

WELCOME TO THE OUTDOOR LAB!

GENERAL INFORMATION for PARENTS and GUARDIANS

WHAT IS THE OUTDOOR LAB?

The Outdoor Lab is an over 200-acre outdoor education center in Fauquier County owned by the Arlington Outdoor Education Association (AOEA). AOE is a non-profit organization whose primary mission is to promote and provide outdoor education experiences for Arlington students and citizens. AOE and 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/Office of Academics 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 site includes two wooded mountains intersected by a spring-fed stream that flows over a series of geological faults into a 2-acre pond. 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 an APS teacher (who also serves as the onsite Director), five resource-instructional assistants, and a maintenance person.

WHERE IS IT LOCATED?

The Lab is located about 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. These may include curriculum-based nature walks, ecological studies, analysis of invertebrates or aquatic organisms, or simple machines. There is usually about two hours of activities before lunch and another hour and a half of activities after lunch.

Students in Grade 3 bring their own lunch. At the discretion of the teacher, students in Grades 5, 7, and high school may be offered the opportunity to purchase a hot dog cookout lunch for \$4.00. Students may choose between turkey hot dogs (no beef or pork) or a vegetarian option of tofu "pups." The complete menu, including brand names, is available on the APS Outdoor Lab web page (<https://www.apsva.us/science/outdoor-lab>). The lunch fee will be collected by the teacher in advance of the trip; for students unable to pay, the Lab will cover the cost of the cookout.

Prior to each trip, parents/guardians will receive a school permission slip and an emergency contact form. These must be signed and returned to the school for a student to travel to the Outdoor Lab.

CHAPERONES

Many teachers welcome the help of chaperones during their 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 workstation 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.

Parent chaperones are encouraged to carpool to the Lab. Driving directions are posted on the APS Outdoor Lab web page (<https://www.apsva.us/science/outdoor-lab>).

AOEA OPEN HOUSES—AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FAMILIES TO VISIT

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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

Lab Phone: 540-347-2258

Email: michele.karnbach@apsva.us (Michele Karnbach, Outdoor Lab Director)

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

Office Phone: 703-228-6166

Email: dat.le@apsva.us (Dat Le, Supervisor, Science)

Email: chris.reid@apsva.us (Christine Reid, Administrative Assistant)

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

AOEA - Outdoor Lab

P. O. Box 5646

Arlington, VA 22205

<https://outdoorlab.org>