



United States Department of the Interior  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve  
11500 Highway 150  
Mosca, Colorado 81146-9798  
Phone 719-378-6300 Fax 719-378-6310

## Frequently Asked Questions – FAQ’s

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### 1. *How much does it cost?*

Nothing! The only cost to you is your time. A \$50 deposit will be required to hold your spot once accepted, but that will be refunded in full upon completion of the program. If the \$50 deposit poses a financial hardship for you, please contact the Education Specialist for alternatives.

### 2. *How will I get to the park?*

You will need to arrange your own transportation to and from the park. If you are having trouble finding a ride, or you would like to volunteer to participate in a carpool, please contact the Education Specialist.

### 3. *What do I need to bring?*

Group gear and some personal gear are supplied by the Ambassadors program. The Gear List is available online and should be followed closely. If you are having trouble acquiring some of the items on the gear list, let us know and we'll do our best to find you some loaners.

### 4. *When are the sessions?*

Dates vary from year to year. Check this year's application form and website for current dates.

Please note your session preferences on your application. We will try to accommodate you as best we can, but we cannot guarantee. Please be flexible.



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### ***5. What if I can't go on one of the trips? Can I switch dates?***

We will try to accommodate your preferences on trip dates but because of group size limitations, we may not be able to switch.

### ***6. Can I invite friends and family?***

Parents, family members, and friends are invited to attend the awards ceremony and party held on the last day of each session. This is a great opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of each member! The overnight sessions, however, are open only to enrolled Ambassadors.

### ***7. Is it dangerous? Will I be eaten by a bear?***

The most dangerous part of the Ambassadors for Wilderness program will be your drive to and from the park. Risk management will be an integral part of our curriculum, minimizing the hazards of wilderness travel. Pay attention to the instructors and use your own common sense and you'll be fine.

### ***8. What if I get hurt?***

Signing the Agreement for Individual Voluntary Services entitles you to medical coverage under the Office of Workers Compensation. Any illness or injury you receive *while working within the bounds of your volunteer agreement* would be fully covered. Your emergency contacts will be called and you will be taken to the nearest medical care facility.

### ***9. Who else will be in my group?***

Participants will be recruited from all over the San Luis Valley and surrounding areas. Selection is based on enthusiasm and leadership qualities, not academic performance. You may already know some of your fellow Ambassadors or you may be the sole representative from your school. Middle school participants will be current 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders (going into 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade). High school participants will be current freshman, sophomores, and juniors (going into 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade).

### ***10. What will we do?***

Everything! We will be studying some of the special resources of the Great Sand Dunes, doing some field science with park staff, helping to maintain trails with Student Conservation Association trail crews, and maybe teaching younger visitors about the park. All the while, we'll be learning outdoor skills, making new friends, exploring a spectacular landscape, and having a ball!

### ***11. What will we eat?***

Because traveling in wilderness requires you to carry your food on your back, you may at first be unfamiliar with some of the menu choices. Food will be lightweight, non-perishable, easily packable, and *delicious!* Dietary restrictions and allergies can be easily accommodated.

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**12. *How much will we be hiking?***

We'll be hiking an average of about 5 miles each day – sometimes up to 8 miles, sometimes as few as 3 miles. For some participants, the hiking will be a physical challenge. For others, the challenge will be a mental one in keeping a slower pace than normal.

**13. *What do I need to do to carry out my “ambassadorial” duties?***

The AFW Film Festival in September is your chance to tell your story in your own words. Create a video, write a song or story, set a slideshow to music, or create an art project. You will be able to consult with your Great Sand Dunes instructors and your teachers back at school to find the right kind of project for you.

**14. *Can I get credit for this?***

Yes! High school students who complete their session *and* participate in the Film Festival become eligible for either volunteer service hours or 1 transferable elective credit from Byron Syring Delta Center. There are no fees to transfer credit to your school.

**15. *Can I be paid for this?***

This is a purely volunteer and educational experience. However, if you complete your session *and* participate in the Film Festival, you will be entitled to a \$100 scholarship.

**16. *Can I get a job out of this?***

Alumni of the Ambassadors for Wilderness program are eligible to become Student Instructors for a small daily stipend. In addition, Student Instructors may be eligible to apply for paid summer positions as rangers of Great Sand Dunes. Ask around and you will find that most federal land employees got their feet in the door through a volunteer experience like this one. Although we cannot promise a paid position out of this, you will have an enormous competitive advantage over your average classmate. On our last day we will go over basic career counseling and how to get jobs with agencies like the National Park Service.