

# WELCOME TO THE OUTDOOR LAB!

## GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

### WHAT IT IS:

The Outdoor Lab is an over 200-acre outdoor education center in Fauquier County owned by the Arlington Outdoor Education Association (AOEA). AOEА is a non-profit organization whose primary mission is to promote and provide outdoor education experiences for Arlington students and citizens. AOEА and the Arlington Public Schools (APS) work cooperatively in this effort. The education program conducted at the Outdoor Lab is under the direction of the Science Office/Department of Instruction within APS. The property is officially called the Phoebe Hall Knipling Outdoor Laboratory in honor of Dr. Phoebe Knipling who, as a former APS Science Supervisor, was instrumental in establishing the facility as an outdoor education site.

The **land resource** is exquisite. Its two wooded mountains are split by a pristine spring-fed stream that flows over a series of geological faults into a 2-acre pond teeming with life. The property also boasts a large rolling meadow and a mixture of hardwoods and conifers that make it an ideal habitat for Virginia wildlife.

The **facility**, while rustic, includes:

- a dining room and kitchen
- a classroom/wildlife lab with microscopes
- an ever-increasing assortment of interdisciplinary study equipment
- over 5 miles of marked trails
- restroom facilities
- approximately 22 canvas tents that can be mounted on wood platforms.

The **staff** consists of a teacher/director, two resource/teacher assistants, and a custodian/maintenance person.

### WHERE IS IT LOCATED?

The Lab is located 35 miles west of Arlington in Broad Run, Virginia. The trip to the lab takes approximately an hour by school bus. Most of the travel is along Interstate 66.

### WHAT HAPPENS ON A FIELD TRIP TO THE OUTDOOR LAB?

The agenda for a visit is determined by the classroom teacher(s), in consultation with the Lab Director. The instruction is usually correlated with the curriculum currently being taught in the classroom. It often encompasses an overview of the science topics taught throughout the year and a review of topics covered in the SOLs.

**Typical day trip:** The students are transported to the Lab by school bus, leaving just after the start of the regular day. Upon reaching the Lab, the class is greeted by a staff member, who orients them to the main facilities. The schedule of activities follows what has been requested in advance by the teacher. There is usually about two hours of activities before lunch and another hour and a half of activities after lunch. Students in Grade 3 must bring their own lunches. At the discretion of the teacher, students in Grades 5 and up may be offered the opportunity to purchase a hot dog cookout lunch for \$4.00; this fee will be collected by the teacher in advance of the trip. Activities during the day may include curriculum-based nature walks, compass navigation and orienteering, rigorous ecological studies and aquatic analyses, group initiative games, or nature crafts. Prior to each trip, parents receive a school permission slip and an Emergency Contact Form.

**Typical overnight trip:** All Grade 5 classes are offered the opportunity to spend an overnight at the Outdoor Lab. Overnights are scheduled over a block of Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday. Students bring a sleeping bag (loaners available), a change of clothes and personal items, and a bag lunch to eat on the first day. After orientation to the facility, everyone helps to erect the canvas tents on wood platforms. Instructional activities are similar to those mentioned for day trips, with the addition of an evening program or hike. The schedule and focus for the two-day experience is planned in advance in consultation with the Lab Director. Following a cookout lunch and final clean-up on the second day, the bus returns to Arlington before the end of the regular school day. Prior to the trip, parents receive a suggested equipment list, information on cost, and several APS permission slips. Other than the bag lunch, all meals and snacks are provided by the Lab as part of the trip fee of \$10.00. This is collected by the teacher in advance of the trip.

**Food:** Turkey hot dogs are served at the lunchtime cookout; they contain no beef or pork. Vegetarian options are available, with advance notice, for both the lunch cookout (tofu hot dogs) and for dinner (meatless lasagna) during the overnight. If a student has food allergies or dietary restrictions, please let the Lab Director or staff know in advance of your trip. Because of the large number of students and short time period, the Lab is not able to provide separate meal options for the cookout or overnight trips. In the case of specific food allergies, accommodations may be made for a student to bring his/her own food, but a parent chaperone or teacher will need to assist in its preparation. Please contact your classroom teacher or the Outdoor Lab to make this request. A menu of the food served on the GR 5 overnight, including brand names, is available on the APS Outdoor Lab web page.

## **CHAPERONES**

Many teachers welcome the help of chaperones during the class trip to the Outdoor Lab. The Lab staff and the classroom teacher(s) lead the instructional sessions, but chaperones help with a variety of other tasks: assisting in meal preparation and clean-up, passing out supplies, performing head counts, walking students from one work station to another, helping students feel comfortable in a new environment, etc.

In considering whether to volunteer, please remember that the Lab is a nature education facility. It does not have paved roads and the activities may involve hiking and uneven terrain. In addition, please honor the limit placed on the number of chaperones. The Lab site is used almost every day school is in session, as well as for several weeks during the summer. As much as we appreciate the enthusiasm of parents to help out, we must also consider the fragile nature of the Lab's environment to prevent damage from overuse.

## **ARE THERE OTHER WAYS IN WHICH STUDENTS MAY USE THE OUTDOOR LAB?**

The Outdoor Lab offers an ever-evolving program and many options are possible. The Lab can be used as the focus for a science fair project or for a class project. If you have an idea for using the facility, call the Lab Director.

In addition, every summer the Outdoor Lab runs week-long summer camp programs for students completing Grades 4 to 8. Dates are announced in the Summer School Bulletin.

Several times a year, the AOEA sponsors weekend open houses when the public is invited to enjoy the property and learn about the programs offered there. To learn more about these various events, contact the AOEA and request to be put on its mailing list.

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

To get on the **AOEA mailing list**, please contact:

AOEA - Outdoor Lab  
P. O. Box 5646  
Arlington, VA 22205  
703-228-7650

For the **Outdoor Lab Facility**, please contact:

Neil Heinekamp and Christine Payack, Co-Directors  
Email: [neil.heinekamp@apsva.us](mailto:neil.heinekamp@apsva.us); [christine.payack@apsva.us](mailto:christine.payack@apsva.us)  
Lab Phone: 1-866-295-1118 (toll-free)

For the **APS Science Office**, please contact:

Office Phone: 703-228-6166  
Email: [dat.le@apsva.us](mailto:dat.le@apsva.us) (Dat Le, Supervisor, Science)  
Email: [chris.reid@apsva.us](mailto:chris.reid@apsva.us) (Christine Reid, Administrative Assistant)