

# Senior Forester Academy

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## The Adventure Continues...

The Northern Arizona University Centennial Forest offers unique environmental science education programs for kids ages 9-16. These programs provide a summer camp experience where kids learn about and explore the beautiful ponderosa pine forest surrounding Flagstaff, Arizona. Through collaboratively designed, hands-on curriculum, campers develop life-long environmental stewardship skills as well as life-long friends. Together, the Centennial Forest and our summer camp programs offer a unique opportunity for youth to get outside and experience the wonder and beauty of the forest through hiking, forest discovery, and nature-based art and games.



Our summer camp programs are designed to build on the knowledge campers gain each year by offering a variety of experiences for them to “grow into”. Children ages 9-10 are encouraged to start off their camping experience with the Junior Forester Academy (JFA). JFA offers a hands-on introduction to the world of forestry and environmental science. The next step, for campers ages 11-12, is the Senior Forester Academy (SFA) where participants conduct their own scientific experiment using skills they learned as Juniors. The Outdoor Leadership Academy (OLA) is the third step for campers ages 13-14, where they are taught how to lead groups in the outdoors. As the last program in our tiered curriculum, the Climate Change Challenge (CCC) offers campers aged 15 and up the opportunity to bring climate change to life through hands-on activities and collaborative research. After campers have completed the Climate Change Challenge they are welcome to apply to our Counselor-in-Training (CIT) program. As CITs, campers will get the opportunity to put all of the skills they learned over the course of the program to use working with other campers. The CITs will deliver information and run activities, gaining the valuable leadership skills necessary to move into our Junior Counselor (JC) program and become part of our next generation of environmental leaders.

### Goals and Objectives

The overall goals and objectives of our programs are to:



1. Introduce kids to the wonder, beauty and importance of forests, and how our natural world influences their current lives and career paths.
2. Provide integrated, hands-on lessons and activities that incorporate math, reading, writing, art and critical thinking skills that lead to creative and thoughtful discussion.
3. Teach kids strong land ethics and stewardship skills by “putting them in the shoes” of a forest researcher.
4. Develop a spirit of community service by integrating community service and critical forest health projects into the learning experience.
5. Provide a fun and engaging learning experience that encourages kids to become active in their communities and schools.

### Vision

The vision of the Centennial Forest Environmental Education Programs is to have fun while connecting kids and families to the forest and the natural world that surrounds them so that they can learn and teach others about good stewardship, land ethics, and forest health. Campers gain the knowledge and experience to examine the world in a new way by using critical thinking skills gained through fun, hands-on activities. Not only do kids learn about forestry and environmental science, they also learn about exciting career opportunities managing and caring for our nation’s natural resources. They also get to plan community service projects to conduct in their communities once camp is over. This final step will take them to the empowerment stage where they will be ready to lead their community and the next generation of environmental stewards.

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All of our counselors and staff are alumni of or are currently attending NAU specializing in such diverse fields as forestry, education, environmental science, hotel and restaurant management, parks and recreation management, communications, and health professions. Each counselor is trained in CPR/First Aid and is specially selected to serve as a good role model for campers. Our incredibly low ratio of adults to campers (1:7) allows for increased quality of supervision and learning experiences.

## **Senior Forester Academy Curriculum**

As the second step in our forestry education program, the Senior Forester Academy (SFA) provides an experience that builds on the skills learned as Juniors while also challenging campers to look at the forest through the eyes of a scientist. The SFA curriculum is centered around forest research projects that investigate how song birds, insects and trees make a living in different parts of the forest. Campers are guided by experts in the identification of local song birds by sight and sound. They will learn from professional entomologists how to trap and identify ground beetles and then employ the forest measurement skills they mastered as Juniors to create hypotheses that can be tested throughout the week. At the end of the week, campers make poster presentations with their data and hypotheses which are then presented to the entire group.



Seniors also get the opportunity to conquer NAU's ropes course, this fun and exciting experience includes team oriented problem-solving games using a maze of cables, logs, platforms, ropes, and climbing walls. The NAU ropes course is designed to challenge campers to work as a team while at the same time working towards their own personal goals. This course has proven to be a huge hit with campers and has helped conquer fears that campers may have thought were insurmountable.



Senior campers participate in a community service project restoring some ponderosa pine stands badly infested with noxious weeds. Campers learn how to identify both native and exotic plants and how their presence or absence impacts our local ponderosa pine ecosystem. After the exotics have been identified and removed, campers will then replace them with locally grown native grasses, trees, and wildflowers. The goal of this project is for campers to learn new environmental stewardship skills that they can teach others and apply in their own communities and backyards. A hiking trip to West Clear Creek rounds out the week and cools campers off while they learn about critical riparian areas.

The finale of the Senior week is an advanced Logger Olympics. The events are similar to those experienced as Juniors but with added skills such as prey stalking. After the Olympics have concluded and "medals" are awarded a small graduation ceremony and pizza party is enjoyed by all campers. This is a wonderful way to end the session because we make sure everyone receives an award and recognition for all of their accomplishments during the week.

**For more information please contact us at  
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*Environmental Education Programs*