



Becoming an Outdoors-Woman

Provided by www.bowca.org

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The Becoming and Outdoors-Woman program started with a workshop called "Breaking Down the Barriers to Participation of Women in Angling and Hunting." This one-day workshop took place at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in August of 1990 and its objective was to identify the barriers to participation by women and to discuss strategies to address these barriers. One of the major barriers identified was a lack of opportunity for women to learn outdoor skills in a non-threatening, comfortable environment. This led to the development of the first Becoming an Outdoors-Woman multi-course weekend workshop in 1991. Now, over 80 BOW workshops are offered in over 40 states, several Canadian provinces and in New Zealand. Over 20,000 women participate in BOW events every year.

California's Becoming and Outdoors-Woman Program

The California Department of Fish and Game sponsored the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program in 1994. A statewide advisory committee was formed, and the program was organized and implemented by volunteers. In 1998, Susan Herrgesell was appointed as the full-time Program Coordinator and the program expanded from two workshops annually (one in northern California, and one in southern California) to three workshops in 1999 and four in 2000. Each workshop accommodated 100 participants.

2001 saw the addition of a new workshop format called "Beyond BOW." Twelve topic-specific workshops were added that allowed participants to "take it to the next level" and receive more comprehensive instruction. The Beyond BOW workshops accommodated approximately 25 participants each.

In 2004, during a budget crisis in the State of California, the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program was de-funded. Rather than allowing the program to wither and die, an effort was made by several concerned volunteers to reorganize and resurrect BOW as a new educational, non-profit organization. After a two-year hiatus for program development and implementation, the new Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, California, Inc. emerged: stronger and better than ever.

Operated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, with a volunteer board of directors, BOW, California operates on a fee-based course attendance, aided by the funding of sponsors and personal contributions.

With a wide variety of topic-specific courses and an annual multi-course workshop, BOW, California provides courses and activities for approximately 600 participants annually. Courses offered in recent years include fly fishing, bird watching, archery, kayaking, cross-country skiing, map and compass, GPS, Dutch oven cooking, trap and sporting clays, personal self-defense, ATV and dirt bikes, a drawing class, and others.

BOW, California plans to continue providing opportunities for women to learn outdoor skills in a safe, encouraging and supportive environment; to foster the learning process; to empower women to build their self-confidence in outdoor skills and life's adventures; and to show a understanding of and caring for the beauty of the nature that surrounds us.

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