

**America's Great Outdoors  
Notes from Listening Session**

Location: Chicago, IL

Date: August 6, 2010

*President Obama launched a national conversation about conservation in America at the White House Conference on the Great Outdoors on April 16, 2010. The President understands that protecting and restoring the lands and waters that we love and reconnecting people to the outdoors must happen at the local level. Therefore, President Obama directed the principal leaders of the Initiative to travel across the country to listen and learn from people directly involved in finding grassroots solutions to conserve our lands, waterways, historical and cultural resources and to reconnect Americans with the Outdoors. The President indicated that the sessions should engage the full range of interested groups, including tribal leaders, farmers and ranchers, sportsmen, community park groups, foresters, youth groups, businesspeople, educators, State and local government, recreation and conservation groups and others. The President placed a special priority on engaging with America's youth. Below are notes from the breakout groups at the Listening Session sorted by Discussion Question. Please feel free to use the ideation tool at <http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf/> if you would like to share your thoughts.*

Discussion Questions

1. What works: Please share your thoughts and ideas on effective strategies for conservation, recreation and reconnecting people to the outdoors.
2. Challenges: What obstacles exist to achieve your goals for conservation, recreation, or reconnecting people to the outdoors?
3. Federal government role: How can the federal government be a more effective partner in helping to achieve conservation, recreation or reconnecting people to the outdoors?
4. What additional tools and resources would help your efforts be even more successful?

Discussion Question 1-4	Comment
1	Ninety percent of a stream is in Cook County forest preserve yet has not been maintained. It is a resource that should be utilized for outdoor recreation for example game fishing. Nature preserve is being overrun by coyotes. There may be a sewage issue
2/3	Sierra club previously dictated how they should get kids outdoors, but then changed their tactics so that they incubate ideas at a local level. This was more beneficial to both parties. He is curious how federal government ideas will be rolled out?
2	AGO has a wonderful website with 1,000s of ideas, 1000s of comments. University of Arkansas, invested in Army Corps of Engineers for campsites. People recover from mental and physical problems better in the outdoors/ campsites. For example Secretary of De
2	We can encourage private industry to build their own parks/green spaces. This

	<p>promotes sustainability, work/life balance.</p> <p>In CPS, some schools use physical education class as a study hall. When she was a student, they had to go camping. Make PE an advent</p>
1, 2	<p>City high school has two empty pools that could be put to use. He tracks down trees. At their nature preserve no one fixes downed trees. He organizes volunteers to take away downed trees manually with volunteers.</p>
All	<p>Encouraging citizen stewardship is very important. Their organization is working well within national trail system.</p> <p>Baby boomers have an opportunity – retirees have a lot of time and energy to devote to outdoors projects.</p> <p>Many of the high schools in Wisconsin</p>
2	<p>Utilize “place based education.” If one is in formal education or non-formal (e.g. zoos, aquariums) you can better incorporate what is going on in local community.</p> <p>She has 9,000 volunteers who go out and collect data. Helps make it more interesting.</p>
1, 2	<p>Concerned that children are hearing too much scary information about the environment. All should remain developmentally appropriate when engaging children</p> <p>David Sobel has done research on what is appropriate. Different levels for 0-3, 7-10, 10-12, 12+. We</p>
3	<p>Need to bring additional federal agencies corporation for community services. It is not a priority on paper to some agencies. We are trying to work with DOL, DOJ. DOI is working well.</p> <p>Concerned that staff of those agencies are not interested in developing</p>
3	<p>Reach out to kids via social networking to raise awareness. Popular culture does not provide good role models. Kids are not apathetic, they are ignorant and lack information. There is a loss of story teller generation. Both parents work, even grandma isn't</p>
2	<p>Don't think you need a very big space. Their organization gives each kid a plant to plant at home.</p> <p>Garden is less space than the room – has 70 themed gardens. Make it fun – they have “Pizza themed” with basil, tomatoes.</p> <p>When he talks about pesticide, and</p>
3	<p>When she was talking to park service, there is a reticence from staff workers who say “this is not my job, I don't have time for this.”</p>

2	<p>Meet once a month, collaborate and brainstorm on ideas. Focus on helping land management and volunteers form an easier relationship.</p> <p>Could be better implemented if you had agencies around the country that can roll up their sleeves.</p>
2	<p>Could have seniors adopt a forest or park and mentor a youth in the process.</p>
2	<p>Growing Power in Milwaukee is a great organization. Develop gardens at school. Bring the outdoors to the indoors.</p> <p>Helping with Detroit urban garden. Detroit gave up their park system, and they are working to adopt parks and turn them into urban gardens w</p>
2, 3	<p>Partnerships at local level with after school programs provide outdoor experience for many people. Changing family structures with two working parents there is a need for trusted caretakers (YMCA, after school)</p> <p>Supports Moving Outdoors and Nature Act legislature</p>
2	<p>Learned that keeping things simple is very important. Groups go to campground property – Joliet housing authority. Kids had never had experiences with outdoors. We had activities and games planned, but kids just wanted to look at acorns and spiders. Don't</p>
2	<p>Many organizations would like to partner with school systems – make it part of the science program. Field trips are important. They could host and sponsor field trips for schools via money and time.</p>
2	<p>It's all about partnerships.</p>
1	<p>Works closely with CAPS and Beat leaders to engage in positive loitering and the formation of walking clubs to clean up surrounding communities. Encourages communities to form a walking club to get more people outside to enjoy the outdoors.</p>
4	<p>Green infrastructure is very important to provide places for people to enjoy the outdoors. Trails can provide a national infrastructure to link communities and wildlife refuges together and improve human and ecological health as well. People should get outdoors and be active stewards to improve the health and wellness of the Nation and encourage use of National trail systems.</p>
3	<p>Speaks out in favor of the DOI document on land management which suggests connecting the ecosystem at a landscape system and protecting national forests and parks to maintain ecological health and the health of Americans. No more wilderness policy-prevents further protection of land as research spaces.</p>

1	Advocates for innovate use of technology to bring kids and teens outdoors interactively across all generations. It is possible to connect youth to outdoors through encourage integration of parks and technology to improve the health of teens and youth
2, 3	The same challenges exist in obesity today that existed years ago. More funding is needed to establish collaborative, cost-effective, sustainable solutions to eliminate obesity. Stop making people aware of obesity (because they already are) and focus on solutions. Use people who are innovators, problem solvers, etc to solve the problem as opposed to organizations.
1	Intergenerational approach needed to connect the elderly and youth demographics. Create a bond to explore the outdoors, fishing, and recreation and also teach life lessons. Also work on opportunities for team building and problem solving for youth with disabilities like ADD.
1	Coordinates a train-the-trainer program that goes out into diverse communities to train pediatric health care providers to prescribe nature to their patients. Also provides informational brochures to patients on green spaces to enjoy in their area.
2	Protecting public health through cleaner water. People are constantly using Chicago parks and rec., especially the waterways. Chicago is disagreeing with sanitizing 1.2 billion gallons of water as recommended by EPA.
2	<p>Questions for audience:  Health Care providers in room?: Minority of room  Who has been told by a physician to go outdoors? Not many at all.  Better link between health care system &amp; public lands.  Current health care providers are trying to get in and outpatients.  Ideas:  Education as physician – learn how to prescribe these resources  Patient needs information – how to ask questions on what type of outdoor activity they need  Need database to tell where to go? Can patient have access?  Very excited about the huge potential for new public health opportunity with great outdoors initiatives.</p>
1, 2	<p>Building a Healthier Chicago  Nutrition in inner city  Partner with Dr. Galloway  Consider safety in underprivileged area – day to day safety is #1 priority  Large open areas/buildings to move freely in urban areas  New innovative ideas need to be promoted more to inner cities –</p>

	<p>Working with police dept in inner cities</p> <p>Opportunity to take advantage of the current schools – as well as not used land – build small parks in communities</p> <p>Utilize current resources.</p>
1, 3	<p>Supports no child left inside act – input environmental education in pre k-12 curriculum</p> <p>Connect youth to nature – continue Obama’s initiative</p> <p>Educate the children on the benefits of outside resources to aid in their development.</p> <p>Represents 70 million Americans.</p>
3	<p>Thank President, First Lady, and administration</p> <p>Federal gov’t needs to play a role in local community – cant be in silos and need to work together</p>
2	<p>Critical children develop outdoor recreation at a very early age</p> <p>Create comfort in toddler years – introduce children to nature</p> <p>Not just talking to kids – talk to parents</p>
1	<p>Open streets for physical activity for people of all ages</p> <p>Open streets- modeled off Columbia</p> <p>Close streets on Sundays to get physically active – million people in Columbia</p> <p>Part of Chicago culture every 5 yrs</p> <p>Mix communities share network of street out in front</p> <p>Invite leaders in US to DC to be a leader in open streets</p>
2	<p>Suburbs abused – economic justice</p> <p>Project they maintain – soft trail lake – not maintained and been ignored</p> <p>Issues about watershed</p> <p>Flashest stream in all NE Illinois</p> <p>Provides game fish</p> <p>Cant provide b/c its being ignored</p> <p>Nature reserve suffers by being overrun by coyotes - No more beavers</p> <p>Thorton reservoir – world’s largest toilet bowl – no environmental impact study</p>
1, 3	<p>Utilize community service assignments &amp; projects at parks/forests; Agencies need to find a way to incorporate partnerships into Position Descriptions for all employees to foster volunteerism and partnerships to accomplish goals of parks &amp; forests</p>
2	<p>Urban kids are scared of outdoors, break down barriers to appreciating outdoors;</p> <p>Concerned that agencies don't trust data gathered from volunteers in the field</p>
1	<p>Age appropriate learning 7-10 free exploration</p>

2	Concern hearing from staff not interested not increasing partnerships and volunteers; Need to make it easier with staff to get involved w best practices and volunteerism DOI working well with trying to use STEP program to get jobs, how do we want to make things easier to work w
1	Use more social media to reach kids. Kids are not apathetic, but are ignorant about outdoors, Need to use technology to get information and tell story. Loss of storytelling skills, use social media to make issues relevant
1	Don't need a big space to connect with nature. Have a forest children's garden, or theme gardens that connect kids to their environment. Connections small ideas and scale up to big picture.
2	NPS workers say that partnerships are too difficult to manage. Too cumbersome to utilize. Staff say that fostering and using volunteers and partners is not my job.
3	Encourage to come up with solutions to focus on relationship with Land Mgt agencies, meet regularly. Suggest using retirees to adopt forest/campground, trail to care for, and then use "older" generation volunteer to mentor a young person or kids group to care for resource.
1	Need to bring outdoors to people. Use student volunteers & partnership with Girl Scouts to simulate an environmental community locally, then can come to the real resource, i.e. National Park/Forest. Use cell phones to take picture of resource in the outdoors
1	Partnerships @ local level, provide funding for trusted programs like Corps Network, YMCA. New legislation moving toward outdoor education more funding with partners at state & local level. Funding- 27% increase of science scores with kids have outdoor education. More fed community come together on research
1	Found keep thing simple works, not so important to schedule formal activities, let them appreciate outdoors, let kids get dirty, experiential learning. Teach importance to giving back to community.
1, 2	Recognized that membership & support of youth in conservation is low, try to get youth interested in conservation, exposure at young age. Developed program for schools called Project Webfoot, teachers interested, failed due to cost & funding. Conservation needs to be a part of school curriculum. Need to become partners with school systems, conservation organizations & state & Fed need to s
2, 3	Resources, many programs around the country are replicable and it boils down to resources. Feds can provide resources. State, local and community programs and NGOs have good programs, based on science and have the ability to be replicated.

2	Why is it that no one talks about global warming? How do we get kids and adults to understand this and change their behaviors? How does the government help us make that leap? It is also the churches, etc. It has to happen at a very visceral level.
1, 2	As a child I was exposed to the outdoors through public school athletics. Luckily for me, I could run right in my neighborhood. Safety was a major factor for that. We need to address a proximity barrier. Or even the psychological barrier of thinking that
2	I think the biggest barrier is that we lack a clear vision for what we're talking about. Lack of vision will delay America in getting in shape. I think putting gardens in schools, getting them to connect to nature and getting them moving is critical.
1	The key to anything is knowledge and education. I was educated in healthy foods and health. They took out health classes in schools and they need to go back. And gym class.
1, 2	Build trails that are shared-use and sustainable. The tension between conservation and allowing uses. Recreation falls into the category of high use. There is a need for science to look at true impacts of recreation on our natural resources.
3	Their mission is to prevent lung disease and they are very interested in air quality; wants federal government to focus on creating strong air quality standards, based on real science, and federal government is only way we can get these standards set. EPA n
1	Physician for 40+years, and has faced air quality issues the whole time. Everyone should be able to walk 3 miles (roundtrip) for school or work, shopping, or to a bus stop. Do not get in the car when you are going less than 3 miles. They take kids on h
1	mother of 4 kids, will do outdoor activities with her children at home: COFI/Power-Pac
3	Fed Government can be involved in taxes, and putting the money in the right place. Need to be getting enough resources for schools to provide recess, and healthier food, instead of subsidizing air pollution. Cap and dividend make a lot of sense, but are
2	We have swimming pool in the HS but it doesn't work. Do not have a playground; need funding from fed gov't for playground and to fix pool. The students want to use it, but cannot. They have healthy food, team have a peace center for Jews,
1, 3	I am Director of the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway, Designated by the Federal Highway Administration as one of seven in Illinois and one in a collection of 150 of America's Byways throughout the US. These treasured roadways, deserve...We tend to think of Byways as the offspring of the 20th century

	<p>conservation effort to manage and protect National Forests and Grasslands, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and BLM lands. Byways are the “doorways” to experiences, connecting people...Byways remarkably combine recreation, tourism and quality of life with an emphasis on experiencing each place for its unique intrinsic qualities. While Byways work to attract and educate visitors, Byways also strive to reach those who live in the region... We recommend: 1. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on experience than on place. Outstanding outdoor experiences can be found anywhere if the intrinsic qualities, including history and culture, are well-protected and these stories are well told. 2. Include America’s Byways in the federal resource that connect Americans to the outdoorsy. These are local grassroots public and non-profit organizations that rare deeply connected to the people, local, state, and federal governmental agencies. 3. Place the emphasis on “America’s Great outdoors” that not only include the treasured outdoor assets that are in federal and state ownership but also those that are in the communities where American’s live and receive the most frequent daily use. 4. Much of any outdoor experience is in the journey to and from the destination. Involve the transportation, tourism and attractions sectors in the project. Encourage the road less traveled and remember= the journey is part of the destination. 5. Please keep us involved. Contact us at <a href="http://www.Nsbfoundation.com">www.Nsbfoundation.com</a></p>
2	A barrier is a lack of information. People don’t have information about what is out there and what access they have.
2	People do not know where to go to recreate. People could use the phone to get access to information. There is an opportunity to work with companies to get information from their phones (e.g. I phone apps)
2	When tracking Health impact on students in environmental programs these records become subject to HIPA. The technical expertise required for this records management is a barrier to environmental professionals. For inner city youth of poverty, there are social and behavioral issues that environmental organizations are not equipped to deal with. SCA has tried to balance the societal and environmental expertise of staff to round out experience for the youth.
2	There are so many competing interests for adults and youth that prevent them to getting people outdoors. We need to figure out how to raise the profile of outdoor activities.
2	Barrier is that we cannot get our foot in the door into high schools to create awareness. We are a small organization and people from the city
2	We have lost the way of counting what is useful (i.e. the greater society invests value in built environment and commerce and things that generate money). Figure out how



	to invest value in the non-built environment.
2	Crime is a barrier for children whether it is real or perceived. Most activities had to occur indoors because after a certain time period, it was unsafe for children to be outside.
2	Funding needs to come from agencies to support initiatives in the community. The community should decide what we are going to do and then get funded. We have encountered a lot of problems to get kids outdoors because of insurance reasons.
1	Park service program. Rivers and trails conservation assistance works. This program connects with communities and smaller towns to bring park service to the people where you don't have a lot of federal public land and then educate those people about the NPS lands further away but still in the area. We are attempting the L. Michigan water trail which will provide safe stopping off points for kayakers and canoeists to circumnavigate L. Michigan. This is a community driven process.
1	Insert environmental education into K-12 regular curriculum
1, 4	The 100K + schools in the nation is the prime interface between children and the outdoors. The edible schoolyard in Berkeley is the kind of activity that introduces children to the living ecosystem.
3	Federal government could be more flexible with their funding pots. Reestablish the biosphere reserve designation, which is an international designation. We have a globally rare biodiversity juxtaposed to thousands of people in this area but it's not recognized because we are in an urban area. Let's increase this profile.
2	Department of Labor dedicated 20 million to workforce investment dollars to support work on our public lands which is very exciting. The technical issue is that workforce development folks don't know how to manage workforce investment act money and it is beyond many organizations.
2	We need to instill in kids how to go out and discover. How do we light this fire in the kids, Education. Schools are geared to reading, writing, and arithmetic and there is nothing about exploring and discovering, fix this.
3	Get the local schools to use our native ecosystems as part of their curriculum. Rather than kids learning about the rain forest, learn about the local prairie which can be reflected back in the classroom and then they go home and teach their families.
2, 4	Federal government could be more effective if there were more collaboration between the federal agencies that are not normal allies. For example, you should link education and health and human services and national park services to get kids moving and doing environmental activities. The lets move initiative is a good example

	of how these things can be carried out.
3	Unused blacktops could be converted into green spaces so that children can play things like soccer. Educate children on safety and provide a safe corridor so that children can walk to a green space.
3	Create a nationally recognized cross curriculum that emphasizes environment and the usual, reading, writing, and math.
3	National Park service could collaborate with the school system so that people in the parks give presentations about national park service resources that are available.
4	Creating marketing campaigns around natural services has increased usership. A possible example; Zac Efron just had poison oak because he was camping in a national park. If he did a national piece on how cool it is to camp, or be in wilderness, and you had a number of people around that message to increase the sex appeal of being in the outdoors.
3	When students are going to medical school, the curriculum should teach how their patients can enjoy the outdoors to improve their health. If there were some standardization of this information in medical school curriculum this would be very beneficial.
2	Awareness of parks recreation opportunity Need info on how to get to these places, e.g. Indiana dunes nat. lakeshore, need car/transport to get
2	Transportation issues. Silos of fed agencies are an impediment. HUD DOT needs to be involved.
1, 2	Got kids w diabetes in the parks via partnership w Kaiser, 2nd year couldn't get enough kids. Need better communication with health care providers.
2	Shrinking amt of natural areas, casinos, etc. infringe on natural areas. Road access diminishes the very place you want access to.
2	Barriers with language
2	Work in Chicago; land not available in communities so kids can walk there safely.
1	Integrated their project into the smaller and medium size communities, went to city boards, had communities volunteer and construct trails, and now working to connect these communities together.
1	Provide leadership training. Job programs to train and introduce workers to environmental field. Diverse folks participate in this, but need funding. Foundations

	like to start these programs, but hard to get funding to sustain efforts.
1	Partner and collaborate. Educate inner city parents on programs.
1	Outdoor living, need to teach what that means. In suburbs how can you increase trails so folks can get around without cars. To combat ecological illiteracy, need to teach with living landscapes in yards and in parks.
1	Utilize school networks, libraries. Have assignments, e.g. where is the closest park? Provide in multiple languages.
2, 3	Fed money went to Cook County, but not yet distributed to the local groups. Make the county accountable in how they use the money, make sure it gets to the community/ local groups.
3	Need full funding for urban park partnership. Support Nat'l wildlife refuge in Hackmatack, will increase open space, and provide wild lands close to large urban area.
2	We are competing against electronic games. Need to give a thrill outside. Maybe motorized recreation. Sailing.
3	Support Hackmatack. Support restoration activities, they can be a job creator. Involve the faith community to be engaged in restoration.
4	In California, they developed a very powerful search engine to locate open space. Input your address and it will locate local, state and federal parks, and includes transportation information on how to get there. They need help in getting the word out.
1	Education! Most kids will never see what IL looked like (the Prairie State), need to manage the land for natural areas. Teach what is special about their own locality.
4	Need a clearing house on opportunities, e.g. match available slots for camps w/kids interested from other organization.
3	Focus on quality of experience, build it well and they will come. Fully fund Land and Water Conservation Fund, and enhanced tax incentives for land easements. The tax incentives were a crucial factor for land owner participation in conservation easement
3	Need to help foster the interaction between land managers and the healthcare community. Need an entry point to health community for the ecological community.
2	Clemson Beaver Pond overrun by coyotes and beaver population; Sawk Trail Lake & dam abandoned by Cook County Forest Preserve for past 50 years, filled with silt and not in compliance with Clean Water Act; Thorton Transitional Composite Reservoir-

	lacking environmental impact study and will destroy groundwater resources
1, 3	With obesity rising and disposable resources shrinking, is there any consideration of financial incentives to improve health through promotion of active lifestyles? We have successfully encouraged home ownership, retirement savings, and education via incentives.
2	We work on issues that affect our communities, families, and schools in Chicago. Listening to you today, as an organizer, we walk door to door talking to people on issues, we need to have this information in our communities. We understand and know that in order for anything, no matter what it is, you must go to the source first to find out what they need in order to correct any problems no matter what the problem is. Whether safety, health, education, or family issues. Every step we take is a step toward a better future.