

Community benefits from grant to get more kids outdoors

CORNWALL — National Park Trust is pleased to announce 41 winners in the Every Kid Outdoors Small Grants Program — and Cornwall's Black Rock Forest (BRF) is one of them.

In partnership with the USDA Forest Service, the National Park Trust developed the Every Kid Outdoors Small Grants Program to support schools and organizations

focused on connecting elementary school-aged youth to public parks, lands, and waters.

The grant supports the Every Kid Outdoors Program, a federal youth initiative designed to provide every 4th grader in the United States the opportunity to visit public lands and waters for free with their fam-

ilies. Taking advantage of the great outdoors as an excellent classroom, the Park Trust and the USDA Forest Service provide experiences that will help kids establish lifelong connections with nature and become the next generation of park stewards.

BRF received a \$1314 award

to support its work to engage elementary school students in Project FeederWatch. Through Cornell Lab of Ornithology's program, we are connecting students with wildlife observation and participating in data collection for an expected 335 elementary school students who will visit during the FeederWatch season, through the end of April. Already, eight classes — 190 elementary school students — participated this winter.

Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive: "The field trip was a great

experience for me. It was super cool and really fun! I liked looking at birds and learning their names," one Cornwall third grader said.

Teachers are excited about the trips as well: "I love Project FeederWatch. I've taken part for several years now," said Caryn Mante, teacher at Willow Avenue Elementary School. "I hope that by taking part in FeederWatch at Black Rock Forest, I will get to see new birds that I have not been able to observe before."

Jessica Schnell, director of

Education at BRF is excited too.

"We are so excited to be launching this program with the help of the support of the EKO Small Grants Program. With weakening winters, we have not been able to provide the same programs on ice safety and identifying animal tracks in snow. With Project FeederWatch, students are able to help contribute to scientific research, while learning about their local backyard birds," she said.

For more information, visit blackrockforest.org.