

# *Un Año Outdoors*

2024 • HONORING OUR *RAÍCES*



## **Mission**

We inspire, connect, and engage Latino communities in the outdoors and embrace *cultura y familia* as part of the outdoor narrative, ensuring our history, heritage, and leadership are valued and represented.

## **Vision**

A world where all Latino communities enjoy nature as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place—a world where the outdoors is a place to share and celebrate stories, knowledge, and culture while growing leadership and an active community of Latino outdoor users, mentors, and stewards.

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*familia • comunidad • cultura • access • service • diversity • life-long learning*





“My LO community is a constant source of positive interactions with people I can learn from and look up to.”  
-Geraldine Duque Salazar, Latino Outdoors Volunteer, Boston, MA



## ABOUT US

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A simple declaration of love for *latinidad* in the outdoors took root and grew from its 2013 origins as a personal blog into a national *comunidad* of people who love and care for the outdoors. Today, Latino Outdoors (LO) is powered by a volunteer network that is 250 members strong and reaches communities in 32 locations from coast to coast. Together with LO's national support staff, these volunteer leaders are expanding outdoor engagement and conservation through leadership development opportunities for hundreds, recreational experiences for thousands, and narrative-shifting initiatives that reach tens of thousands every year.



**Photos By:**

**Cover:** Verónica Miranda, LO Volunteer, San Francisco

**Previous:** Geraldine Duque Salazar, LO Volunteer, Boston

**Top:** Diana Ramos, LO Volunteer, DC/Maryland/Virginia

**Bottom:** Lebný Pargás, LO Volunteer, Seattle

## 2023 RECAP

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Illustration by Elexis Padrón, LO Volunteer, SF Bay Area

Before stepping into 2024, Latino Outdoors marked a significant milestone. In [2023](#), we celebrated our 10th anniversary and reflected on the journey, honoring the friendships and partnerships that have empowered and shaped our community. We published [Pepe Plantasemillas](#), a children's book that recaps LO's first decade metaphorically through the adventures of a colorful bird sharing a seed of *cultura y comunidad*. We showcased a traveling art exhibit, featuring commissioned art and archival photos of our community over the years. We connected more than 8,600 participants to the outdoors by delivering nearly 380 outings nationally. For the first time, LO's leadership campout ventured beyond California, as we held our annual national retreat within the stunning landscapes of Texas' Hill Country. Over 80 volunteers, staff, board members, and special guests gathered for a memorable weekend of connection, learning, and inspiration. We expanded our reach by welcoming nearly 100 new volunteer leaders to LO, growing and strengthening our regional teams in Chicago, Miami, Dallas, and Bakersfield. Anniversary festivities culminated in a beautiful *fiesta* with storytelling, music, and dancing.





**Photos By:**

**Left:** Victoria Ramírez, LO Volunteer, Fresno

**Middle:** LCW Photo Contest Winner Rebeca Garcia

**Right:** Fernando Ramos, LO Volunteer, Philadelphia

## OUR PROGRAMS

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Latino Outdoors centers its work around three programmatic focus areas: outdoor experiences, narratives, and leadership. Our core programs work in synergy, strengthening each other and amplifying their collective impact. Through *Vamos Outdoors* (Let's Go Outdoors), we nurture a stronger connection between participants and the outdoors, primarily through free, organized family and community-friendly outings. We then amplify these and other outdoor experiences as part of our storytelling and advocacy efforts under LO's *Yo Cuento Outdoors* (I Matter/ I Tell a Story/ I Count Outdoors) Program, with the goal of enriching the collective narrative of outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation. And through our third program, *Crecemos Outdoors* (We Grow Outdoors), we give back to our volunteers and the broader LO *comunidad* by supporting them with leadership development and capacity-building opportunities.

### VAMOS OUTDOORS

We begin each new year with one big resolution: celebrate community outdoors. This year LO Inland Empire literally ran into the new year. LO community members participated in the Run With the Roses 5K sponsored by lululemon on New Year's Eve. As the clock struck midnight, the run began. Under streetlights and an urban night sky, Latino Outdoors welcomed 2024 in community with 2,500 runners from southern California and beyond. Each stride through the streets of Pasadena a celebration of the promise of the next 366 days. As the sun rose all across our national network, the first-day hikes began.





Photo by Michê Lozano, LO Volunteer, Tucson

LO DC/Maryland/Virginia bundled up for a chilly hike along the banks of the Shenandoah River. LO Tucson climbed Pusch Peak in the Sonoran Desert and were greeted by a tiny rock wren at the summit. LO San Antonio and LO San Diego enjoyed nature close to home strolling through local city parks where they shared *chocolate caliente* and set intentions for the year to come. And on the west coast, LO San Francisco hiked along the water's edge at Tomales Bay State Park enjoying a bluebird day and views of the tranquil bay. Each regional team welcomed the year in a different location, yet all did so with the common purpose of cultivating *comunidad*.

In 2024, LO leaders led more outings for more people than in any prior year. Over 500 outings took place and over 11,000 participants took part. We hiked. We kayaked. We birded. We biked. We camped. We fished. We rafted. We danced. Nearly a quarter of our participants were youth and 43% were first timers. Every Latino Outdoors outing is crafted with community in mind. Each one is an expression of joy in the outdoors.

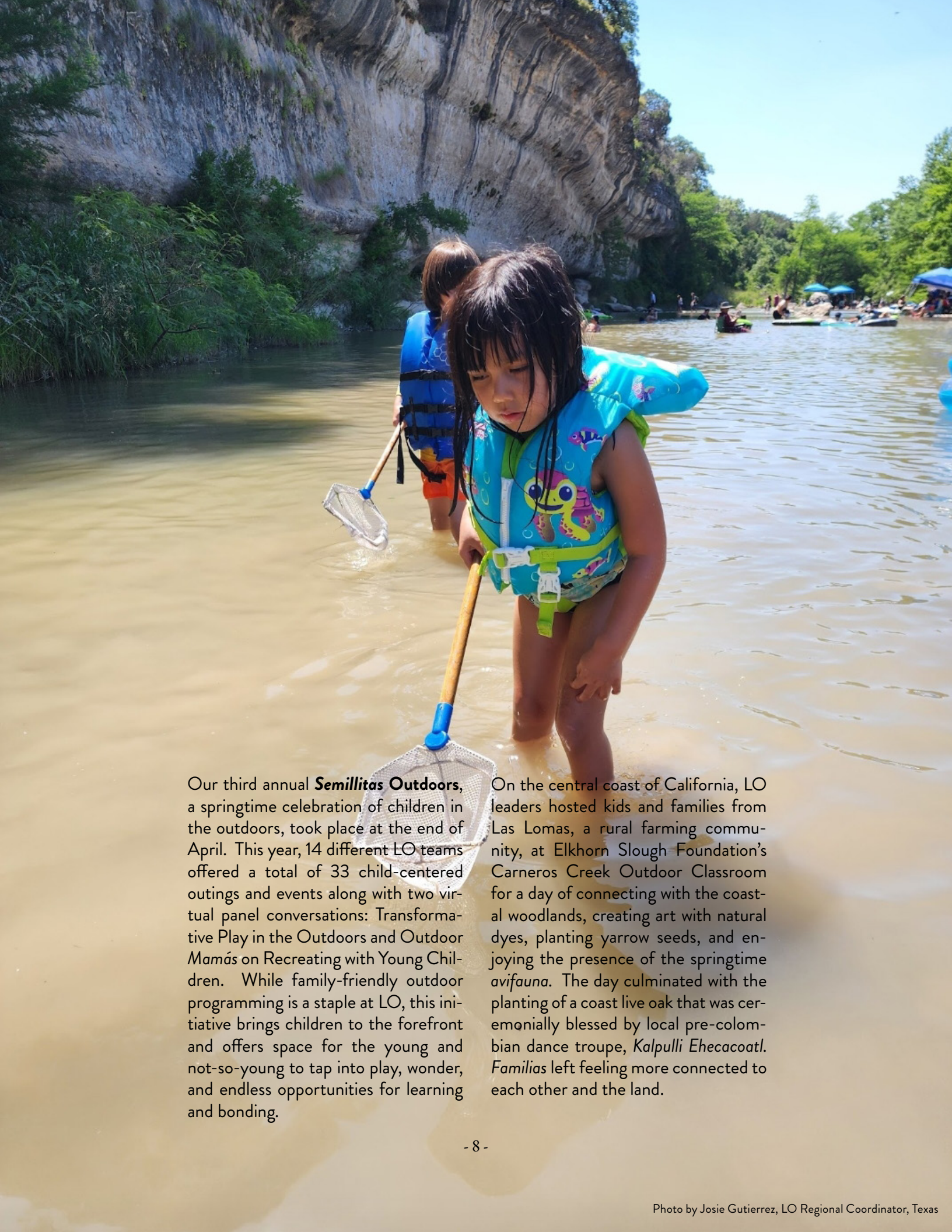
Photo by Edith Campos, LO Volunteer, Houston

“This was LO Houston’s first full day event that included transporting participants outside of the city. The collaboration with Precinct 2 (for free transportation) and Houston Audubon (for free entry and guide) made this event possible and successful. Smith Oaks is a world renowned sanctuary [for birding] so being able to provide this experience at no cost to our community was very meaningful.”

-Edith Campos, Latino Outdoors Volunteer, Houston, TX







Our third annual **Semillitas Outdoors**, a springtime celebration of children in the outdoors, took place at the end of April. This year, 14 different LO teams offered a total of 33 child-centered outings and events along with two virtual panel conversations: Transformative Play in the Outdoors and Outdoor Mamás on Recreating with Young Children. While family-friendly outdoor programming is a staple at LO, this initiative brings children to the forefront and offers space for the young and not-so-young to tap into play, wonder, and endless opportunities for learning and bonding.

On the central coast of California, LO leaders hosted kids and families from Las Lomas, a rural farming community, at Elkhorn Slough Foundation's Carneros Creek Outdoor Classroom for a day of connecting with the coastal woodlands, creating art with natural dyes, planting yarrow seeds, and enjoying the presence of the springtime avifauna. The day culminated with the planting of a coast live oak that was ceremonially blessed by local pre-colombian dance troupe, *Kalpulli Ehecacatl*. Families left feeling more connected to each other and the land.





Photo by Verónica Miranda, LO Volunteer, San Francisco

**Orgullosamente Outdoors** is about proudly bringing your whole self outdoors and cultivating a community that welcomes everyone that does so. More and more people, including members of the LGBTQIA+ community, are uplifting the healing power of the outdoors. LO welcomes LGBTQIA+ people all year long. Each June however, we raise the level of our intentionality together with everyone else who celebrates Pride Month and what it represents. In 2024, we hosted 15 Pride-centered

outings and events including campouts, day hikes, bouldering events y mas. In a local park, LO Baltimore volunteers hosted a Pride sunset yoga and picnic, providing a grounding space for participants to move and breathe in unison surrounded by colorful flags blowing in the wind. Part of working towards a better world, means contributing to one in which everyone can safely and proudly be who they are, whether it's outdoors or anywhere else.



## YO CUENTO

Stories are powerful. They give us strength, make us laugh, and can unite us unlike anything else. Without storytelling, there is no Latino Outdoors. Across a variety of media and formats, we continually strive to tell and amplify stories that celebrate and uplift *latinidad*'s rich diversity and relationship with the outdoors. We share stories that touch on our connection to nature, commitment to conservation, and the joy and healing we find in nature together. LO's storytelling continues to reach more and more people. Our audience across various online platforms stood at 121,000 when 2024 came to a close, an 8% increase year-over-year.

Each year, Latino Outdoors volunteers and staff create and share thousands of pieces of content, both regionally and nationally. And although the volume of our communications is important because it reflects the many voices that are behind it, the words that are coming from our community of storytellers are what matter most. In 2024, some of those words were conveyed through panels and presentations on birding, outdoor career pathways, the annual City Nature Challenge, and more. Other storytellers with whom we collaborated included friends from GreenLatinos, NYC Audubon, Drag Story Hour, Sempervirens Fund, Pride Outside, and more. We highlighted the ParksRx Movement, which is seeing doctors and clinicians prescribe time in nature, and amplified Sempervirens Fund's [TrailsRx](#) initiative, a wellness program focused specifically on the physical and mental health benefits of enjoying redwood forest trails. Each story adds something new and unique to the larger outdoor narrative. Each story broadens and strengthens the outdoor community.



“I love how the phrase *Yo Cuento* is ambiguous and can take on several meanings. It can mean ‘I tell a story’, but it can also mean ‘I count’ or ‘I matter.’ The latter stands out to me the most because, for a long time, I didn’t think I mattered in the outdoors. I don’t look like your average outdoor enthusiast, and it wasn’t until about six years ago when I discovered the beauty of nature and my passion for hiking and building community.”

— Maricruz Zarate, [contributor](#) to LO's Blog





Photo by LCW Photo Contest Winner Rebeca Garcia

The 5th annual Latino Conservation Week Photo Contest received over 200 submissions. Each one a piece of visual storytelling that expands outdoor and conservation narratives. Earning the grand prize was a photograph depicting conservation *cultura* in the form of a group of people walking down a path carrying freshly cut *carrizo* (reeds) in the Oaxacan countryside. Photographer Rebeca Garcia

explained, “As Zapotec Indigenous people, conservation is maintained through an intimate relationship with the land. We tend to the land, as she tends to us. On this day, she let us borrow some *carrizo* to make the crafts we will continue making for generations: baskets, reusable straws, doors, the list goes on and on.” This image reminds us that conservation *cultura* runs deep and that our stories cross borders.



## Advocacy

Our approach to advocacy is relationship-driven, centers community, and amplifies our personal and cultural ties to place. We tell stories about the places we love, the ecological threats we face, and the importance of protecting open spaces. People who love the land, who have authentic, positive experiences with it, are more likely to fight to protect the land. This year, Latino Outdoors successfully engaged in collaborative advocacy efforts for the expansion of San Gabriel Mountains National Monument and inclusion of the Molok Luyuk ridgeline in Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument. These expansions protected nearly 120,000 acres of lands in California with scientific, cultural, ecological, and historical importance, while improving outdoor access for nearby communities. National monument designations are part of “30x30” efforts to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030 to mitigate climate change. In this work, LO continues to focus on relationship-building with indigenous tribes and local communities to support their conservation priorities.



*"I went into this process thinking that I was not enough in a myriad of ways. And literally after the first meeting, I was like, 'nah, I belong here.' You belong here. These people aren't as scary as we pedestal them to be. And they work for us, and they need to hear us." -Mel Mendez, Latino Outdoors NY & Northeast Regional Coordinator, on her first advocacy experience on Capitol Hill during Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK) Week 2024*



“Being in community with my [LO] team always inspires me to connect with and explore the outdoors. In those spaces, we share so much joy and laughter, and I can't think of better ways to do this. When we program, this joy is reflected, and participants become inspired to return to explore the outdoors with us.”

-Victoria Ramírez, Latino Outdoors Volunteer, Fresno, CA

## CRECEMOS OUTDOORS

Latino Outdoors continues to foster diverse outdoor leadership by supporting our volunteer leaders with professional development opportunities and an affinity space. This year, a new LO regional team launched to serve communities in California's Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, offering them opportunities to connect with the ocean, mountains, and region's open spaces. Nationwide, 50 people joined LO as new volunteers.

Our volunteers approach their LO experience with a growth mindset, and Latino Outdoors reciprocates by investing in them and their capacity as leaders. In 2024, LO sponsored 22 volunteers with wilderness first aid training. This certification bolsters the ability of our leaders to be responsive to medical conditions and challenges that can arise during outings. Additionally, we supported volunteers' participation in trainings to develop skills in backpacking, camping, indoor climbing, sea kayaking, surfing, and yoga. LO leaders also networked and learned together with allies during gatherings such as the NOLS Wilderness Risk Management, America the Beautiful For All: New Era New Leaders, and We Are One Conferences. These convenings connect our volunteers and staff to peer learning opportunities and support their development as leaders in outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation.

The Jobs+ Opportunity Board on [latinooutdoors.org](http://latinooutdoors.org) is a simple way in which LO helps increase awareness of the wide-ranging employment and professional advancement opportunities in outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation. The public can search for and post opportunities to the job board. Over 2,000 jobs, internships, and fellowships were shared in 2024.





Photo by Verónica Miranda, LO Volunteer, San Francisco

Our annual LO Leadership Campout took us to new heights as we gathered 8,500 feet above sea level at Colorado’s Rocky Mountain National Park. Volunteer leaders representing 17 different Latino Outdoors regions along with staff and board members visited the traditional homeland and territory of various present-day tribal nations including the Assiniboine, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Northern Cheyenne and Ute Indian Tribe, among others. A total of 72 people convened for LO’s national retreat, which saw us hiking at dawn, observing moose and other wildlife, learning about phenology, fishing, engaging in strategic planning, dancing, and laughing. It was a joyful celebration of Latino Outdoors leaders who descended from the mountains with full hearts and a renewed commitment to championing diverse people systems and ecosystems.



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

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Latino Outdoors is a community first and an organization second, and LO Austin leader Liz Cruz is all about *comunidad*. She tirelessly advocates for Latinos of all ages to tap into their own love of nature and the outdoors. Liz first connected with LO as a participant attending day hikes and community events. Two years later, she volunteers as Program Coordinator for Latino Outdoors in Austin. Although she has core childhood memories of time spent visiting her *abuela* in the countryside, playing under pecan trees with her cousins, and enjoying bean and cheese taco picnics courtesy of her grandmother, Liz did not fully recognize her love of the outdoors until later in life. We are in awe of her openness to trying new experiences, like a 25-mile backpacking expedition into Montana wilderness land with fellow LO leaders to gather water samples for a community science project. Together with her teammates in Austin, she frequently organizes and leads outings, engages in community outreach, and encourages the members of LO Austin's growing *comunidad* to try something new. *Mil gracias* Liz for reminding us that it is never too late to embrace the many ways there are to connect with the outdoors.



Photo by Josie Gutierrez, LO Regional Coordinator, Texas





## MIL GRACIAS | MANY THANKS

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Comunidad is at the heart of Latino Outdoors, and that includes the community of nonprofits, land management agencies, outdoor clubs, affinity groups, businesses, and foundations that we collaborate with each year. This ecosystem of collaborators creates synergies and strengthens bonds between people and the outdoors, and we are grateful to be a part of it.

In 2024, LO connected with [more than 600 collaborators](#). Some of our partners and supporters during the year included:

11th Hour Project/The Schmidt Family Foundation • Ability Skateboarding & Action Sports • All Bodies on Bikes - ABQ • Arc'teryx • *Bachata Flow* • Bat Conservation International • Botanical Community Development Initiatives • C&S Wholesale Grocers • Camp Uwani • Chicago BIPOC Birders • City of San Antonio - Parks & Recreation • Clif Family Foundation • Coalition for Engaged Education • Community Initiatives • Conservation Lands Foundation • Continental Divide Trail Coalition • Defenders of Wildlife • *Defensores de la Cuenca* • Elkhorn Slough Foundation • Friends of Herring Run Parks • H-E-B • Hispanic Access Foundation • Houston Audubon • Jacob & Terese Hershey Foundation • Justice Outside • Kayak Chicago • Kelson Foundation • Latinas in Tech • lululemon • M.E.Ch.A de Fresno City College • *MANA de Albuquerque* • Marigold Society, Janaki Anagha • Maryland Department of Natural Resources • Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation • Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation • Miami Workers Center • Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District • More Women+ Surf • Morro Coast Audubon Society • My Outdoor Colorado • National Park Service • National Park Trust • Nevada Department of Wildlife • New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division • New York State Parks • Next Generation Sonoran Desert Researchers (N-Gen) • *Nuestras Raíces*, Holyoke, MA • Outdoor Afro • Outdoor Asian • Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK) • Parks California • Philly Bike Oracle • Pilsen Public Art Tours • Pisces Foundation • Pride Outside • Rails to Trails Conservancy • REI Cooperative Action Fund • Resources Legacy Fund • Richard King Mellon Foundation • *Salud Chicago* • *Sempervirens* Fund • Summits in Solidarity • Swaner Preserve & EcoCenter, Utah State University • Texas Parks & Wildlife • The Campbell Foundation • The North Face • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • Waverley Street Foundation • Western Conservation Foundation • William and Flora Hewlett Foundation





## *GRACIAS OUTDOORS*

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The sun rises and we gather  
To walk trails, to paddle through water, to BE outdoors.  
With *pan dulce*, *arepas*, and *cafecito* in hand,  
Our joyful voices greet the day.

We are in this together.  
We cultivate *comunidad*. We cultivate conservation *cultura*.  
We love and enjoy the healing land and revitalizing water.  
*Estamos aquí.*  
With you.  
*Gracias Outdoors.*





## LOOKING AHEAD

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Photo by Camp Uwani, LO Collaborator, New York City

We have some mantras at Latino Outdoors. If you've read up to this point, you'll have come across them. "Vamos outdoors", "crecemos outdoors", and "estamos aquí", to name a few. "Yo cuento" is another, and it conveys so much in just two words. It is a phrase in Spanish that means "I tell a story", "I matter", and "I count". Though worded as a personal expression, it is an invitation to LO community members to take up that mantra for and beyond themselves.

The complete sentiment behind the two words is "I matter, you matter, and we matter." Although this may seem like a given, it's worth spelling out in a world where there is plenty of focus on the "I" and perhaps not enough on the "we". This trending preoccupation with our individual perspective is exacerbated by our increasing dependence on forms of social and interpersonal communication that are simply proxies and stand-ins for our real selves. We filter and inhibit our social interactions through

screens, apps, and now, AI. Empathy easily becomes a foreign concept when our methods of interacting with others do not require us to be authentically present with them.

To matter, we actually have to show up. We have to show up for ourselves and each other. We have to BE: be engaged, be heard, be a listener, be challenged, and be present. There is no substitute for real life. The camera doesn't do it justice. You have to be there.

Although showing up means being open and vulnerable, it also means making ourselves available to opportunities for learning and growth. At LO, we have found that the outdoors is a powerful space that is conducive to cultivating community. It is a setting with the right conditions for conjuring a spirit of shared responsibility and understanding. The outdoors can make our hearts beat faster, our stomachs growl, and our bodies shiver. In the outdoors, we fall down and get back up. The outdoors reminds us of how small we are in the grand scheme of things and how big we are when we rise to the challenge. In the outdoors, we are both pushed back and propelled forward. And when we experience these things together, *en comunidad*, we discover that we are more alike than we are different.

A new year brings with it some uncertainty. However, what is certain is that the outdoors is no less a place for cultivating community than it was last year. The potential and possibilities for learning and growing together remain the same. For 2025, Latino Outdoors invites everyone to show up, in real life, to show love for the outdoors and for each other.



# LATINO OUTDOORS®

Latino Outdoors is a space for the community to be present, share our voices, and showcase how an ethic of conservation and roots in nature have been ingrained in *la cultura latina* for generations.

[latinooutdoors.org](http://latinooutdoors.org)