

The Clearing



PROGRAM GUIDE



FARM & WILDERNESS



Campers gather for a pre-meal circle near The Clearing's outdoor kitchen.

WHY CHOOSE THE CLEARING?

The Clearing at Farm & Wilderness (F&W) offers a rare opportunity for young people to step away from the relentless pace of modern life. Here, campers trade clocks for connection, discovering who they truly are when freed from the pressures of screens, mirrors, and constant scheduling. This is a place where middle schoolers learn to live in harmony with the natural world, master outdoor living skills, and experience the power of shared ritual and ceremony.

What makes The Clearing special is its depth. While many camps offer wilderness activities, few provide the time and space for young people to truly slow down and develop spiritual connection to nature and community. Through gathering natural living skills, working closely together, and participating in ceremonies that mark personal growth, campers experience something truly transformative. In our small community of 30-42 campers living in canvas lodges on more than 4,800 acres of conserved woodlands, every young person matters and belongs.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Clearing is a two-week unplugged wilderness experience for campers ages 11-14, located on the central ridge of the Green Mountains in Mount Holly Vermont. Young people live in simple canvas lodges, develop deep outdoor living skills and build close friendships in a low-competition environment focused on daily ritual, ceremony, and spiritual connection that helps them embrace closeness to the natural world. All genders are welcome in a mixed community that honors all identities.

Living Spaces

Campers live in canvas yurts with 4-6 campers and one counselor per lodge. Each lodge features a fire at its center, creating a warm gathering space. Shared facilities nearby provide fresh water and hot showers.

Daily Rhythm

Days begin with morning chores—gathering fuel, chopping wood, tending composting toilets, and preparing breakfast. After breakfast, the entire camp gathers for Silent Meeting and Community Meeting before heading to immersions. Afternoons include free choice activity periods, and evenings offer diverse programming from cabin time to all-camp ceremonies.

OUTCOMES

Close Connection to Nature

Campers develop deeper knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the natural world and feel they are of nature, not separate from it.

Throughout sessions, campers will demonstrate this connection by:

- Spending most of their time outdoors in the woods.
- Becoming familiar with the element of fire through daily practice
- Building shelters using natural materials and traditional techniques

Close Connection to Self

Through taking on learning experiences, challenges, and friendships, campers develop a stronger sense of identity and self-esteem by finding a new willingness to pursue personal challenges.

Throughout sessions, campers will demonstrate self-connection by:

- Completing personal challenges like Fire Quest
- Choosing immersions that match their interests
- Experiencing freedom from clocks, mirrors, and screens
- Working safely with knives, axes, and other wilderness tools
- Applying learned skills during Earth Walk overnight experience

A camper practices their knife skills with a self-directed whittling project.





Campers explore the natural world and their relationship to it through structured learning opportunities.

Close Connection to Community

Campers develop true belonging with their peers after two weeks of taking on challenges together, keeping camp running together, and experiencing ceremonies designed to foster acceptance.

Throughout sessions, campers will demonstrate interconnectedness by:

- Contributing through daily chores that benefit everyone
- Working in small lodge groups with close counselor support
- Participating in ceremonies that mark growth
- Supporting peers during Fire Quest and celebrations

Freedom from Modern Pressures

Campers experience life free from pressures of clocks, mirrors, and screens, heightening their ability to be present and aware of their immediate surroundings, and find joy in simpler living.

Throughout sessions, campers will demonstrate this freedom by:

- Living without watches, following natural rhythms
- Having no access to mirrors, phones, or technology
- Measuring days by ceremonies and natural light
- Being fully themselves without constant external validation

MAGIC MOMENTS/SESSION JOURNEY

Camper should come away from a summer at The Clearing with new skills and experiences. Educational programming is designed to serve as the foundation upon which these transformative moments take place. These 'magic moments' are stages in the campers' journey through their weeks together at camp that make it an unforgettable experience.

They are as follows:

- I'm here, I matter, and I'm going to be alright.
- I'm excited about what's ahead, I am confident I can do it and ready to get started.
- I'm in! We're in the zone.
- It was hard and I am proud of myself.
- I belong here because I have contributed and I want to celebrate this with others

STAFFING

Each camper lodge consists of 4-6 campers and one counselor. With an enrollment goal of 30-42 campers, The Clearing has a staff-to-camper ratio of approximately 1:3 in Year 1, potentially rising to 1:4 in future years.

The Support Staff Team

- Camp Director (shared with SAM Camp - Adair Arbor)
- 2 Assistant Directors
- Logistics Coordinator
- Program Support
- Head Cook
- 6 Cabin Counselors
- Shared Nurse

In our small, all-gender community, everyone belongs.





The natural world is our home and our classroom, and most of our days are spent fully outside.

The Clearing staff are trained in Behavior Management and Conflict Resolution, Youth Development, Mental Health, Cultural Competency (DEI), Wilderness Skills, and the camp-specific Emergency Action Plan. All staff are Wilderness First Aid certified by the start of camp, with many receiving Wilderness First Responder certification. Staff will come experienced and with a deep understanding of F&W, allowing training to focus on technical skills.

Shared Resources with SAM Camp

The Clearing benefits from shared systems with SAM Camp, including healthcare (shared nurse with designated nursing assistant), behavioral health specialist, coordinated operations, and kitchen coordination for meal planning and ordering.

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PROGRAM FEATURES

Daily Program: Morning Prep

The day begins with 45 minutes to 1 hour of community time before breakfast to prepare for the day. Working in rotating groups, campers gather fuel for fires, chop wood, clean and restock composting toilets, and take showers. The shower group serves as cook crew with additional duties helping prepare meals. These chores aren't just logistics—they're essential for camp to function and teach the practice of interdependence.

Daily Program: Silent Meeting and Community Meeting

After breakfast, the entire community gathers for Silent Meeting—a time for group contemplation where campers sit together in silence, listening to nature and connecting to each other. Following Silent Meeting, Community Meeting offers space for reflection, processing, and community connection.

Daily Program: Immersions

Immersions are structured, 7-8 day workshops with clear learning arcs. Rather than sampling many activities, campers choose one immersion to pursue deeply, developing real competency through sustained practice.

Immersion options include:

- Fire Skills: Advanced techniques, building different types of fires, bowdrill mastery
- Backcountry Cuisine: Advanced fire cooking, wild edibles, outdoor meal preparation
- Practical Arts: Basket weaving, hide tanning, cordage, working with natural materials
- Storytelling: Preparing stories and songs about nature and community

Daily Program: Free Choice Activity Periods

After lunch and rest hour, campers enjoy two afternoon periods choosing how to spend time—hikes, swimming, crafting, games, practicing skills, or staff/camper-led activities.

Major Ceremonies

Opening Ceremony

Marks the start of the experience with lighting a fire that will burn throughout the session. All other fires throughout the session for cooking, warmth, and ceremony will be lit from this central flame that we start together on our first night as a community.

Fire is integral to daily life at The Clearing, including for cooking, skill practice, and as part of our ceremonies.



Fire Quest and Welcoming Celebration

Each camper takes on the challenge of building either a solo fire from sunrise to sundown, or participates in the building and tending of our community Big Fire. After a potluck dinner with other F&W guests, we join together for a ceremony of storytelling, song, appreciation, and formally welcoming new community members to our circle. We'll end the night by dancing "The Serpentine", a beloved and upbeat tradition that blends music, dance, and storytelling into an interactive oral history of this land and the people who love it.

Earth Walk

The culminating overnight experience where campers apply all learned skills. Working in immersion groups, they venture into the woods to set up camp and spend the night. They return for lunch, then participate in a closing ceremony that includes putting out the session fire.

SAMPLE SESSION SCHEDULE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	Arrival	Camp Skills 101	Immersion	Immersion	Immersion	Fire Quest	Immersion
	Opening Ceremony	Immersion			Waterfront Evening		Adventure Day Prep
Week 2	Adventure Day	Immersion	Immersion	Immersion	Earth Walk	Earth Walk Returns	Departure
						Big Pack	

Week One

Sunday: Arrival and Orientation

Monday-Tuesday: Introduction to all skill areas, setting up camp routines

Wednesday-Thursday: First immersion rotation begins

Friday: Cabin cookout evening

Saturday-Sunday: Community building activities and immersion work

Week Two

Monday-Tuesday: Final immersion rotation, Fire Quest preparation

Wednesday: Fire Quest and Welcoming Celebration

Thursday: Rest and recovery day

Friday: Earth Walk preparation

Saturday: Earth Walk overnight begins

Sunday: Return from Earth Walk, Closing Ceremony

Monday: Departure

SAMPLE MENU

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oatmeal and fixings (nuts, brown sugar, dried fruit, sunflower seeds) • Hard boiled eggs • Sliced apples and oranges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrambled eggs and sauteed greens • Yogurt (non-dairy and dairy options) with toppings • Peach cobbler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homemade biscuits and gravy (vegan and meat varieties) • Granola and milk • Yogurt (non-dairy and dairy options) with toppings • Sliced apples and oranges
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwich bar: cold cuts, cheese, bread, sun butter and jelly, sliced tomatoes • Egg salad • Hummus • Salad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegan chili with toppings of sour cream, cheese, tortilla chips • Kale salad with cranberries, nuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grilled cheese sandwiches and homemade omato soup • Cucumbers and carrots • Chips
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbed popcorn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tortilla chips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grapes
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homemade mac and cheese • Kale salad • Carrot sticks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulled pork • Buns • Coleslaw • Pickled onions • Green salad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make your own burritos: tortillas, rice, beans, slaw, veggies, cheese, sour cream, onions

Note: Meals will be prepared using combination of fire, outdoor oven, and propane stove. Menu will feature family-style meals eaten outdoors or under the Roundhouse, incorporating produce from F&W farms when possible. Cook crew (rotating camper groups) will assist with meal preparation under staff guidance.

The Roundhouse is our central, covered gathering space.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We believe that the incredible F&W experience should be open to all who want to join. We have a deep history of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion work dating back to our founding. We strive to create systems and spaces to create as diverse a community as possible. This has three prongs: camper discussions & experience, organizational systems, and staffing policies.

Camper Discussions & Programming

We want all our campers to feel a sense of belonging. This begins when campers feel they can bring their full authentic selves to the experience. All our camps use a foundational approach that focuses, sequentially, on four topics:

IDENTITY > EMPATHY > CRITICAL THINKING > ACTION

The discussions are age-appropriate and focused on each camp's unique community. Campers at The Clearing will have an evening focused on Identity and Empathy.

Organizational Systems

To support our staff, campers, and programming, we have implemented several systems to help us be more responsive to a diverse group of campers, including:

- Teaching preventive responses to behaviors through routines & rituals
- Utilizing a behavior response system emphasizing collaboration and team decision-making
- Comprehensive orientation of families prior to arrival

Staffing Policies

Inspired by the words of the late Dr. Rita Pierson, we believe that "every camper deserves a champion" and we actively work to hire a diverse staff, so every camper can see themselves reflected in our staff. We have worked to partner with organizations to create pipelines and opportunities for staff new to F&W. Our industry-leading three weeks of staff training include deep discussions around identity and a large toolkit of responses that focus on preventive routines that work for all campers.

Campers at The Clearing form deep connections with themselves, with nature, and with each other.



Gender Inclusion at The Clearing

The Clearing is designed as a mixed-gender community that honors all identities. We offer housing options for male, female, and all-gender lodges to ensure all campers can choose the living situation where they feel most comfortable. We follow F&W best practices for supporting gender-diverse campers and creating an inclusive environment where all young people can thrive.

Cultural Respect in Ceremony

We are committed to designing ceremonies and rituals at The Clearing that are culturally appropriate and authentic to the values our camps were founded on rather than borrowing from other cultures. Our Mission and Values statements can be found at: www.farmandwilderness.org/about#mission

THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

Believe it or not, we've barely scratched the surface of everything The Clearing has to offer. We want you to be informed and inspired to join us this summer. Please contact us if you have any questions, want to dive deeper or set up a meeting. Email us at: admissions@farmandwilderness.org.

See you out there!

