May 2020

# 2020 IES Wheat Ridge Nature Play Connections Project COVID-19 Update

## COVID-19 Modifications

Like many organizations across Colorado and around the globe, the Institute for Environmental Solutions has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home government mandates. It is an absolute priority for IES to keep all community members, stakeholders and team members safe during these unique times. The original plans to implement the 2020 IES Wheat Ridge Nature Play Connections Project (NPCP) in April and May of 2020 are not feasible due to social distancing requirements and students learning from home. IES is maintaining close communication with stakeholders and the community to ensure the project is still implemented, with unavoidable delays.

## Adaptations to student classroom workshops

The classroom workshops with Kullerstrand Teaching Responsibility And Independence with Learning Supports (TRAILS) students and their general education partners were planned for mid-April and early May 2020. The revised Workshop One will be in a remote-learning format in collaboration with TRAILS teachers and staff members for implementation. IES will maintain the original educational theme of pollinators and will encourage students to spend time safely outdoors during this spring and summer. The activities will be equitable and accessible to all families and students, regardless of resources available. Workshop Two is planned for September-October 2020, after two outdoor work days.

As students transition to a remote-learning format, IES looks forward to a new challenge of providing high-level environmental education at home.

## Adaptations to student planting days

The 2020 NPCP originally consisted of two planting days at Anderson Park in April 2020. Due to needed modifications, Wheat Ridge

Parks and Recreation Department (WRPRD) staff members will plant all proposed plants this spring to ensure their survival. In collaboration with WRPRD, Wheat Ridge Historical Society, and Kullerstrand Elementary School, the 2020 NPCP planting will now be implemented at Wheat Ridge Historical Park with an updated planting plan. The planting has been rescheduled for two days in September, contingent on shelter-in-place mandates being lifted and students returning to school. Planting day one will include planting instructions and tool safety as well as planting native species in the park. IES will take advantage of the Historical Park's location to add some historical curriculum to the planting days.

IES has chosen Historical Park as the updated planting site for the modified 2020 NPCP.

## Keep IES running through these difficult times!

Help IES advance our important environmental improvement and ecological education goals.

Donate today at www.coloradogives.org/i4es

Join the Tree Stewards volunteer program

Join our e-newsletter list to keep up to date on IES projects

IES is dedicated to the safety and health of the Colorado community. Despite challenges, we are moving forward in innovative ways to implement project events that prevent pollution and contamination.

To learn more, visit www.i4es.org or contact us at Solutions@i4es.org

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# 2020 Nature Play Connections Project (NPCP) Prospectus

## Project Overview

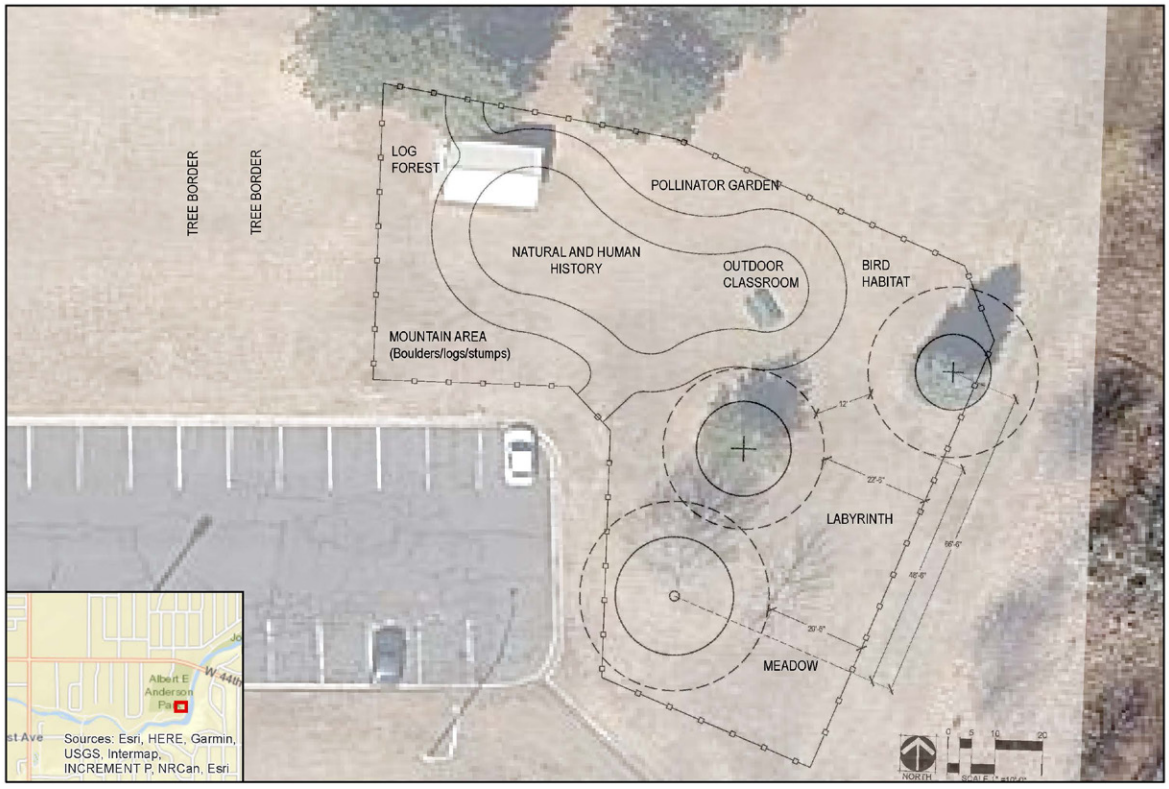
The Institute for Environmental Solutions (IES) 2020 Nature Play Connections Project (NPCP) will be our 7th year restoring open space in Wheat Ridge. This exciting new project will establish a pollinator garden and increase tree canopy in Anderson Park's new Nature Play Area. Through the 2020 NPCP, students at Kullerstrand Elementary will participate in two ecology and science curriculum-based workshops to develop leadership skills, interact with peers and adults in the community, and experience outdoor education that they don't often have access to. IES will continue valuable partnerships with the Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation Department (WRPRD) and Kullerstrand Elementary School, and will continue to grow and strengthen the volunteer Tree Stewards maintenance program.

TRAILS students from Kullerstrand Elementary participate in planting trees and native flowers in Wheat Ridge.

## Wheat Ridge Community and Nature Play Area

Wheat Ridge, Colorado, is home to 31,000 residents. Since 2000, Wheat Ridge has increased local available walking routes by 24%. The new Nature Play Area in Anderson Park will include natural play structures such as trees, stumps, and rocks rather than plastic playground equipment. The park path will connect to the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt trail. The project will engage children in learning and playing in their local environment through natural play and learning structures. The Nature Play Area will include meadow, a pollinator garden, a labyrinth, and a local history feature. Students from several local schools are involved in the design and construction of the Nature Play Area.

# Map of Nature Play Area




**2020 IES Wheat Ridge Nature Play Connections Project Map**

2019 NFWF Project Location Map

Institute for Environmental Solutions

Draft
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## Project Objectives

- Create a pollinator garden in an area previously covered with turf grass to attract and provide habitat for critical pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and birds
- Create a meadow using native flowers and shrubs to increase native plant cover in the park
- Improve the area damaged by construction of the area by planting native plants
- Develop and implement two ecological workshops with Kullerstrand TRAILS and general education students
- Care for new plants for three years after planting by the IES Tree Stewards
- Foster strong collaborative relationships with project stakeholders through planning and debrief meetings
- Evaluate the success of the project, and create a Final Report and project video to document the program for improvement and future replication

## Partnership with Project Stakeholders

Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation is an invaluable partner to IES.

IES has partnered with WRPRD for the past 7 years, and has planted over 200 plants in the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt through 6 community-based projects. WRPRD is essential to the success of IES projects in Wheat Ridge, from helping during planting days to filling tanks for weekly site watering. Our partnership continues in a different location, Anderson Park, for the 2020 Nature Play Connections Project. Our collaboration will ensure a successful project.

An essential aspect to IES projects is high-quality environmental and ecological education for local schoolchildren. Kullerstrand Elementary School in Wheat Ridge has partnered with IES for the past 4 projects. Kullerstrand Elementary's Teaching Responsibility And Independence with Learning Supports (TRAILS) students and their general education partners in grades kindergarten through 5 participate in ecological workshops and planting days every spring. Student participation ensures strong cross-curricular connections to environmental education in and out of the classroom, and helps develop the next generation of lifelong environmental stewards.

Kullerstrand students learn about the local ecology through engaging workshops.

## Get involved: Become an IES Project Volunteer or Tree Steward!

IES welcomes volunteers of any age or ability to join us for our projects to help our environment! From participating in weekly plant maintenance to planting during our work days with students, we provide a broad range of volunteer options that everyone can enjoy.

The IES Tree Stewards program involves local community members in plant maintenance to increase survival rates of IES plants. Tree Stewards water, weed, and mulch the new plants weekly for three years to ensure that plants stay healthy and are set up for success after planting. The Tree Stewards program is a vital resource for IES and is what makes IES projects effective, maximizing survival rate for all planting sites. We are looking for more terrific volunteers to help us make a difference and improve the environment! If you are interested in becoming a Tree Steward and making a positive impact in your community, visit www.i4es.org or email solutions@i4es.org for more details.

Volunteer Tree Stewards and local children work together to ensure the success of each project in Wheat Ridge.

## Funding

IES needs funding to successfully implement environmental improvement and education projects in the Denver area. You can help! Every dollar donated to IES will help us educate young environmental stewards, plant more native plants and trees, and ensure our beautiful open space remains healthy. To donate, visit www.coloradogives.org/i4es.

## Example of Donation Impact to IES

| Donation | Environmental impact | Educational impact |
|---|---|---|
| $100 | Plant one large tree in Anderson Park | Purchase supplies and materials for student workshops |
| $250 | Plant three shrubs in Anderson Park | Fund an interactive module for student workshops |
| $500 | Plant three large trees in Anderson Park | Fund mapping materials for the workshops and planting days |
| $1000 | Plant six large trees in Anderson Park | Train volunteers to be Tree Stewards |
| $2,000 | Plant 50 native shrubs | Host educational workshops for elementary students |

## 2020 NPCP Funders

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the Community First Foundation, Wheat Ridge Outside Agency Program, and Hertel Living Trust have provided funds to IES to implement this year's project in Anderson Park. Thanks to the generous contribution through NFWF, IES is on track to accomplish all project tasks and goals for the 2020 Nature Play Connections Project.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a generous contributor to this year's project.

Powering Community Together

## About IES

The Institute for Environmental Solutions delivers scientific solutions to improve our health and environment. Founded in 2004, IES applies an innovative approach to environmental problem solving that emphasizes asking difficult questions, reaching out to all potentially affected stakeholders to invite involvement in project design and oversight, and commitment to sound science. The Tree Project improves Colorado cities through multi-disciplinary partnerships and urban forestry programs. We improve the environment and community health and educate children and adults to become environmental stewards. The Tree Project engages community members to rehabilitate, improve, and maintain urban natural resources. To learn more about IES and the Tree Project, visit www.i4es.org.