

Firefly Song



PROGRAM GUIDE



FARM & WILDERNESS



Campers help to harvest produce from the garden.

“Living in nature sparks curiosity and wonder, and that’s what we’re here for.”

—Farm & Wilderness Values

WHY CHOOSE FIREFLY SONG CAMP?

Firefly Song campers discover their inner strength with support from their peers, staff mentors, and the surrounding natural environment. With a myriad of opportunities for campers to learn skills and try activities that may have historically been less accessible to girls and nonbinary youth, we truly offer a unique path to an increased sense of empowerment for all. It’s a place for campers who thrive when encouraged to move past their comfort zone, guided by a program structure that balances deliberate routines with the opportunity to choose activities that ignite their passion. Every camper’s authentic self is cherished, and they feel pride as they forge new friendships, work together to overcome adversity, and discover new strengths.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Firefly Song is a three-week unplugged wilderness experience based on the Woodward Reservoir in Plymouth, Vermont. Girls and non-binary campers embrace interdependence while living in uniquely built three-sided cabins, diving into new projects and building a lasting impact on their community.

Firefly Song stretches from our garden — which is situated above an orchard and occasional grazing pasture for our cows, sheep or goats — to our waterfront on Woodward Reservoir, up the hill to our Silent Meeting circle, where we gather daily to reflect and connect, and beyond which is our adventure course. From various spots at camp, we have access to miles of trails and views of the Green Mountains. Camper cabins, simple wooden three-sided structures, are scattered throughout our property, sometimes quite hidden amongst the trees.

In the middle of camp our Main Lodge and Cozy Lodge provide a hub for multiple types of programming and activity. Creative Arts, Work Projects, Rocks & Ropes, and Barns & Gardens, all have space in or around this area, making this an important place for all manners of learning, doing, developing and connecting. With no access to cell phones or technology of any kind, campers connect with each other, make meaning in the surrounding environment, and while they adjust to new surroundings, our programming and staff are there to help them embrace this discomfort and it becomes one of the experiences that leads to the sense of empowerment that is so crucial at Firefly Song.

Community and belonging are of utmost importance and campers achieve both in the three-week sessions. All campers are part of a cabin group, made up of ~8 campers and 2 or 3 staff; cabins are then clustered in groups called Lodges: First Lodge is 9-10 year olds, Big Lodge is 11-12 year olds, and Senior Lodge is 13-14 year olds. These age groupings or “Lodges” help support developmental needs in an age-appropriate way. Finally, our whole camp is its own place for community to be built through daily traditions like circling up on the lodge lawn before every meal, group song time, All-Camp Games, and various special occasions.

On a typical day, campers have two long blocks where they engage in activities that offer learning opportunities, either in specific skill areas or around our Program Outcomes, with plenty of space for the silly, fun times that summer camp is perhaps traditionally known for.

In the mornings, campers travel in assigned groups (6-7 campers per group, grouped by age), and over their three weeks at camp, will experience all our different activity areas:

- Barns and Gardens
- Work Projects
- Creative Arts
- Rocks and Ropes
- Outdoor Living Skills

Our waterfront is a core piece of our programming, with swimming lessons for all campers on every regular program day.

After lunch and rest hour, campers have an afternoon of choice activities and can decide where they want to spend the nearly two-hour block of time. The waterfront is open for General Swim & Boating every afternoon, weather permitting.

Campers and Staff work together to set the tone for the session, create group agreements, have intentional discussions, and practice open mindedness. Each camper at FS is personally and publicly affirmed for the unique gifts they bring to camp, and there are daily, structured opportunities to recognize and praise each other for the joys and labors of the day. Unlike the world that most of our campers live in during the year, Firefly Song allows proper acknowledgment and appreciation for thresholds, barriers, transitions, beginnings, and endings.

OUTCOMES

Identity

- a) Engaging in actions based on who campers want to be; making choices around activities which bring them joy and help them engage with their most authentic self
- b) Discovering who they might become through engaging with others in their community
- c) Developing understanding and skill around seeing differences and similarities between oneself and others

Our flock of laying hens produce eggs as well as opportunities for campers to learn about animal care.





The loft above the barn is a space for campers to engage in many different activities.

Throughout sessions, campers will engage in the following alignment activities:

- Practicing self-expression and the skill of listening to understand others at Identity Nights
- Living simply away from phones and connecting with others more fully due to the decrease in “the distractions of technology”
- Offering and receiving affirmations
- Building community with others in cabin & lodge nights

Agency

- a) Understanding the power and competence they can bring to their interactions with others and their environment
- b) Developing confidence in their own inner will and outer skill to succeed at challenges
- c) Engaging in daily life with intention and purpose

Throughout sessions, campers will engage in the following alignment activities:

- Building their skills in each of our activity areas
- Developing competencies at the waterfront and on trips
- Making choices about what activities to participate in
- Choosing to co-lead activities with staff in camper-led afternoon activities

Interdependence

- a) Understanding that others rely on them and acting accordingly
- b) Demonstrating a willingness to participate in activities that might benefit others more than themselves
- c) Asking for support from the community when needed, as well as recognizing when the community is asking for their support

Throughout sessions, campers will engage in the following alignment activities:

- Completing daily camp chores, as a whole camp and individual cabin
- Collaborating with Timberlake and other camps to:
 - Build the Bonfire for Fair or Interdependence Day
 - Help design and play in All-Camp games
 - Lead service projects, by Lodge
 - Interact and collaborate with Farm interns, Farm & Wilderness (F&W) Conservation director, Marketing Director, and other year-round staff to get the bigger picture of Farm and Wilderness's non-profit mission

MAGIC MOMENTS/SESSION JOURNEY

Campers should come away from a summer at Firefly Song with new skills and experiences. Educational programming is designed to serve as the foundation upon which these transformative moments take place. These “magic moments” are stages in the campers’ journey through their weeks together at camp that make it an unforgettable experience.

They are as follows:

- I’m here, I matter, and I’m going to be alright.
- I’m excited about what’s ahead, I am confident I can do it and ready to get started.
- I’m in! We’re in the zone.
- It was hard and I am proud of myself.
- I belong here because I have contributed, and I want to celebrate this with others.

With hundreds of acres for a “backyard”, campers can explore and develop their wilderness skills.





Gathering for meals is socially, as well as nutritionally rewarding.

STAFFING

With between 4-6 cabins in each Lodge, and 2-3 counselors living in each cabin, we have about 30-36 Cabin Staff who live in the cabins with campers; these staff all also specialize & work in an activity area. Before campers arrive, staff spend three weeks further developing skills in their activity area so that they are well equipped to work with youth, moving beyond just knowledge in an area to a more developed understanding of how to teach in that area. This training time also gives staff a chance to learn what each of these activity areas means and looks like in the context of F&W values. Staff training also includes Wilderness First Aid for most staff, Lifeguard Training for some, trip leading and wilderness skills, conflict resolution and behavior management, and much more.

Each Lodge has its own dedicated Lodge Head, who supports the staff in that lodge as well as plans and leads community strengthening programming within the lodge. The Leadership Team at Firefly Song consists of the Camp Director, an Assistant Director, Program Director, Trips Coordinator, and the Lodge Heads. Other layers of Leadership include Activity Heads for each different activity area, access to a behavioral health specialist to support camper and staff wellness, a camp nurse, and finally a kitchen crew dedicated to providing us with delicious food all summer long, some of it even coming out of our own farm and gardens.

With enrollment of about 115 campers most sessions, this means a total staff to camper ratio approaching 1:2. Our staff bring all manner of diverse backgrounds and identities to their roles at camp, and with such a large staff, campers inevitably find people to connect with, whether it is one of the counselors living in the cabin with them, or someone from the staff at large. These connections with staff can have a profound impact on the campers; among other things, helping them develop images of possibility as they are developing their own identity.

PROGRAM FEATURES

Morning Activities and Senior Lodge Apprenticeships

As noted above, mornings are a time when campers experience our Activity Areas in some depth. We schedule First and Big Lodge campers into the different areas, where they spend two or three days in each, and by the end of the session they will have experienced a wide range of learning across all the areas. Morning activity times range from one hour to two hours.

Senior Lodgers, our 13-14 year olds, have a slightly different structure to their mornings, choosing one area to dive deeply into and sticking with it for the whole session. "For example, they might choose to work toward their Pioneer rating, learning wilderness skills such as shelter and fire building, map and compass and knife use. Other apprentice programs include: Canoeing, Farming, Work Projects, Mural Painting, etc.



Campers live in open, simple cabins and create important relationships.

Afternoon Activities

Each day after rest hour, campers and staff disperse to locations all around camp for the second long block of activity time. Everyone has opportunity for choice here (though going to an activity is required). We offer a range of small and big group activities, some more active, others more quiet. With 12-14 activities each day, campers have plenty to choose from. This list offers some examples of what we might serve up on a typical Firefly Song afternoon: work projects; open shop; collaging; ultimate frisbee; lawn games; long-distance swims; crocheting; plant hike; flower crowns; mural painting; wood burning; patching; day hikes, fairy house building; acrostic poems and illustrating; games; weaving; knife skills and tests; log rolling; making bookmarks.

Chores

Chores are central to our values and our daily life at F&W; they show up everywhere and are one of many ways campers will experience our outcome focused on interdependence. At every meal, multiple cabins offer support: through table setting and post meal clean up. Other camp chores include helping with lawn clean up, morning and afternoon barn chores and management of trash, compost, and recycling, as well as cleaning our composting outhouses (called “Kybos”). Camp cannot run without the support of campers, and as they witness an increase in the benefits they experience, their connection to camp and pride in the ways they have contributed.

The Routine and The Special

Routine is a critical part of camp: a regular bedtime, songs after breakfast leading in to Silent Meeting every day, swim lessons and general swim, and of course, all the chores we do! The special days that give us that sense of adventure and excitement are also a key part of what makes a session at Firefly Song special. During the first half of the summer, we look forward to Interdependence Day, when we gather with all the other F&W camps, each of us contributing a song that we have chosen and practiced. We also celebrate “Unbirthday” during Session One — a time to turn things a bit upside down, go off book, off schedule, have a dance party, and celebrate us all in new ways.

In Second Session, a long-standing and much awaited day is “Some Day” — the day we do the things usually only promised for some abstract future: “some day we will have ice cream for breakfast”, “some day we will slip and slide on the lodge lawn”. The F&W Fair, a combination alumni event, welcome to new families, and camper showcase day is the focus of some preparation, as we prepare to show off skills we have learned and things we have made.

“Chill Mornings” happen periodically throughout the session and offer a chance to catch up on sleep and then enjoy a buffet breakfast bagel bar, do some caretaking around camp and in the cabin, and then finish out the day with regular afternoon and evening activities.

Wilderness Trips

Every camper will go on a Wilderness Trip during their time at Firefly Song. Our youngest campers go out for just two nights; by the time campers are in Senior Lodge, trips may be as long as four nights and five days. With hiking, canoeing and rock-climbing as well as trips of varying levels, we try to make sure there is “something for everyone” and campers can choose how and where to challenge themselves. Before hitting the trail, we support in-camp preparation: practicing skills, choosing a menu and packing the food, understanding what gear will go out and how to use it, meeting and getting to know your trip group and setting agreements for your time together.

Trips may travel west to the Adirondacks, or east to the remote lakes of Maine. Of course we take advantage of excellent local terrain, along Vermont’s Long Trail or the nearby Green Mountains of New Hampshire. Trips are another site for campers to grow in our outcome areas — developing a sense of themselves, perhaps as a hiker or climber, potential new identities for them; developing skills that give them a sense of agency; and understanding how the successful functioning of a trip “ecosystem” relies on everyone’s interdependence.

A few times during the session, campers will have an opportunity to opt in to a “Big Day Hike”. Small groups will hit the trail for a full day multi-peak hiking experience, often driving to a starting location and then hiking victoriously into camp at the end of the day. Hiking without heavy overnight packs and gear, hiking more mileage than they might do on an overnight hike, and hiking with a set of campers who choose to take on this significant challenge gives campers another place to build skill and interact with the local wilderness.

Practicing the skills they will need out on trips is an important part of our program.





Free time for being with friends is one part of the daily schedule.

SAMPLE SESSION SCHEDULE

Here is what a typical session at Firefly Song may look like. In each session, we strike a balance between structure and downtime, creative play and wilderness adventure. Please note that no two summers or sessions are exactly alike, and specific dates and order of events are subject to change.

Sample First Session

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1				Arrival/ Orientation	Introduction to Activity Areas and Apprenticeship options	Activity Area Rotations & Apprenticeships Choice of Activity Area	
Week 2		Activity Area Rotations & Apprenticeships Waterfront Afternoon	Choice of Activity Area	Sleep in/ Chores	Activity Area Rotations & Apprenticeships Harvest Afternoon		All-camps Interdependence Day
Week 3	Prep. for Trips	Trips 			Return from Trips/Pack-in	Unbirthday	Sleep in/ Chores
Week 4	Activity Area Rotations & Apprenticeships	Big Hike Day/ Project Completion	Grand Circuit Day	Packing/ Camp Clean-up Banquet/ Appreciations	Departure		

SAMPLE MENU

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oatmeal and fixings (nuts, brown sugar, dried fruit, sunflower seeds) • Hard boiled eggs • Sliced apples and oranges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrambled eggs and sauteed greens • Yogurt (non-dairy and dairy options) with toppings • Peach cobbler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homemade biscuits and gravy (vegan and meat varieties) • Granola and milk • Yogurt (non-dairy and dairy options) with toppings • Sliced apples and oranges
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwich bar: cold cuts, cheese, bread, sun butter and jelly, sliced tomatoes • Egg salad • Hummus • Salad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegan chili with toppings of sour cream, cheese, tortilla chips • Kale salad with cranberries, nuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grilled cheese sandwiches and homemade tomato soup • Cucumbers and carrots • Chips
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbed popcorn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tortilla chips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grapes
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homemade mac and cheese • Kale salad • Carrot sticks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulled pork • Buns • Coleslaw • Pickled onions • Green salad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make your own burritos: tortillas, rice, beans, slaw, veggies, cheese, sour cream, onions

Notes about our food at Firefly Song

We supplement meals each week with fresh organic produce from our farms. There are always the following types of alternatives:

- Dairy-free
- Glute-free
- Vegan and vegetarian options
- Other alternatives as needed

We offer dessert on special occasions, not daily

Campers practice their canoe skills on our gorgeous lake.





So many different ways to have fun at camp!

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We believe that the incredible F&W experience should be open to all who want to join. We have a deep history of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion work dating back to our founding and we strive to create systems and spaces to create as diverse and supportive a community as possible. This looks a little different at each camp, and generally has three prongs: camper discussions & experience, organizational systems, and staffing policies.

Camper Discussions & Programming

Ultimately, we want all our campers to feel a sense of belonging. This begins by campers feeling they can bring their full authentic selves to the experience. Part of this is through our programming and discussions. All our camps use a foundational approach that focuses, sequentially, on four topics:

IDENTITY > EMPATHY > CRITICAL THINKING > ACTION

While each camp will discuss different aspects of this sequence, generally our younger campers will focus on identity while our oldest will focus on action. The discussions are age appropriate and focused on each camp's unique community.

At Firefly Song in particular, campers will engage in two evening discussions separated by AGE:

- Intersectional Feminism, Gender, & Sexuality
- Race & Class

Organizational Systems

To support our staff, campers, and programming we have sought out reforming to our internal ways of working with each other. Learning from best practices in other educational institutions, we have implemented several systems to help us be more responsive to a diverse group of campers, including:

- Teaching preventive responses to behaviors through routines & rituals;
- Utilizing a behavior response system that emphasizes collaboration and decision-making by a team rather than a single individual;
- Comprehensive orientation of families prior to arrival including individual phone calls, online sessions, blog posts, podcasts, and more.

Staffing Policies

Inspired by the words of the late Dr. Rita Pierson, we actively work to hire as diverse a staff as possible so every camp can see themselves reflected in our staff. We believe that every camper deserves a champion, so we have worked to partner with organizations to create pipelines and opportunities for staff new to F&W. Our industry-leading three weeks of staff training are also designed to include deep discussions around identity and a large toolkit of responses that focus on preventive routines that work for all campers.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

Believe it or not, we've barely scratched the surface of everything Firefly Song has to offer. If you have any questions or want to dive deeper, send us an email at admissions@farmandwilderness.org. Also be sure to check out our Instagram to see photos from the summer: [Campfireflysong](https://www.instagram.com/Campfireflysong)

See you on the trail!

