



# The Ecology School



We recently met with the team from The Ecology School to learn more about their mission and some of the exciting changes they are in the process of implementing.

For twenty years, the school has been providing students of all ages with experiential learning in ecology, conservation, farming and sustainability. The programs include both day-long as well as multiple-day sessions for students from both near and far to have hands-on learning opportunities about the environment and ecological systems. In 2018 The Ecology School welcomed more than 12,000 participants, learning about specific ecosystems that we share with a wide diversity of plants and animals.

For many students, this is their first opportunity to receive interactive education outside in a natural environment, as opposed to in the typical classroom / textbook setting. As human activity increasingly impacts fragile ecosystems, The Ecology School's mission becomes even more critical in preparing future generations to be informed and inspired stewards of our environment.

Up until this past year, The Ecology School has leased space locally to deliver their programs. But recently they have embarked on a new direction that will profoundly transform their trajectory and their ability to provide world-class ecological instruction.

This past year The Ecology School relocated on a permanent basis to River Bend Farm, on a hundred-acre site overlooking the Saco River. The farm provides an ideal location for the school to expand their programming and to become a national leader in environmental education and sustainability. This year the school will build a dormitory and dining commons to supplement the main farmhouse and enable all educational activity to be centered at River Bend Farm as of 2020.

From the Chamber's perspective, having The Ecology School as an integral and unique part of our local educational and cultural ecosystem is another example of what makes the Saco and Biddeford area so special.

Providing these educational opportunities and infrastructure – in many cases free of charge to students and schools – requires both passion and resources to make happen. It's important to note that the school thrives because of the support they receive from many engaged and supportive partners and donors. As they undertake this next transformative step in their journey at River Bend Farm, the school is actively seeking local companies and residents to become more involved via volunteering or donations.

If you'd like to learn more about the current plans and needs at The Ecology School, please reach out to them. By having this leadership organization right here in our local area, we increasingly become more nationally recognized as being on the forefront of environmentally conscious educational and experiential trends. Let's do everything we can to help the school continue to excel in their new home at River Bend Farm!

