

# Wilderness Educational Trip Application Guidelines for Authorized Commercial Operators

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Education is an enumerated purpose of wilderness. As such, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (SEKI) exempts approved Educational Trips provided by authorized commercial operators from the Commercial Service Day (CSD) restrictions described in its Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP) Extent Necessary Determination (END).

Most for-credit, university and school sponsored trips are non-commercial in nature, and thus are not subject to the CSD restrictions described in the WSP. Educational Trips, as described in this guidance, are trips that would *otherwise be commercial*, but instead qualify as Educational due to meeting the criteria described below. Only authorized commercial operators may provide Educational Trips as described in this guidance.

To qualify as an Educational Trip, a trip must offer:

1. Academic goals related to environmental education as its primary purpose;
2. Qualified educator to deliver the academic content; and
3. Educational nexus to SEKI wilderness.

Requirements for meeting these criteria are described below. All Educational Trips must be approved in advance by SEKI Commercial Services via the proposal process described below. Once an Educational Trip is approved in writing by SEKI Commercial Services, the approved Educational Trip may be conducted for the duration of the permit term, and the trip will not be subject to the CSD restrictions described in the END.

Approved Educational Trips are subject to all relevant wilderness use permits and regulations, and must be marketed as educational or academic in nature. Educational Trips are subject to all reporting requirements, which includes reporting revenue earned in the park. If qualified educators are also serving as guides, they must meet all required guide qualifications. Failure to uphold these requirements will result in loss of Educational Trip approval. Educational Trips may convey academic credit, but academic credit is not a requirement.

## **Educational Trip Criteria:**

1. **Academic Goals:** To demonstrate that a proposed Educational Trip offers academic goals related to environmental education as its primary purpose, applicants must provide:
  - A description of the specific academic goals of the trip, clearly stating how the goals will allow participants to explore environmental issues, engage in environmental problem solving, and take action to improve the environment.
  - A detailed itinerary with an integrated syllabus clearly demonstrating that the primary purpose of the trip is academic. The detailed itinerary and integrated syllabus must demonstrate that academic content is woven through and integral to the trip's purpose and design.

- A trip evaluation plan that includes 1) pre and post-trip assessments that measure participant learning outcomes, and 2) a traditional post-trip evaluation that measures trip and instructor quality.
2. **Qualified Educator:** To demonstrate that a proposed Educational Trip offers a qualified educator to deliver the academic content, applicants must provide:
- To qualify on education: Academic transcripts demonstrating that the educator has a master's degree or higher in environmental studies or a related field – such as ecology, biology, or environmental policy – from an accredited college or university.
  - To qualify on a combination of education and experience:
    - Academic transcripts demonstrating that the educator has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies or a related field – such as ecology, biology, or environmental policy – from an accredited college or university; *and* a resume showing a minimum of two (2) years of experience teaching curriculum-based environmental studies or related content; or
    - Certification of completing the Leave No Trace Master Educator course within the past five (5) years; *and* a resume showing a minimum of two (2) years of experience teaching curriculum-based environmental studies or related content.
3. **Educational Nexus to Wilderness:** To demonstrate that a proposed Educational Trip offers a clear educational nexus to SEKI wilderness, applicants must provide:
- A written statement identifying how the educational purposes of the trip are connected to SEKI wilderness, and why wilderness is the necessary context for the academic content.

# Educational Trip Proposal Process

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If you meet the criteria above, submit the following information in a single proposal package to the address below. Please allow three (3) weeks for processing.

1. A cover letter from an authorized commercial operator that briefly describes the proposed Educational Trip and requests approval to offer the Educational Trip within SEKI wilderness. Include the approximate number of times you plan to offer the trip, as well as the approximate number of participants, guides and instructors on the trip, as well as any additional support services.
2. A description of the specific academic goals of the trip, clearly stating how the goals will allow participants to explore environmental issues, engage in environmental problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. *See Academic Goals, above.*
3. A detailed itinerary with an integrated syllabus clearly demonstrating that the primary purpose of the trip is academic. *See Academic Goals, above. Additional materials here could include lesson plans, required reading materials, instructor presentation materials, etc.*
4. A trip evaluation plan, to include draft assessments and evaluations. *See Academic Goals, above.*
5. Proposed educator's name, position, resume, and demonstration of qualification based on either education, or a combination of education and experience. *See Qualified Educator, above.*
6. A written statement identifying how the educational purposes of the trip are connected to SEKI wilderness, and why wilderness is the necessary context for the academic content.

Email proposal package to:

SEKI Commercial Services Office  
[seki\\_concessions@nps.gov](mailto:seki_concessions@nps.gov)

- **Educational Trip proposals cannot be submitted post-trip.**
- **Educational Trips require valid commercial authorizations and wilderness permits.**
- **Educational Trip proposals will not be approved for hardship factors.**
- **“Blanket” Educational Trip proposals for all “trips” or “services” will not be considered. Authorized commercial operators must submit separate proposal packages for each specific Educational Trip.**

If your proposal is approved, you will receive an Educational Trip authorization, which will allow you to provide the Educational Trip for the duration of your current commercial authorization.

If your proposal is denied, you will receive a letter from the park explaining why your Educational Trip proposal does not qualify.