NATIONAL IMPACT REPORT



NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY 2026

Caring for our Shared America

Across the country, communities came together on September 26 to celebrate the 33rd annual National Public Lands Day. This year's theme, Caring for Our Shared America, highlighted our shared responsibility to protect the parks, forests, trails, and waterways that connect us, as the nation marked its 250th anniversary.





COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

47,950
Participants

793
Registered Events

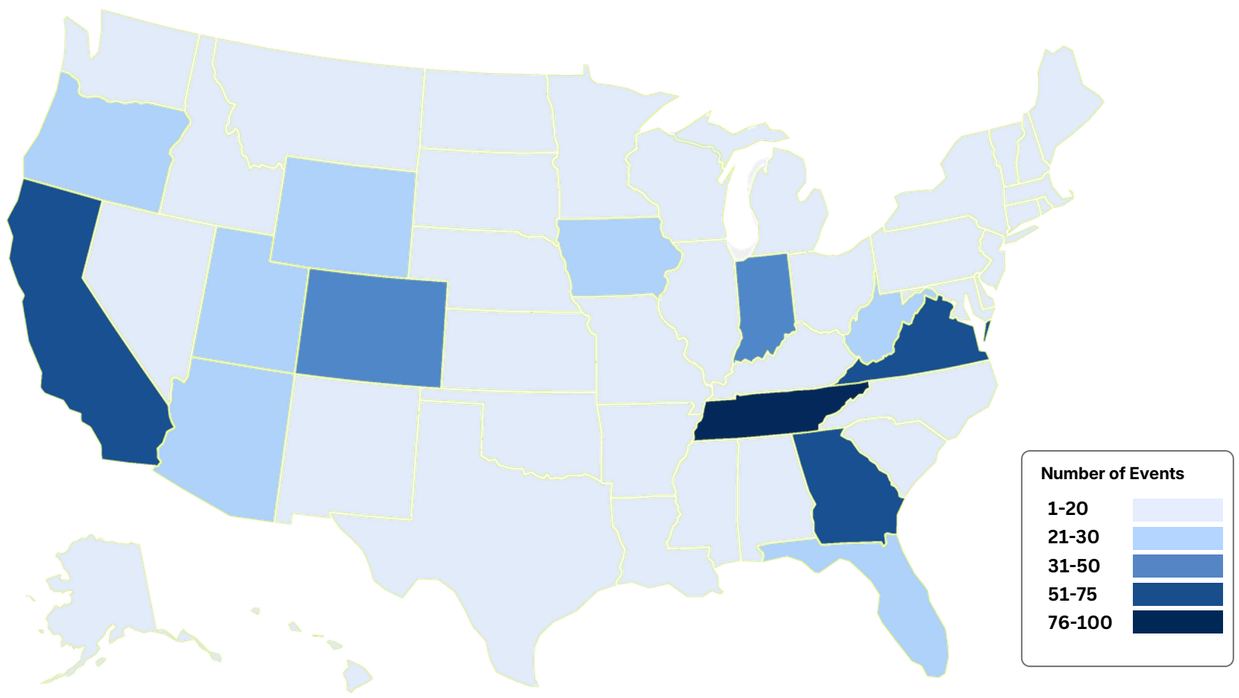
1,381
Work/Activity Sites

280,202
Hours of Event Participation

$8.6M
Value of Volunteer Service

CELEBRATION ACROSS THE COUNTRY

NPLD events took place across all 50 states, Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, and US territories.





Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, UT

CONSERVATION IMPACT

18,821
Acres of Land Impacted

732,108
Sq. Ft. of Invasive Species Removed

692
Miles of Trails & Shoreline Impacted

296,609
Pounds of Trash Collected

38,527
Native Plants Planted

To discover more about National Public Lands Day and learn how you can get involved, visit NEEFusa.org/npld

NEEF National Environmental Education Foundation

Data is sourced from surveys returned by NPLD site managers

NPLD SIGNATURE SITE

"This is how people get to build the connection with nature and understand what it takes to preserve it."

~ Nicole Corey, Executive Director, Natural Restorations

On a sunny day near Phoenix, Arizona, nearly 300 volunteers hiked and paddled along the **Lower Salt River in Tonto National Forest,** picking up 1,180 pounds of manmade debris, micro-trash, fishing line, and more. Natural Restorations, the local nonprofit leading the event, specializes in removing trash and graffiti from Arizona's wilderness. Along with their dedicated team of military veteran leaders, Natural Restorations highlighted the physical, mental, and emotional wellness that comes from spending time outdoors, enriching the lives of military veterans and all community members. They also shared about the death of a beloved wild horse in 2022 after choking on plastic debris, reminding event attendees how important it is to remove even the smallest amount of litter. Energized by the story, scout troops, church groups, college students, law enforcement organizations, families—new and long-time volunteers—descended on the river for a morning of service, fun, and connection.



This event was supported by NEEF and the American Medical Association (AMA).



COLLABORATIONS & CONNECTIONS

NEEF partnered with **America 250** on the America Gives campaign to create the largest volunteer effort in US history. Centuries ago, the United States was built on shared responsibility and civic participation. Today, NPLD lets Americans act on that idea. Whether removing invasive plants from a Civil War battlefield, restoring national forest trails, or cleaning up a local park, volunteers connect everyday service to places of shared history and meaning.



Hellroaring Rim OHV Trail, UT

This year, NEEF partnered with The Reset, presented by **Outward Bound USA**, to offer a simple invitation to young people: put down the screen, get outside, and do something meaningful for the places we share.



Kolomoki Mounds State Park, GA



Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, ME

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE FIELD

On NPLD, veterans are invited to discover what fresh air, teamwork, and purpose can do for the mind and body after leaving the service. There's no better example than AZT VETS x The Outdoor Muster's Veteran Volunteer Work Weekend. This season-opening operation supported trail maintenance, drainage improvements, and tread work across **Kaibab National Forest's North Rim**, a landscape still recovering from the 2025 Dragon Bravo Fire. It continues Arizona Trail Association's Veteran Engagement and Trail Stewardship program, designed to create meaningful opportunities for military veterans. This was more than trail work. It was a chance to aid recovery and show what happens when the military community shows up with a shared purpose.

NEW EVENT PLANNING RESOURCES

This year's free toolkit, Cultivating Volunteer Leadership, helps event coordinators build a tiered volunteer leadership structure, so organizations can do more without adding staff time. It suits large events, like National Public Lands Day, and everyday programs alike. The toolkit was complemented by a free public webinar, featuring event planning and volunteer coordination experts.

Turning Strangers into Teammates is a new guide that provides event coordinators low-pressure ways to help volunteers connect and move past small talk without awkward icebreakers. It covers what motivates volunteers to show up, why introductions support long-term retention, leading questions that draw out meaningful answers, and tips for leaders on modeling openness.



Holt Lake, AL



Gateway Arch National Park, MO

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Thank you to our sponsors: the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, National Park Service, and the American Medical Association (AMA). Interested in supporting NPLD? Contact info@NEEFusa.org

Save the date!
NPLD 2027 | September 25