

America's Great Outdoors
Notes from Youth Listening Session

Location: Kissimmee, FL

Date: August 26, 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

- Y1. Where do you go when you are not indoors?
- Y2. What do you do personally to protect the environment?
- Y3. What are some obstacles and challenges that prevent young people from spending time outdoors?
- Y4. What recommendations would you make to President Obama to get more young people engaged in, and connected to, the outdoors?

Discussion Question Y1-Y4	Comment
Y1	I like to go kayaking and to the Itchetucknee and Weeki Wachi Rivers - we ride horses on trails, dirt-bikes and 4-wheelers.
Y1	I like to go to the beach with my family and I play soccer and swim.
Y1	Swim in the ocean and walk on trails.
Y1	I enjoy getting outside anywhere – bugs don't seem to like me! – Fishing, camping, walking. I lead tours. I have a canoe and like boating, birdwatching.
Y1	I have a garden in my backyard and I am out there watering peach trees. I basically hate to go indoors. I planted trees all around the house – now 11 years old. Gives lots of habitat. Just back from Joyce Kilmer NF in NC. Go walking every morning and we do 2-3 miles every morning.
Y1	I made it my job to be outdoors and guide kayaking, biking. I obviously like to be outside. I grew up in the city and now, I am anxious to be outside.
Y1	I used to do trip-leading with schools. I like the different ages on tours. Outdoors – I like to bird by ear. Don't need binoculars. Don't need to see the critters. It's a lot of fun!
Y1	I grew up on a 2 acre property and considered it rural. But we had a creek and put a small boat in it.
Y1	I am on the crew team so we are on the lake every day, rowing on lakes and rivers. Being in Orlando, there is not much open space, which is kind of sad. We like to be outside – I have 4 little brothers.

Y1	I could go out and I had the woods around me – now I know I was trespassing – but it was just the outdoors for me. We would make paths, trails and we would get home eventually. We would go clamming and scalloping, mullet fishing – swamp buggy in Big Cypress. Dad would run the boat or build a camp. Going places with families.
Y2	I don't think of my backyard – I think of the Grand Canyon, and paying money to go to a National Park.
Y2	Outdoors meant going to Grandma and Granddaddy's and running out into woods and cow pastures and we found something to do on our own. No Nintendos.
Y2	Let's take out the "Great" in outdoors.
Y2	I remember as a kid, we drove to New Hampshire, we stopped in NC – we went hiking and it was really fun. We went rappelling. They had a little lake there and we went swimming. Seeing everything made it fun.
Y2	Trees at Joyce Kilmer that are this big around – you just don't see those.
Y2	We drove out to Colorado to look at colleges and it was cool seeing the mountains. I never have hiked in the mountains and I always wanted to rock climb. Seeing hummingbirds by the hundreds in Missouri at a feeder – awesome. I like places that are untouched.
Y2	I would like more opportunities for skydiving, scuba diving.
Y2	I would like more opportunities for snow-skiing, snorkeling.
Y2	I would like more opportunities for snowboarding, haven't seen snow in years.
Y2	I would like more opportunities for hunting.
Y2	Always wished we had more biking trails on the east coast like we have in other parts of FL.
Y2	When we lived in Illinois next to the cornfields, we didn't have cable or video games, so we were outside every day. I liked to climb trees. When it snowed, we made stuff in the snow. We made playgrounds. Then, we moved to FL and we tend to stay inside.
Y3	My pet peeve is the lack of people recycling – very few people put out bins – it's a behavior problem.
Y3	I think it's lack of education. I've grown up in a different country and seen different sides. Everyone was educated in the importance of recycling in Germany. It didn't happen overnight. If you go to any public place, there will be different bins to sort trash. Teach the kids why it's important. They would hit you in the pocket to get folks interested. Resources in Europe are more expensive, so recycling and conserving are more important.
Y3	This is a problem, especially in Orlando, with so many tourists, you see a lot of trash on the ground and in the lakes. They don't know where to recycle. General lack of places to recycle things outside your home.
Y3	Kids and adults are more interested in animals and plants – kids have pets. Learn how to care for other living things. Lack of interest in the natural world.
Y3	People have to pay to go into park, pay for parking. Just driving there is a hassle. Would like to be able to walk to open space. School indoors, homework indoors. No free time to be outside.
Y3	I agree with the whole money thing – it costs money to cross into Sanibel and you go fishing and you have to pay to get into refuge. It's a 40 minute drive. It's hot outside. I

	don't mind in the winter.
Y3	There is a lack of interest in local animal and plants. I could go see lions at Animal Kingdom and most people seem to like that instead of the local animals.
Y3	Locals don't grasp that they have amazing animals right there. There is a lack of knowledge that there is a lot of wildlife close at hand.
Y3	As a parent, I am going to say "fear." I did not have fear as a child. Fear of other people, not wildlife. Remoteness of it.
Y4	I recommend more access and availability - that could make the difference.
Y4	Instead of one 10,000 acre place make 10 - 1,000 acre places.
Y4	How about making the outdoors an educational priority?
Y4	After elementary school, you don't hear much about environment, etc. You might have a recycling club. It's not stressed.
Y2	Our high school is very focused and does emphasize recycling.
Y4	Environmental ethics – tie it together with all connections. What are the consequences?
Y4	Using recycling bins is first step. But it needs to be followed up.
Y2	My parents gave me controlled, supervised environmental experiences. It helped me become a teacher and lead walks. Parents should feel that there is a safety net.
Y1	Walking the dog outdoors.
Y1	Hiking in the mountains.
Y1	Enjoys being around water.
Y1	Being in the backyard.
Y1	Biking in the woods and state parks.
Y1	Rough camping in state/national parks.
Y1	High-mountains, canyons, grasslands, rivers and fresh waters, Everglades, Camp Wewa in Apopka.
Y1	Fresh and peaceful, mangroves and wading birds.
Y1	More secluded areas, not as impacted by people.
Y1	Wild areas that are free of development, sand pine scrub; Juniper Run and Alexander Run in the Ocala National Forest.
Y1	Forest by a lake, camping, fish moving through the water.
Y1	The great plains, mountains, vast open areas.
Y3	Beach erosion and trash, the oil spill.
Y3	Overdevelopment, over populated areas, habitat fragmentation, water quality concerns.
Y3	Human ignorance, pride and carelessness.
Y3	Sprawl, habitat destruction and fragmentation, general disconnect with anything natural.
Y3	Trash and litter, pollution.
Y3	Urban sprawl, fragmentation, general disregard for natural areas, people take natural areas for granted.
Y3	Classroom time and activities, busy schedules.
Y3	The economy, cost of driving to remote locations, cost of gear and equipment.

Y3	High cost of equipment, the perception that you need to have a certain level of equipment to be "outdoors," the perception that being outdoors is not entertaining.
Y3	Since youth don't spend much time outdoors, there is a lack of understanding of the outdoors and associated safety concerns; many other interests that don't involve the outdoors.
Y3	Any free time is spent at home or in neighborhoods due to lack of transportation.
Y2	Indoor entertainment options were not available several years ago. Years ago, the entertainment was being outside and doing things outdoors.
Y4	Incorporating school sponsored trips to state parks and/or natural areas as part of school activities and field trips. Restructure Physical Education to include outdoor activities such as nature walks, planting trees.
Y4	Begin an outdoor educational class as part of school curriculum.
Y4	Outdoor education in schools, creating community centers that incorporate outdoor education.
Y4	Education programs funded by and through conservation funds to cover transportation costs of exploring outdoor areas. Bring back the Civilian Conservation Corps, re-vitalize the Youth Conservation Corps.
Y4	Create a school course that incorporates outdoor education where students could learn basic skills, safety and learn about nature. Plan and prepare a small garden on school grounds.
Y4	Funding available to community organizations to provide outdoor education.
Y4	All students can be exposed to some outdoor activities. Walk out the door and see what is there.
Y1	Beach, lakes, white water, likes to be near water
Y3	Segmentation, fragmentation of environment
Y1	Vivid contrasts, horizon with mountains, clouds, big views.
Y3	You can't get anywhere without driving. I see two separate societies, the computer or sit at home group and the play/go outdoors group.
Y4	Have employment opportunities for young people in the outdoors, like the old CCC. Need easily accessible areas, connected recreation opportunities, more playgrounds and parks.
Y1	Fishing, off-shore fishing, beach.
Y3	The great outdoors is very American, not much connection to outdoors in Europe. I see it as no urban areas touching, very rural.
Y3	Tourists and greater populations bring noise and pollution
Y3	Schools are missing opportunities to expose youth to the outdoors. We used to have time made for us, now we must make time to be outside.
Y4	Have more outdoor activities in school. Construct more bike trails. Learn more about the effects of an industrialized economy/nation.
Y1	Ocala National Forest, springs, lakes.
Y1	Green, open spaces, wildlife habitat.
Y3	Loss of parks and open space, development.
Y3	Accessibility, lack of school programs.

Y4	Need a requirement that with each new development, builders must leave open space and build parks and pools. Schools should provide pools, recreation opportunities.
Y1	Biking, mountain biking.
Y1	Wildlife.
Y3	Construction/development. Loss of habitat.
Y3	Finding/making time. Fewer parks, fewer organized sports.
Y4	Have the President walk the walk, he should go camping.
Y1	Springs, snorkeling, biking.
Y1	Few people, big open spaces.
Y3	Loss of habitat.
Y3	Work, time, safety especially after hours.
Y4	Find a way to break the computer connection.
Y1	Bike, hike trails, swim in springs.
Y3	Pesticides/herbicides. Hormones in animals. Loss of habitat.
Y3	School. The fact that many homework assignments must be done on a computer.
Y4	Give class credits for working or volunteering in the outdoors. Physical education classes that require kids be outdoors. Engage kids at a younger age. Show parents that the outdoors is OK (they won't be eaten by a bear).