

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

Location: Minneapolis, MN

Date: July 7, 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?

N/A – Not Available

Discussion Question 1-4	Comment
N/A	Safety and the perception of safety is a big concern for both kids and parents.
N/A	Adult leaders are needed who can be mentors, examples, address the safety issue.
N/A	Need for gear to camp and do other outdoor activity
N/A	Organized sports takes too much time and makes kids associate all outdoor time with sports activity. Need to allow unorganized activity as well.
N/A	Need culturally appropriate programming. Not just a language issue but a connection to older traditions with the outdoors found in some cultures.
N/A	Transportation to remote locations is a big issue. Even transportation to local resources can be an issue because of cost and safety concerns.
N/A	Self-definition of some kids as "City Kids" who don't do the outdoors keeps many kids from

	trying things they might like. There is a need for programs that help “City Kids” get past their fears and identity issues to get to the experiences themselves.
N/A	Need more fun things to do in winter as it is cold here for much of the year. Outdoors can’t just be in summer.
N/A	Funding is an enduring issue, but especially important in the context of state and local budgets going into crises. Federal programs that are trying to leverage a local match may have a challenge in finding it from shrinking local program budgets.
N/A	Partnerships are important, but are similarly stretched by budget issues.
N/A	Need federal grant programs to keep good programs alive because youth and nature programs are viewed by many as non-essential and cut early in the process of budget cutting.
N/A	Explore funding from various federal agencies, not just the land agencies, to develop partnership programs on public lands. Education funding, crime prevention, health programs etc.
N/A	Continue to grow the Corps Network for youth opportunities and connect these programs up to programs that work with younger students, land management projects, and other partnerships.
N/A	Expand service learning opportunities in coordination with the needs of the schools and the needs of land agencies. Start earlier with these kind of programs to get kids invested in a “land ethic”
N/A	Keep the conversation with youth going. Don’t let this be a one shot listening effort but an on-going commitment to including the voice of youth.
N/A	Expand the scope of what might be included in the services that come from youth jobs corps type programs. Don’t just assume that manual labor is the only thing that young people have to offer.
N/A	Include more integrated training and educational efforts into the various jobs corps and connect these better to both K-12 and college level educational and training programs.

N/A	Include youth representation at the board levels of NGOs and somehow in the decision making bodies at governmental agencies.
N/A	Don't just focus on the problems and obstacles, but also on the solutions that seem to be working and models of success. Fund the expansion of successful models, including ways to help people learn more about what works. Include evaluation so we know what is working well and why.
N/A	Recognize what resources are nearby and develop these local connections as a bridge to engaging youth in caring about the larger system of public lands. You don't need to go far to find a chance to engage with nature.
N/A	Don't divide the world so clearly into nature and not-nature as this reinforces the idea that we are able to be separate from the larger systems of nature. People are nature too and we should help youth develop a sense that they are within nature rather than approach nature as something that is an experience to be had in some distant place.
N/A	Pay more attention to the connections between experiences with nature and education. Look not just at math and science but also at the social and emotional learning and the sense of self that comes from an awareness of connection to the larger world.
N/A	Involve businesses for funding, in-kind resources, mentors, and other help. Understand that because businesses care a lot about having an educated work force that they can be supportive of using experiences with nature to improve education.
N/A	Understand the scale of the audience need and build programs to meet the need. This will take bigger budgets, but these should be seen as investments that payback with an educated and healthy population that cares about the state of the natural world.
N/A	Without getting hysterical about it, move to develop programs that help young people to understand that we are dealing with global systems under great stress and that we have a crisis at hand. Don't just approach interacting with nature as something that makes us feel good, but rather as an essential way of looking at the world at a time when our very survival demands that we be aware of how our decisions impact natural systems.

