

LETTER FROM SANDY COLHOUN, NOLS PRESIDENT

SUBJECT | Important Announcement Regarding Organizational Restructuring

Dear NOLS Community,

With a heavy heart, I write to inform you of some significant changes that will be taking place within our school in the coming days.

After careful consideration and evaluation of our current circumstances, and with the support of the Board of Trustees, it has become necessary for NOLS to implement a series of staff reductions and campus closures. These decisions were not made lightly, and we understand the profound impact they will have on our community.

We will reduce our workforce by 60 positions, of which 42 staff will be directly impacted, and 18 currently vacant positions will either be eliminated or not be filled due to restructuring. Also, in the fall of 2024, we will suspend operations at three campus locations: NOLS Pacific Northwest, NOLS Northeast, and NOLS Southwest.

As I have shared over the last twelve months, our financial situation requires significant action. To address NOLS' financial challenges, our school must reduce costs and downsize our administrative and support staff teams relative to course offerings. We have not returned to the course and student levels that we had experienced in the past.

By reducing the number of campuses operating in FY25, we aim to retain and grow the number of summer expedition students and work opportunities for field faculty by consolidating our summer field operations to Alaska, Rocky Mountain, Three Peaks Ranch, the Vernal River Base, and Teton Valley. We will continue supporting NOLS Northeast access programs in FY25 using a simplified format that is currently being developed.

The NOLS Northeast, NOLS Pacific Northwest, and NOLS Southwest campuses and wilderness classrooms have provided deeply positive experiences for thousands of students. They are home to extraordinary staff who make NOLS magic happen daily. The decisions we make today in support of the school should in no way overshadow the significance of these branches in the history of NOLS.

We are committed to supporting all affected employees during this time. Each individual directly impacted by the layoffs will be offered a severance package and additional resources to help ease this transition.

I want to assure you that we remain dedicated to our mission and values. While these changes represent a challenging period for NOLS, they are crucial for continuing to serve students with leadership, wilderness medicine, and outdoor skills for future decades. This is also an opportunity for us to refocus our efforts and emerge stronger and more resilient than ever before.

We understand that you may have questions or concerns about these changes, and we are committed to providing you with the information and support you need. Here's what you can expect in the days ahead:

Executive Team leaders will have individual discussions with employees whose roles are affected, providing details about their separation process. We kindly ask that you allow us the time today to engage with humanity and gratitude in a very difficult situation. Your Executive Team leader will let you know when these conversations are complete so that you may support each other. Separately, leaders will conduct optional team meetings to answer employees' questions and provide support for their teams. We understand this will be a challenging time for all our team members, whether impacted directly or indirectly; please afford each other grace, empathy, and kindness.

We will have an **all-school meeting on March 13 at 12:00 pm MT.**

This meeting will replace the Community Forum (already scheduled on the NOLS Events calendar). It will give you the chance to hear directly from me and other senior leaders and ask questions about these changes. We will also talk about how we got here, the impacts of these changes, why we had to make these difficult but necessary restructuring decisions, and where we go from here.

You can join the All-School Meeting using the Zoom link in the calendar invite.

Alongside staff and campus closures, we will scale back several programs.

- We are reducing entry-level campus wages to \$13/hr.
- Training and development programs will be reduced. Impacted programs include, but are not limited to, expedition leadership seminars, research programs, and instructor course reimbursement (for both expeditions and wilderness medicine).
- The US Domestic Expedition Instructor In Training Program (IIT) will run in a limited format this fiscal year. The FY25 plan for this program will be determined later this year.

- We have changed the seasonal employees' travel policy for 2024. New in-town, seasonal employees will not receive a travel reimbursement, and returning employees will receive a \$600 stipend toward travel to a campus.
- We will suspend the in-person Field Faculty Summit and Wilderness Medicine All Staff Meeting for 2024 and 2025.

Where do we go from here?

The value of a NOLS experience in the field and the classroom is increasingly important in the world today, especially as leadership skills are needed now more than ever. In short, our mission has never been more vital. I want to express my deepest gratitude to each of you for your unwavering dedication and commitment to NOLS. Together, we have built a vibrant and thriving community, and I am confident that we will navigate this challenging time with grace and resilience.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Sincerely,
Sandy Colhoun
President
NOLS