



58TH ANNUAL NYSOEA CONFERENCE

From the Ground Up: Growing Knowledge Through Nature and Community

November 5-8, 2026

Silver Bay YMCA

Silver Bay, NY

Conference Strands and Descriptions

Outdoors is for All: Equity, Access, and Inclusion

This strand will share knowledge of how we can reimagine outdoor spaces, programs, and experiences to ensure they are welcoming and accessible to all. Share ideas and practices that address systemic barriers related to race, ability, socioeconomic status, gender identity, and geography. Workshops can highlight inclusive program design, community partnerships, culturally responsive leadership, and strategies for reducing financial and physical obstacles to participation.

Eco-STEM: Science for People and Place

This strand highlights the intersection of science, community, and environment, by emphasizing how STEM can be a tool for understanding and improving the places we live. Sessions will explore hands-on, place-based learning that connects ecology, technology, engineering, and math to real-world challenges and local knowledge. By bridging scientific inquiry with cultural and environmental awareness, this strand supports educators in making STEM relevant, responsive, and rooted in nature.

Creative Roots: Nature-based Art Practices

This strand will showcase hands-on, nature-based art practices that draw inspiration from local landscapes, seasonal changes, and ecological materials. Approaches can integrate visual arts, storytelling, movement, and design to foster observation, reflection, and expression.

Mud and Movement: Adventure Learning and Wild Play

This strand celebrates the power of active, hands-on experiences in the outdoors, where curiosity, risk-taking, and unstructured play come together to support learning.

Workshops can explore play-centered approaches that invite participants to climb, build, explore... and get messy. Grounded in experiential learning, this strand will support educators to create spaces where participants can move freely, connect with nature, and discover through doing.

Nurturing Minds: Sharing Stories and Practices

This strand provides opportunity for presenters to exchange narratives, strategies, and lessons learned from their work. Workshops can highlight diverse approaches to supporting growth, well-being, and connection in educational and community settings.