



# ETC Sea Kayak Accessible San Francisco Bay Recreation Program: Final Programmatic Report (Amended)

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*Recipient Organization/Agency: Environmental Traveling Companions*

*Date Submitted: April 24, 2015, revised January 12, 2016*

*Project Period: 1/01/2013 to 1/31/2015*

*Award Amount: \$100,000*

*Matching Contributions: \$100,000*

*Total Disbursement: \$100,000*

*Project Number: #8006.12.033426*

## **1. Summary of Accomplishments**

On behalf of Environmental Traveling Companions' (ETC's) Board, staff, volunteers, and participants, I would like to thank the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for the generous two-year grant of \$100,000. We are proud to report that ETC's 2013- 2014 San Francisco Bay and Shoreline Sea Kayak Program has delivered its largest and two most successful seasons in our history. Over the past two years we conducted 94 day trips and 44 multi-day Angel Island adventures on San Francisco Bay. ETC's sea kayak trips on San Francisco Bay served 1940 disabled and disadvantaged participants with 2,750 user days (user day = number of participants x number of trip days). Trip bookings in the Sea Kayak Program far exceeded all prior years. This increase in bookings was made possible by increased scholarship funds and an expanded kayak fleet thanks to the NFWF funding, strong program partners and some exciting new collaborations.

## **2. Project Activities & Outcomes**

### **Activities**

Funding from NFWF enabled ETC to provide physically and financially accessible kayak trips on San Francisco Bay for 1940 disabled and disadvantaged paddlers (\$40,000) and to purchase new equipment to sustain and expand our San Francisco Bay adaptive kayak program (\$60,000). With your 2013-2014 grant support, ETC accomplished the following objectives:

- Trained 37 new Bay Area volunteers from diverse backgrounds as sea kayak guides and environmental educators for ETC's recreational kayaking trips on San Francisco Bay.
- Expanded our outreach and collaborations with Bay Area schools and agencies and booked 30 new partner organizations and schools to join ETC on our educational San Francisco Bay Sea Kayak Trips.
- Provided opportunities for 1940 paddlers with special needs to participate in our one to three-day San Francisco Bay and Shoreline Sea Kayak Adventures. These participants learned paddling and boating safety skills, discovered the rich natural, human, and conservation history of the

Bay, explore the Richardson Bay shoreline and learn how they can protect San Francisco Bay and its watershed.

- Provided 4 five-day San Francisco Bay Sea Kayak components for two of ETC's intensive Youth LEAD Courses.
- Trained 14 outstanding Youth LEAD Fellows (ages 15-18) in the 2013/2014 school years who developed their leadership skills and served as junior leaders on 12 Bay sea kayak adventures for their peers.
- Offered Benefit Sea Kayak Trips to the general public to provide education and enjoyment of the rich resources of the Bay and to support ETC's mission.
- Purchased high quality sea kayak equipment and adaptive paddling gear, which enabled us to expand our San Francisco Bay and Shoreline Sea Kayak Program. The new equipment has increased the morale of our volunteer community and will benefit our program for years to come!

## **Benefits**

ETC's San Francisco Bay Sea Kayak Program was successful in providing unique recreation and educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth, people of all ages with disabilities, and the general public to achieve the following objectives.

- Stepping outside of their everyday routines to have fun, healthy, and educational sea kayaking adventures exploring San Francisco Bay and its shoreline.
- Challenging themselves and expand their capabilities in a safe and supportive community environment.
- Learning to incorporate healthy exercise and outdoor exploration into their daily lives.
- Developing teamwork, communication, and leadership skills.
- Cultivating an appreciation for the rich natural resources of San Francisco Bay, inspiring a desire to protect it.
- Building the self-esteem and confidence necessary to overcome obstacles in their everyday lives.

Melissa Phillips, a recreation coordinator from the Pomeroy Center for people with developmental disabilities, has this to say about their recent ETC San Francisco Bay Kayaking Trip:

*"We have a participant... who uses a wheelchair and does not have a lot of mobility. He was immediately paired up with ETC guide Aaron and they became fast friends. It was awesome to look back at their kayak and see Aaron paddling in the back and [the participant] sitting in the front, completely relaxed with his fingers grazing the water. They were even able to fit his wheelchair in the middle of the kayak to use during our picnic lunch on the beach. The smiles on their faces throughout the day were priceless. These trips really bond us all and will stick with all of us for years to come.*

*Having a program like ETC gives opportunities to our participants that they would not otherwise have. ETC's emphasis on safety and adaptability makes the trip accessible to everyone and we could not be more grateful. The greatest part of these trips is when we leave and everyone is talking on the ride home saying they cannot wait to do it again!"*

One student journeyed all the way from Boston this past summer to join ETC on our two week All Abilities Youth LEAD course on San Francisco Bay and the South Fork American River. She did not let her visual impairment limit her in any way, and I believe she taught as much as she learned through her tenacity, courage and beautiful voice:

*“I was born two and a half months early and I have been blind for my entire life, but that hasn’t stopped me from following my dreams. During the ETC LEAD course I was challenged from day one. I wasn’t sure how the other kids would react to me or if I would be accepted. I broke through the surface of stereotypes when I was the first to capsize my kayak during rescue practice. As I listened to the protocol and tried to remember what to do in the exact order, my stomach churned and adrenaline coursed through me. I was afraid and extremely nervous but knew I had to just go for it and take on the challenge. I plastered on a smile and rocked that kayak right over. Afterwards I was less fearful of the salty water and it was no problem to kayak across San Francisco Bay and around Angel Island. The whole experience was over way too soon. I learned not only how to paddle strong but I also learned how to be strong; that I could be myself and be accepted. I was also able to make a difference and show my peers that my blindness does not define me. I can paddle and navigate and cut tomatoes just as well as anyone. At ETC’s Youth LEAD program I have found confidence, encouragement, strength and belief in my own leadership skills. I have gained the ability to seize the day and advocate for myself and for a more inclusive world.”*

By sustaining and expanding our Sea Kayak Program in 2013-2014, we enhanced the enjoyment of boating and shoreline recreation on San Francisco Bay for over 1900 people with disabilities and disadvantaged youth. Sliding-scale scholarships, high quality equipment, adaptive gear, and expertly trained volunteer guides were all imperative to providing fun, safe, educational and transformational adventures for all ETC participants, especially those with special needs.

### **3. The Future**

ETC is thrilled and honored that we have increased the capacity of our San Francisco Bay Sea Kayak and Accessible Recreation Program. We look forward to continuing to expand our outreach to more agencies and schools serving special needs populations. This summer we are expanding our Youth LEAD Program and will offering five two to three-week leadership development courses including another 5-day SF Bay Sea Kayak component.

The new kayaks we were able to purchase with NFWF grant funds will we cared for meticulously so they will last for over a decade and carry thousands of disabled and disadvantaged participants along with volunteer guides as they explore the wonders and beauty of San Francisco Bay and Angel Island.

We will also increase our outreach to generous foundations and individual donors to grow our sliding-scale scholarship fund. With increased visibility in the Sausalito community, Cavallo Point Lodge hosted ETC’s successful Make a Ripple Gala last spring and will do so again in April of 2015, raising over \$100,000 for our Scholarship Fund. As well, the Sausalito Lions Club is sponsoring ETC’s 2015 Sea Kayak Regatta and Paddle-a-thon, an exciting community fundraising event on San Francisco Bay for over 150 paddlers.

On behalf of all our participants like those from the Pomeroy Center and hundreds of others who have returned from a San Francisco Bay sea kayak adventure with increased self-confidence, a new appreciation for the Bay, and a profound sense of environmental stewardship, ETC sincerely thanks the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for our \$100,000 in generous funding.

### **4. Lessons Learned**

It takes a dedicated collaborative community effort of funders (Cosco Busan NRDA Trustee Council and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation), outdoor adventure providers (ETC), skilled volunteers and agency

partners to develop a safe, fun, educational and transformational outdoor adventure program. (not a new lesson but this grant certainly reinforced this ongoing lesson)

- Having top notch gear is essential in providing adaptive sea kayak and outdoor adventure programming. We are deeply grateful for this funding which has enabled ETC to purchase outstanding gear and grow the capacity of our program.
- Providing excellent gear also boosts the morale and incentivizes our community of talented and dedicated volunteer guides. Indeed they were extremely excited to use the new kayaks and paddling gear and I believe it encouraged them to volunteer more!
- “When you have lemons...make lemonade.” Out of a sad environmental accident can come some community good for our parks and programs that get more people out to enjoy and appreciate our natural and wild resources like the amazing estuary-San Francisco Bay. “We can’t save what we don’t love and we can’t love what we don’t know.” Providing access for more citizens, especially those who traditionally don’t use our parks and water resources, is critical to inspire greater environmental stewardship of our precious natural resources.

## 5. Dissemination

ETC has been a pioneer in accessible outdoor adventure programming for decades and we often serve as mentors and consultants to other start-up outdoor programs around the country. We will continue to share the lessons learned with other nonprofits and programs that focus on accessible and educational adventures and paddling programs. It would be excellent to have a final format of this report so we can easily share it and email it to other outdoor adventure organizations who share a similar mission. We can also disseminate lessons learned at conferences like the upcoming NO BARRIERS Conference this coming June in Colorado.

## 6. Project Documents

Project documents included:

- Project Photographs (see below)
- ETC Sample Kayak Trip Packet – One-Day San Francisco Bay Trip (not in this document).

**POSTING OF FINAL REPORT:** *This report and attached project documents may be shared by the Foundation and any Funding Source for the Project via their respective websites. In the event that the Recipient intends to claim that its final report or project documents contains material that does not have to be posted on such websites because it is protected from disclosure by statutory or regulatory provisions, the Recipient shall clearly mark all such potentially protected materials as “PROTECTED” and provide an explanation and complete citation to the statutory or regulatory source for such protection.*



Image 1. ETC volunteer guides in kayaks on a skills development trip paddling from Horseshoe Cove out the Golden Gate to Kirby Cove and back (Photo Credit: Adriana Basques)





Image 2. ETC Youth LEAD participant in kayak on San Francisco Bay en route to Angel Island State Park  
(Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)



Image 3. ETC Board Member and sea kayak volunteer, Alphonso Mance, guiding a trip on San Francisco Bay (Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)





Image 4. ETC Youth LEAD Student Kayaker smiling in kayak (Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)





Image 5. ETC participant from Berkeley Outdoor Recreation Program (BORP) with volunteer guide preparing to launch from ETC's base for a one-day paddle on Richardson Bay (Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)





Image 6. Board Member Tom Morehouse with Youth LEAD Participant, a recent refugee from Afghanistan, participating in the ETC Regatta Paddle-a-thon (Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)



Image 7. Sea Kayak Program Manager Oren Frey participating in guide skills development near the Golden Gate Bridge in a kayak purchased with Cosco Busan funds (Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)





Image 8. Youth LEAD student participating in a two-week all-abilities Youth LEAD course (Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)





Image 9. ETC Youth LEAD Fellows in training to be junior kayak guides (Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)



Image 10. ETC members leading the kayaking component of an Outdoor Educators Institute training (Photo Credit: Diane Poslosky)