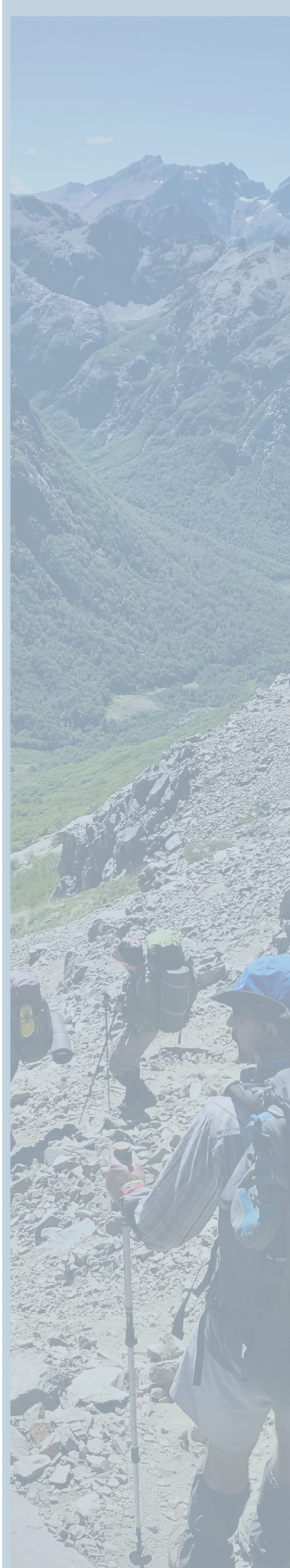
The Wilderness Education Association believes these moments are deepened when facilitated by a professional outdoor leader.”

- Core Principles of the WEA



# 2019-20 At a Glance

- Launched the [WEA Certified Outdoor Leader](#) (COL).
- Curriculum & Standards Committee revised the standardized learning outcomes for both the [Certified Outdoor Educator](#) and Certified Outdoor Leader.
- A new MOU was signed in June 2019 between the WEA and WEA-Japan.
- Board member Jay Post led a COL course in China with Indier Outdoor Education.
- Board President Will Hobbs led an OLTC course in Taiwan with Guan Jang Wu and the National Taiwan Sports University.
- The WEA & 2nd Nature TREC launched a new training program for the Certified Outdoor Educator - the COE Clinic.
- WEA participated at AORE-AEE Conference in Spokane, the Arkansas Regional Adventure Programming Conference, the 2019 WEA-Japan Conference in Gunma, Japan, and RecCon Montana.
- New branding for WEA credentialing programs.
- The 2020 International Conference on Outdoor Leadership was held February 19-22 at HoneyRock, Wheaton College's Outdoor Center for Leadership Development.
- Seven board members rotated off the board: Jerel Cowan, Catie Miller, Rebecca Roehm, Francois Guilleux, Kelli McMahan, Cameron Potter and Kevin Sutton.
- Farewell to the National Office Administrator, Jamie Jennings Martin and welcome Kevin Sutton.
- Welcome to three new board members - Rena Koesler, Michael Odberg, and Wendy Gorton.
- Hired Executive Director Ryan Carlson.





# CREDENTIALING PROGRAM

In 2019, we rolled out the first trials of the new **Certified Outdoor Leader** credential. We say “new” recognizing that it’s actually the “original” WEA credential. The COL was put on hiatus in 2012 as WEA accreditation came online, but feedback from our members revealed a gap between the **OLTC** and the **COE** was too big. The new COL was redesigned to fit that niche, offering an accessible yet rigorous credential for emerging outdoor professionals.



For outdoor enthusiasts and students curious about entering the field of outdoor leadership. Exposure to professional practice in the field using the WEA 6+1 to introduce the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for professional outdoor leadership.



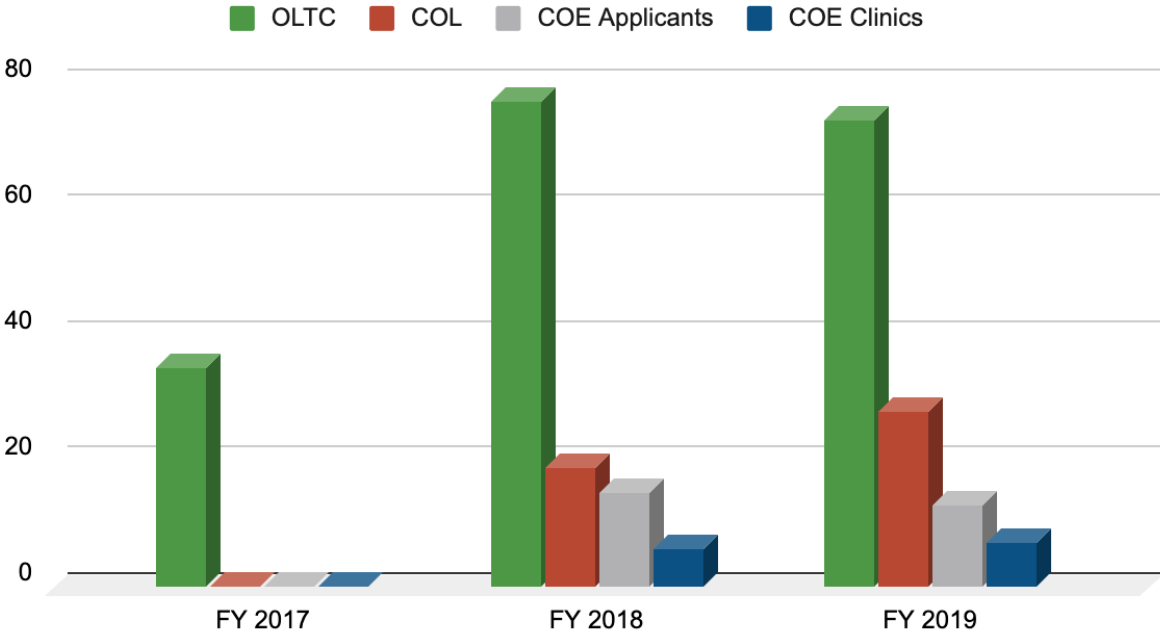
A credential that recognizes leaders are proficient in the WEA 6+1 and equipped to plan and deliver high-quality wilderness experience, model responsible minimum impact practices, and exercise good judgment and effective decision-making across a range of program settings.



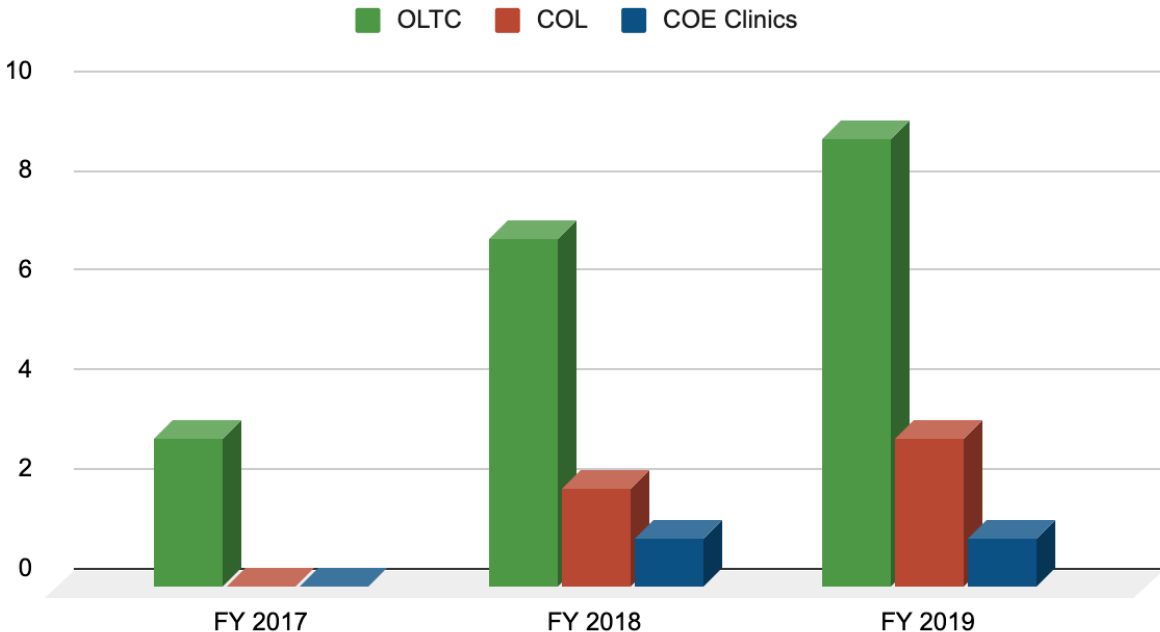
Structured training and assessment in outdoor leadership. For professionals who have proven ability to deliver quality outdoor leadership experiences. COE's demonstrate proficiency to educate, evaluate, and assess outdoor leadership training and development experiences based on the 6+1 standards.

# COURSE NUMBERS

### Number of Course Participants by Fiscal Year



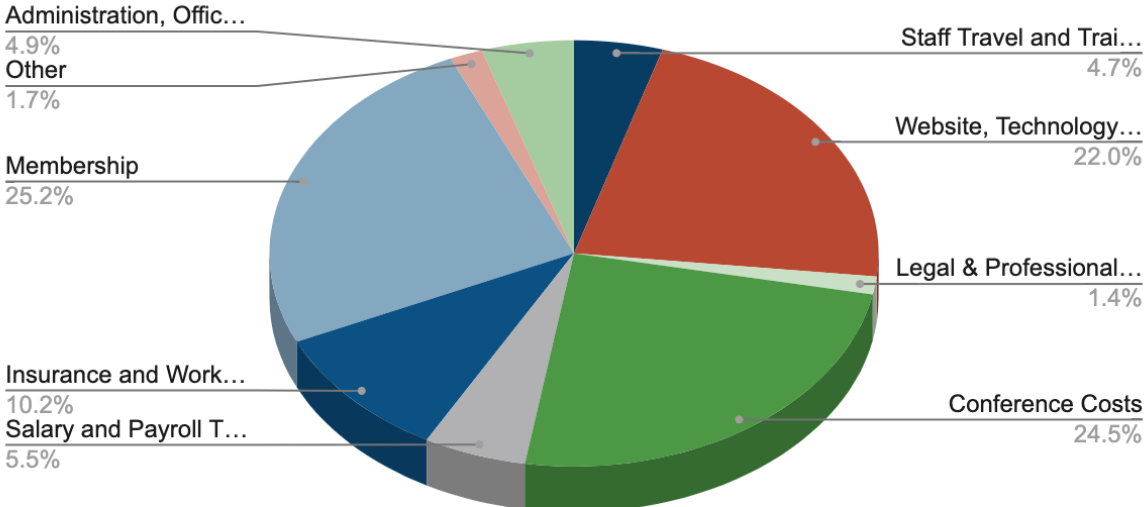
### Number of Courses by Fiscal Year



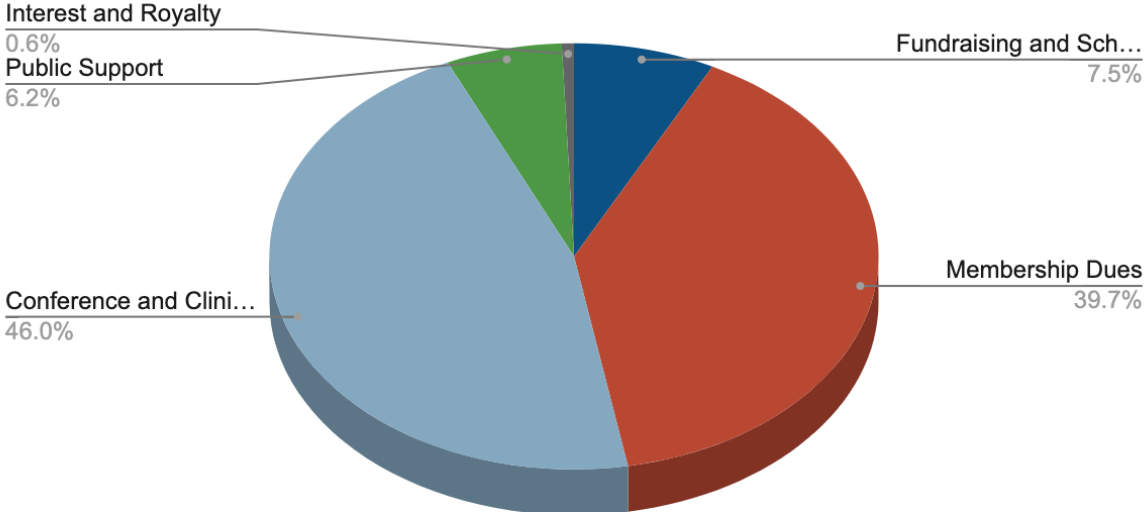


# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Expenses



## Income



In 2019, the WEA's total income was \$33,073 and total expenses were \$27,697.

# ON THE HORIZON

## 2020-2021

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** The WEA launched a DEI committee committed to creating a welcoming and affirming community. The WEA joined the Diversify Outdoors Pledge and will be setting organizational goals to support our DEI initiatives.

**Launching WEA Credentialing Program:** We have spent the past three years testing and refining the WEA credentialing programs: Outdoor Leadership Training Course (OLTC), Certified Outdoor Leader (COL), and Certified Outdoor Educator (COE). We are excited to raise the bar of professionalism in our outdoor leadership industry.

**Certified Outdoor Leader (COL) Written Exam:** We are launching the written exam component to the COL credential. This will be administered through an Online Learning Management System as part of the COL Exam.

**Conference:** We look forward to host our first ever virtual International Conference of Outdoor Leadership on February 12, 2021.

**Fundraising and Industry Partner Campaign:** The world needs professional wilderness educators who are committed to the highest standard of outdoor leadership. The WEA's base must grow in individual memberships, organizational memberships, and industry partners to of the organization.

“The WEA identifies and sets **standards** for **outdoor leadership** education and **accreditation.**”

- Core Principles of the WEA



# Organizational Members & Accreditation

## Organizational Members

2nd Nature TREC

Arkansas Tech University: Parks, Recreation & Hospitality Administration

Baylor University: Recreation and Leisure Services

Black Mountain Expeditions

Coalition for Christian Outreach XD

Gordon College: La Vida Center for Outdoor Education and Leadership

Wheaton College: HoneyRock Outdoor Center for Leadership Development

Humboldt State University: Recreation Administration

Indier Outdoor Education

Ithaca College: Outdoor Adventure Leadership

Ivy Academy Chattanooga: TN State Parks Environmental Institute

Messiah College: Adventure Education

Montana State University Billings: Outdoor Adventure Leadership

Montreat College: Outdoor Education

National Taiwan Sport University: Global Outdoor Adventure Leadership

New England College: Outdoor Education

Oklahoma State University: Outdoor Adventure

Radford University: Department of Recreation, Parks, & Tourism

Salisbury University: Outdoor Education  
Taiwan WEA

Texas A&M University: Outdoor Adventures

University of Central Oklahoma: Outdoor and Community Recreation

University of North Carolina - Charlotte: Venture Outdoor

Western Illinois University: Recreation, Park, & Tourism Administration

WEA Japan

Prince William Sound College, University of Alaska

## Accredited Programs

Ithaca College: Outdoor Adventure

Baylor University: Recreation and Leisure Services

Coalition for Christian Outreach: CCO XD

Western Illinois University: Recreation, Park, & Tourism Administration

Radford University: Department of Recreation, Parks, & Tourism

# Board of Directors & Staff

## Executive Committee

Will Hobbs, President

Jay Post, Vice President

Anja Whittington, Secretary

Sarah Schneider, Treasurer

Emily McKenzie, Immediate Past-President

## Members

Wendy Gorton

Mike Odberg

Rena Koesler

## Staff

Ryan B. Carlson, Executive Director

Kevin Earhart Sutton, National Office

Administrator

“The WEA remains committed to driving the profession forward. We will be steadfast in our efforts to advocate for an **outdoor industry** in the United States that supports **standards** and **credentials** for outdoor leadership.”

- Core Principles of the WEA





1621 Central Ave, Cheyenne, WY 82001  
+1 740-607-9759  
[www.weainfo.org](http://www.weainfo.org)  
[nationaloffice@weainfo.org](mailto:nationaloffice@weainfo.org)