



Fact Sheet: Outdoor Recreation

From parks and rivers to farmlands and forests, America's great outdoors fuel our national spirit of adventure and independence and help power our economy. Our lands and waters also are where our families go to unwind, to fish, hike, and hunt, and to spend valuable time together.

Today, however, much of America's great outdoors is under intense pressure. Open lands, farmlands and woodlands are disappearing, waterways are polluted, and a changing climate is threatening natural systems. At the same time, many Americans – especially young people – are losing touch with the outdoor places and traditions our country has always treasured. President Obama believes that for America to be at its strongest, we need healthy and accessible lands and waters and healthy and active youth who are connected to them. That is why he established the America's Great Outdoors Initiative in April, 2010, to work with the American people develop a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda.

The America's Great Outdoors Initiative turns the old ways upside down. Instead of dictating policies from Washington, it calls for supporting local, community-based conservation ideas. Instead of growing bureaucracy, it calls for reworking inefficient policies and making the Federal Government a better partner with states, tribes, and local communities.

During the summer of 2010, senior Administration officials held 51 public listening sessions across the country, 21 of them specifically with youth. Some 10,000 Americans participated in the live sessions and more than 105,000 provided comments. The outcome of this national conversation is a report to the President, *America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations*. Prepared in consultation with the American people, the report reflects their ideas on how to reconnect with America's lands, waters, and natural and cultural treasures, and build on the conservation successes in communities across the nation.

Outdoor Recreation: What We Heard

Outdoor recreation provides Americans physical and emotional rejuvenation and promotes respect for protecting our natural heritage. Federal agencies provide exceptional recreational opportunities on more than 600 million acres of land that receive more a billion visits each year. State, county, and municipal entities manage thousands of parks, natural areas, and historic sites that are enjoyed by tens of millions of people each year. In addition, many private landowners provide access to their lands for recreation.

Outdoor recreation and tourism and related businesses have become powerful elements of rural and urban economic development. For example, in 2006, hunters, anglers, bird watchers, boaters, and others who enjoy outdoor recreation spent more than \$120 billion on their activities.

Many public comments focused on the desire for more recreational access on local, state, tribal, and federal lands. This includes better public transportation, roads, trailheads, signage, and trails as well as better information about recreational opportunities. Participants also acknowledged that federal land management agencies must balance increasing recreational access with their conservation and stewardship responsibilities.

Outdoor Recreation: What We Are Doing

Responding to the priorities of Americans, the Obama Administration will take action to:

Increase recreational access and opportunities on federal lands and waters

- Create a Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation to improve coordination and effectiveness among federal agencies on recreational activities.
- Expand technical assistance to support community-based efforts to boost access to outdoor recreation.

Provide full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund

- Focus a portion of federal LWCF funds, and broaden guidelines for 5-year Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORPs) to:
 - Enhance and create urban parks and community green spaces; foster landscape-scale conservation; improve river restoration and access; and establish blueways and other recreation venues.
- Invest a portion of LWCF funds to improve recreational access to federal lands.

Support financial and other incentives to encourage access across private working landscapes.

- Expand partnerships with private landowners that facilitate access to or across private lands for recreation through programs such as the USDA Voluntary Public Access Program (Open Fields).

Establish the AGO National Recreational Blueway Trails Initiative to designate community-scale portions of rivers as recreational destinations that receive special attention for restoration and access.

Support restoration and conservation of rivers, bays, coasts, lakes, and estuaries.

- Enhance and restore local waterways and surrounding land by partnering with state, local, and tribal governments, and the private sector.
- Work to reduce fish passage barriers in America's streams and rivers on federal lands.

Manage federal lands and waters to create and protect critical wildlife corridors and connect landscapes in collaboration with other public and private stakeholders.

- Work with states and other partners to use and disseminate scientific data and other information concerning the locations of and threats to critical wildlife corridors.
- Incorporate wildlife corridor conservation and restoration into federal agency plans and programs.

Build stewardship values and engage youth in conservation and recreation.

- Promote and support federal and nongovernmental youth programs that connect children to their natural heritage, including through activities like hunting, fishing, hiking, and others.

For more detailed information and to learn how you can take action in your community, visit:

www.doi.gov/AmericasGreatOutdoors.