



WILDERNESS RISK MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Portland, Oregon | October 20 - 22nd, 2026



OUTWARD
BOUND



student
conservation
association



Call for Proposals & Speaker Information

SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE & EXPERIENCE

Facing Challenges Together

Whether you've attended and presented at the WRMC for many years, or if it's your first time considering attending, we deeply welcome and appreciate your submission!

Speakers, also referred to as Presenters, are vital partners in achieving the goals of the WRMC. It is only through the dedication and collaboration of practitioners, researchers, emerging leaders, and industry experts working in outdoor programs that the community continues to elevate wilderness risk management principles, knowledge, and practices through the WRMC. Often, those who attend and present at the WRMC have expressed that it is the one place where they find the camaraderie, mentoring, and inspiration that is so valuable in continuing their important, challenging, and rewarding work. Thank you for submitting your proposal and being a crucial part of the continuing legacy of facing challenges together.

Call for Proposal Process

How does your work, research, or expertise help achieve the core objective of the WRMC, which is to offer an ***outstanding educational experience to help programs manage the risks of exploring, working, teaching, and recreating in the outdoors***? The best place to start is with a good understanding of the WRMC community, Steering Committee, and Shared Risk Management Philosophy.

Steering Committee

The [Steering Committee](#) manages the educational content and provides collaborative direction and leadership of the conference. The committee is composed of partner organization representatives who are selected to represent attendee demographics and industry sectors. The Steering Committee reviews and selects workshop proposals.

Shared Risk Management Philosophy

The WRMC shared risk management philosophy, as captured by the [WRMC Purpose and Tenets](#), guides the selection of the conference educational content. The tenets are:

- Wilderness and outdoor experiences create unique opportunities for personal growth and skill development.
- There is value to taking risks, and those risks need to be thoughtfully assessed and managed.
- We have a responsibility to share learning in order to promote collaboration and improved risk management practices across the industry.
- Each organization should define its own risk management goals and practices, while also striving to learn from the practices and experiences of others.
- Managing the risks to our participants and staff helps us manage the risks to our organizations.
- We can and should enlist our participants as partners in managing the risks inherent in our programs.
- Cultural humility supports risk management and is essential in creating inclusive programs.
- Transparency with participants and their families is valuable and appropriate, including in times of crisis.
- Timely reporting and debriefing of risk management incidents is key to promoting learning and improving practices over time.
- Prudent legal strategies are grounded in running quality programs that thoughtfully manage risk and prioritize the health and well-being of those involved.

2026 Conference

Main Conference: October 20-22, 2026

Pre-Conference: October 19-20, 2026

Location: Holiday Inn Portland - Columbia Riverfront (909 North Hayden Island Drive, Portland, OR 97217)

Proposal Timeline

Call for Proposals Open: January 20 - April 1, 2026

Accept/Decline Notifications: May 8, 2026

Speaker Commitment Due/Schedule Final: May 22, 2026

Learning Tracks

Select the learning track for your proposal.

- Emergency Planning & Crisis Response
- Field Practices
- Legal & Insurance
- Mental, Social, & Emotional Health
- Program Administration
- Staff Training & Decision Making

Topics focused on climate risks impacting outdoor programs, risk management for field-based practitioners, immigration issues, technology-related risk and use of AI, risk culture, public policy as it relates to outdoor programs, and navigating dimensions of difference in our organizations are encouraged for 2026.

Presentation Format Options

Presentation formats include: Workshops, Short-Talk, Poster, and Pre-conference Sessions. You will submit for your preferred format, but you might be accepted for an alternative format to balance and fill the schedule. We encourage innovative and creative formats! If you have an idea for a new format not listed below, email wrmc@nols.edu.

Main Conference:

Workshops featured during the main conference schedule will be on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

- Workshops: 60 or 90-minute
- 18-minute "Short Talk" (i.e., TED talk, scheduled with 2-4 other Short Talks)
- Poster (displayed during the main conference)

If your proposal is selected you could be scheduled as early as Tuesday at 1:00 pm or as late as Thursday at 5:00 pm. You might find it helpful to see the [schedule for 2025](#).

Multiple Topics/Proposals

You can submit more than one proposal, but please submit no more than one proposal for each topic.

Pre-conference

Pre-conference sessions are provided as an opportunity for interested attendees to dive deeper into a topic. They often (but not always) involve an additional fee for attendees. The fees help offset the cost incurred by the conference organizers for additional meeting spaces and Audio/Visual equipment rentals. The Committee encourages individuals and organizations with relevant expertise to submit proposals for pre-conference sessions that address technical skills, leadership, program management, or other topics aligned with the conference mission and learning tracks. *Sessions that offer certification, advanced training, or applied practice are welcome.* Pre-conference sessions can be any length but are typically scheduled between Monday 8:00 am and Tuesday 5:00 pm in half-day, full-day, or two-day formats.

There are three types of Pre-conference Workshops:

1. Fee to Attendees - [Provider Agreement](#) & W-9 will be required.
2. No Fee to Attendees, but has minimum or maximum attendance limits that require pre-registration. A charge of \$100-\$500 for a 1-4 hour session or \$200-\$800 for a 4+ hour session will be paid to WRMC by the provider.
3. No fee to Attendees with no registration, unlimited walk-in participation. These sessions do not require a Provider Agreement or charge.

Audience

Thinking about the unique WRMC audience can be helpful in crafting your proposal. WRMC attendees are here to learn about wilderness risk management. They come from outdoor/adventure education, conservation corps, recreation and guiding industries, adventure travel, international education, secondary schools, therapeutic programs, college programs, camps, and other sectors (including attendees who are not directly in wilderness risk management, but who are involved in broader risk management at their place of work). Total conference attendance is typically 350-450+ participants.

Presenters can expect 30-125 attendees in their main conference workshop sessions. The main conference typically includes 40+ workshops, one or two short talk series (that include 2-4 short talk presenters), and 3-6 posters. Four or five workshops are scheduled simultaneously, so attendees have to choose from many excellent presentations and topics that interest them.

Your attendees may be new to the wilderness risk management profession, or they may be experienced leaders with decades of education and experience. In your proposal, please identify your preferred target audience as ***Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, or All Levels***. Presenters may be asked to broaden or limit the target audience level, but it's important your proposal identifies what level of material you are presenting.

Transparency Statement

The WRMC Steering Committee, made up of volunteer representatives from diverse organizations, recognizes that conflicts of interest, perceived and actual, can arise as part of the selection of presenters and recipients of annual awards and scholarships. We keep this concern in the forefront of our decision-making and proactively invite committee members to identify potential conflicts. When a potential conflict is raised, it is discussed with the Committee Chair who decides what steps are needed to address the concern. We intentionally seek out new voices and perspectives, expanding participation across backgrounds, while maintaining our commitment to high quality for each conference. For more details on the selection process and committee practices, please see the full overview [linked here](#).

Community, Leadership, and Belonging

The WRMC provides a forum to learn and share common practices in wilderness risk management and contributes to a culture of open dialogue among outdoor industry professionals. The WRMC is committed to the evolution of content and culture in a way that centers on community, leadership, and belonging. Commitment to these values helps perpetuate a culture of continuous improvement in industry risk management practices.

Reasonable Accommodation

If you would like to request a reasonable accommodation to present at the WRMC, please use the most comfortable method to share your request. You may contact wrmc@nols.edu or 307-335-2222, provide information directly within your proposal, or request an opportunity to connect with the WRMC Chair or other leaders to have a conversation regarding your request.

Speaker/Presenter Discount

Speakers are eligible for a significant discount on the conference registration (the exact discount amount will be posted in spring 2026). Facilitating a networking session will not be eligible for the discount.

Presenter registrations will follow all general conference policies for late fees, cancellation fees, etc.

Presenters should register and pay prior to the late fee deadline to receive the lowest-cost registration.

Type	Speakers per session
Workshop (60 or 90-minute)	1-3
Short Talk or Poster	1-2

Preconference	1-3
Panel	2-3 panel members, plus one moderator

Presentation Details

To submit your proposal, you will fill out a google form (link below) and provide the following information:

Description: Accurate and updated description for publication to attendees that clearly and succinctly describes your presentation in 100-200 words.

Outline: An outline of workshop content and estimated time allocated to each area will be requested with your proposal. This outline should be detailed enough for the Steering Committee to understand your workshop and consider it for selection. Please include links or citations to references or any other material helpful to understand the content of the workshop.

Action Steps: Tangible and practical implementation steps that attendees can take to improve risk management in their programs. Action steps are not learning outcomes, but rather, tangible steps attendees can take to incorporate learning outcomes into their programs.

Proposal and Presenter Changes after Acceptance

Only in extenuating circumstances can presenters or content be changed after the proposal is accepted onto the schedule. To request a change, contact wrmc@nols.edu and the WRMC Steering Committee Chair with an emailed request that includes: the reason for the requested change, what you are hoping to change, and if you are hoping to substitute a presenter who has not presented at a WRMC in the past, please also include an updated 75-word bio for the new presenter. If the request to change the presenter is approved, the new presenter is required to agree to the [Speaker Expectations](#).

What happens if your proposal is accepted?

You'll be notified by May 8th with a tentative date, time, and format for your session. Speakers will confirm their acceptance by May 22, 2026.

Submission Form

[2026 Proposal Submission Form](#)

We encourage you to review the [Speaker Expectations](#) before submitting a proposal. If your proposal is accepted, you will be notified and required to acknowledge that you have read and understand the WRMC Speaker Expectations. Please email wrmc@nols.edu with any questions regarding the submission process.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are Short Talks?

Usually, Short Talks are grouped together and fit into one of the 90-minute workshop time slots. That means there will be four presentations (of 18 minutes each). Each presentation can include one or more presenters. It's a rapid-fire Ted Talk-style format.

I'm a new presenter, who can I ask questions and get advice from?

We encourage and welcome new presenters to apply and value new and emerging perspectives within the wilderness risk management industry. We are committed to supporting you in presentation preparation by connecting you with a Steering Committee member to ask questions and brainstorm together.

I've got amazing colleagues and collaborators and several areas of expertise. Can I submit more than one proposal with different co-presenters?

Yes! Please submit one proposal for each presentation idea - you can choose different formats. When you submit on behalf of others, ***it's your responsibility to ensure they have read and understood these updated instructions.***

What if I'm a frequent presenter? Do I still have to fill out and submit a proposal form?

Yes, please complete the entire submission form.

What if I want to present but I am not sure I'm ready?

Consider starting with a Poster or Short Talk. Often the Steering Committee provides feedback or suggests format changes if your proposal is seen as great content but not ready for a full workshop. Sometimes poster or Short Talk presentations come back in future years as a full workshop.

I have questions about the poster presentations.

Please reference the [Poster Presentations Info and FAQ.](#)

Can I submit a proposal or present without attending the full conference?

We encourage presenters to attend the full conference and to engage in the networking events as much as possible. Please let the WRMC Manager know if you accept to present a workshop, but are unable to attend the full conference.

What if I have to cancel unexpectedly due to an emergency?

In cases of an absolutely unavoidable cancellation, please contact wrmc@nols.edu and the WRMC Steering Committee Chair as immediately as possible. Once the schedule is set, last minute cancellations disappoint attendees and create additional logistical challenges. We understand that the world is a little more unpredictable than ever. See above for information on requesting a presenter

change. If there is an equally qualified presenter, you might consider suggesting a replacement first. Cancellation fees and policies apply to presenter registrations.

Do you ever allow topics that aren't in one of the learning tracks?

Please submit into the learning track you think most closely fits your proposal. We are excited to continue expanding the scope of topics covered during the WRMC, as the field of wilderness risk management is continuously evolving. We encourage you to submit, and we'll reach out to you with any questions about which learning track might be most appropriate.

Do I have to use visuals or a slide deck in my presentation?

While it is not required, presenters will likely want to include a contemporary, concise, and easy-to-view visual presentation. You may be presenting in a room with 200 seats that are all full or with 40 people in a room of that same size, so plan for a presentation that can be seen easily from any seat in a large room.

Does the conference help presenters with travel arrangements or costs?

Presenters make and pay for their travel arrangements, including lodging reservations. Presenters receive the registration discount noted above. Presenters are encouraged to book lodging early using the WRMC discounted rate at the conference property. Discounted rooms will book quickly and may sell out well before the conference.

I want to exhibit, sponsor or donate to the scholarship fund too. How do I do that?

Information on these wonderful ways to extend your involvement in the WRMC will be available on the website in the spring. Presenters who also exhibit or sponsor have a heightened obligation for impeccable professionalism during their presentations.

I don't think my topic fits into one of the suggested formats (Short-talk, 60-minutes, 90-minutes, preconference workshop, etc.) - can I propose something else?

Please submit your proposal under the format that you think it will most likely fit, then indicate what you would like to propose as the alternative format in "Other." We welcome alternative formats and would be excited to explore your ideas with you. We're focused on topics that are highly relevant to attendees and foster high levels of engagement.

Does the conference print handouts or material for presenters?

No, presenters are responsible for providing any printed materials they use. Presenters can use the conference app (if being used for the 2026 conference) to upload digital resources. If you would like an option for printing, the hotel has a 24-hour business center, and there is a Staples office supply store near the hotel, 1755 N Tomahawk Island Drive, Portland, OR. It is strongly recommended that you speak directly with the store well in advance to ensure they can deliver the services you will need. (503) 283-8686.

Is there any way I can tell the Steering Committee more about my proposal than just the questions on the form?

Additional information is particularly welcome and valuable for new proposals, longer presentations, or old proposals that you are updating significantly. Use the "Other" section to share more detail you feel is important and be sure to upload helpful documents.