

America's Great Outdoors
Notes from Youth Listening Session

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Date: July 27, 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

YH1: What are some of the historic sites and outdoor places in your community, or elsewhere, that you have enjoyed visiting?

YH2: Why do you think it is important to preserve these places? What do you see as the consequences if we do not?

YH3: What are some obstacles and challenges that prevent people your age from spending more time outdoors and visiting historic sites?

YH4: What sorts of programs, events, or other opportunities would make these places more fun and interesting for people your age?

YH5: What recommendations would you make to President Obama to get more young people engaged in, and connected to, historic places, the outdoors, and recreation?

Discussion Question YH1-YH4	Comment
YH1	INDE - It's fun and exciting to walk past the Liberty Bell on the way to work every day.
YH1	Bandelier National Park with his Boy Scout troop. Likes really well-developed houses carved out of the mountainside and village. Interesting how they lived and defended themselves. Got learn something, see something they wouldn't normally see in Philadelphia.
YH1	Liberty Bell and Independence Hall. Graffiti in INDE hall from 1776 is a must see.
YH1	Blue Ridge Parkway. Worked there last year. Likes big estate overlooking lake, carriage trails, fan of beauty and work that goes into preserving 100 year old manor house and outbuildings, craftsmanship. How it stood up to the test of time.

YH1	State park near my house. I walk my dog there. Good scenery, walking trails. I am from Reading, PA. I like it because it gets me away from everything. It is pretty and convenient.
YH1	New Yorker. Fan of Gettysburg - I like the history and graves but also like walking the trails to mix history with the outdoors. See cemetery and hills from walking trails. Nice vistas. A lot do outside in New York as well.
YH1	Working at VAFO now but been there more times than could count. Hike Mt. Joy and Misery every 4 days with boy scouts to prepare for a big hike. Knew the trail by heart, every rock and tree. Fun but eventually too much to see same hills every day so if you to the same place for the same experience too much, it was too much. Good in preparation for a big event.
YH1	GETT - It appeals to everyone - (battlefield, town's rich history, sense of community). Live close to personal heritage
YH1	HOFU - no one famous worked there, it represents everyday people.
YH1	Western Mining Towns - It's like visiting a movie set, mystery and ghosts.
YH1	Independence Hall, Liberty Bell
YH1	United Nations
YH1	Hopewell
YH1	Valley Forge
YH1	Ellis Island
YH1	French Creek State Park
YH1	Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
YH1	Hickory Run State Park
YH1	Governor's Island
YH1	Fairmount Park
YH1	Manumuskin River, New Jersey, for the scenery. Canoeing, kayaking, hiking. Picking up trash that others have left gives a sense of pride and ownership.
YH1	Groton State Forest, Vermont. Diverse habitats. Hiking, camping.
YH1	Valley Forge. Streams and water habitats. Enjoy fishing for trout.

YH1	NYC Central Park. Urban refuge, enjoy walking, people watching, personal reflection.
YH1	Shubal Trail. Opportunities for physical activity and learning about history.
YH1	Monocacy National Battlefield, MD for personal reflection. Enjoy visiting a particular hill that provides a view and a quiet retreat.
YH1	Delaware Bay Shore, New Jersey. A place for connection with natural cycles such as migration. Enjoy hiking and bird watching.
YH1	Chaco Canyon, interesting to see something so old in a country so young.
YH1	John Heinz conservation center city, access to nature outdoors. In SCA, has seen bald eagle on its nest, which would never happen in an urban area. Goes with other students.
YH1	From built up suburb near Monmouth cultural battlefield. Think about how things were before cars, buildings. I go alone because I can't convince my friends to go.
YH1	From NY in Bayshores different sites preserving nature banding osprey because of the conservation birds are making a comeback. Working with nature conservancy with environmental high school classmates.
YH1	John Heinz and Gettysburg enjoyed because of expanse history and country's past with trails has gone with boy scout troops.
YH1	Hard to go; we're in a crew
YH1	At least once a week I go hiking in a forest preserve or a park
YH1	I go about once a week.
YH1	I go about once a month.
YH1	At lunchtime, I'll go to Washington Square. Does that count? I can't go to a huge park, but I'll go to an urban park quite frequently to relax, take a break from city life, see trees, enjoy looking around.
YH1	Cape May - Preserving endangered birds (piping plovers). Preserving space and more education will help when species are threatened. Public education is an important issue.
YH1	It is important to preserve elements of our collective memory, people's ability to interact with our history helps offer an understanding of our shared history.
YH1	Hands-on experience is vital to understanding history.
YH1	Inhibits irresponsible growth or sprawl.

YH1	Casino near Gettysburg Park, desire just for jobs is shortsighted and conservation can also create jobs.
YH1	Not protecting the irreplaceable we lose our identity, destroys physicality as well as who we are as Americans and how we unite.
YH1	Valley Forge, removal of invasive species - trying to spread awareness of the dangers of invaders like rusty crayfish and kudzu. Keeping ecosystems intact.
YH1	Invasive species - People are actively planting invasive species which are some of the hardest things to contend with and they are only being brought in out of ignorance, not malice.
YH1	Relax
YH1	Learn
YH1	Give a sense of who came before - groundwork sacrifice
YH1	Sense of what happens, spiritual, entertainment, reenactment
YH1	Close to home, a great place to take family and friends
YH1	Great place to take family from out of town
YH1	Speaking about Boston and Philadelphia - City of Philadelphia, see the past through layers of history, you don't need to visit a museum to experience it. Everywhere you go you will find historic significance.
YH1	Speaking about Boston and Philadelphia - Part of our daily life
YH1	Speaking about Boston and Philadelphia - A sense of what happened
YH1	Speaking about Boston and Philadelphia - Tangible reminders of our heritage
YH2	So people can see what happened before. Also, like VAFO, see green open places that you can hike. Not like a city that is entirely paved over. Important to have somewhere natural to go for folks in the city to get away. Fresh air.
YH2	Better than reading in a book. Can read about something and want to go see the real places. If there is no real place, no point in reading the book. History and nature, great to read a book and then go see the real place.
YH2	Important for people in the future to understand where we came from. Seeing the real place makes it tangible.
YH2	People have out of sight, out of mind mentality. With historic sites, if you see the real place, it makes it more interesting, and will learn more but will also experience what they

	experience. Same thing with an environmental site. Helps you to connect with nature or history.
YH2	Better to see real things than watch tv. Better than watching National Geographic channel but actually be outdoors. Being outdoors gives you a cleansing feeling. Outdoors is a way to recharge and a way to connect with our natural selves.
YH2	HOFU - We as a nation don't make anything anymore - what and how the U.S. use to make things.
YH2	Common sense - it is our heritage / belonging, the only history we have
YH2	Essential to the mission of the NPS, future generations
YH2	Revamp historic buildings to use for the purposes of today. Is this still preservation? Where do we draw the line?
YH2	It's interesting what we choose to preserve, value, give access
YH2	Balance businesses use with preservation
YH2	Learn from other people (our history), more powerful to experience places and spaces than to read about them, tangible, the real thing is better than hearing about or just reading about it. Seeing for yourself gives you connection to your emotions and the complete picture.
YH2	Serve as a reminder
YH2	Share our story and identity with the world
YH2	American History is our history
YH2	So future generation can enjoy them; deserve to be able to see the greenscapes.
YH2	Natural Resources
YH2	Sustainability
YH2	Part of history, I guess
YH2	Keep the appreciation of nature and history alive
YH2	Preserve the history of it, but also to go see how it happened, where it happened is more profound than reading it in a book or something
YH2	For future generations to enjoy

YH2	Because if we do not we risk losing our heritage.
YH2	These places provide recreation opportunities
YH2	Provide a connection to the outdoors
YH2	Personal enrichment
YH2	To preserve our historical past and to show our appreciation for those who made sacrifices before us.
YH2	Archaeology - documentation doesn't always survive or tell the truth - the artifacts supplement or provide information. Work well with historical studies. If you lose these resources, you don't get the full story about the past.
YH2	These are fundamental places we connect to; connection is a good way to say it - we'd lose the connection.
YH2	These places are different from Parks & Recreation outdoor spaces, historical sites don't force you to learn, but provide a place to learn and social space - place to communicate, connect, be social.
YH2	I went visiting a bunch of national parks this summer and it seemed like only one out of every five people were speaking English - it was mostly all international visitors.
YH2	U.S. residents just don't think of going - we'll go to Mexico on spring break before we'd think of going to a National Park.
YH2	If you live in one area, you need something nearby in order to learn about what people are talking about. Otherwise your attitude will always be "why should I care?" - need that exposure and experience to understand.
YH3	School
YH3	Disagree. It is an avenue to get to these places.
YH3	Depends on which school you go to. Up to grade 12, never once went to a national park, last 6 years, no field trips at all. Felt getting out of the school building was not important anymore. Getting students out of schools to national parks to teach what happened nearby and what is important. Give students exposure to real places.
YH3	Money. Don't have money, can't go. With unlimited funds, would visit all of the historic sites.
YH3	Someone to go with. Don't like to hike alone.

YH3	Doesn't have someone to go to a historic site with because they are not interested.
YH3	National Parks are not the first thing I think to do. Wouldn't think to go hiking but if there were an open field, I would play sports.
YH3	Time. I don't use my free time well enough to choose to go outside in parks, historic sites.
YH3	Available resources. Motivation.
YH3	Need to share information that the park (INDE) is free. Tickets are free, need to get the correct information out. Communications. These places exist and they are free.
YH3	If you go bike riding you will get hit by a car. I live near the beach and trails but if the only way to get there by car, who's going to take me?
YH3	Physical Accessibility
YH3	Where I live, they don't like high school students to loiter; they built a sitting park, but you get chased out if you sit. They made a skateboard park and put it on the edge of town, but it's so far away, the kids can't get to it. You have to be driven there. Stuck in the suburb; can't get out. There are strip malls we can get to. After nine when everything closes, the kids would go skateboard in the parking lots, but the cops chase them away. Skateboard park is pretty, but you have to be driven there. It's pointless. Can't use what we have access to, can't access what's been provided for us.
YH3	Not youth-friendly (\$, access, etc)
YH3	Some places in NYC - no loitering, police come kick you out. Assumptions it's about drugs or something.
YH3	No place for kids to go sit. No gathering places.
YH3	Youth from outside Chicago asks are there buses that go to Valley Forge or Hopewell? Youth answer, no there aren't; buses take you from one part of the city to another part of the city.
YH3	Buses aren't part of a suburban culture, although you can take a bus to get you to a mall.
YH3	UPenn's historic preservation program is divided in two concentrations: material conservation vs. planning / policy. That doesn't make sense. Planning and historic preservation should go hand in hand. Philly does a pretty good job - Phlash bus and stuff is good to get you to historic places. But I've lived in Seattle and Portland - there it's complicated, not marketed to youth, wasn't incorporated initially in how the city was planned.
YH3	Money and transportation - everyone goes to Europe to backpack - how do you that in the US? Where do you to stay? How do you get around? It's easy in Europe with travel passes

	on trains and buses,, youth hostels, how-to guides. To travel the US you need to rent a car and figure out where you're going to stay, where to go, how to get there, what there is to do there.
YH3	A lot of parents just don't care. I just took a 15 year old friend who'd never been camping in her life. I have friends who have never seen snow or gone skiing. Depends on your family. If they don't care, you will never get the chance.
YH3	Importance of parents bringing kids to these amazing places.
YH3	Young woman who attends Environmental Studies High School in NYC gets opportunities to go hiking and scuba, but a lot of people don't want to go out to the park - broken glass, people smoking. Too much effort that's not worth it.
YH3	Don't want to go unless my friends are there.
YH3	Lack of information of what's there, how to get there.
YH3	I have a friend whose attitude is "I'm just one person; it's not my problem; what I can I do?" She doesn't understand and that makes the problem worse. Knowledge is important. Learning about the environment - make the environment a reality in daily life. We cleaned up a beach and I saw the kind of trash that washes up on shore; it made the connection real.
YH3	Lack of recruiting from NPS. I went to a government job fair and the Department of X was there, but NPS didn't have a rep. Finding internships is hard. I went to volunteer.gov and that led me to another search engine. You really have to look. Need a clearer, easier way to get involved. Never heard of SCA group before today.
YH3	Want more flexibility, less structure with scheduling
YH3	Television / media - excuses not to go see the real thing
YH3	Access - hard to get to cities and rural sites
YH3	Coordinating among NPS sites with other cities, organizations and visitor bureaus - more maps and visibility - share things to do in the area, not just in parks
YH3	Time and money - expensive to visit, can't afford fees, transportation, cost of programs
YH3	Transportation - cost, distance to sites, availability
YH3	Comfort zone, fear of trying something new.
YH3	Money
YH3	Time, single mothers are parenting most under-served audiences and do not have disposable

	time or money to provide experiences for their children
YH3	Accessibility to and from site
YH3	Mobility once arriving at site
YH3	Youth do not know about historical sites and recreational parks in their neighborhood/area
YH3	Lack of engagement and interaction by the public with the youth
YH3	Sites are ruined by others, graffiti / defacing is unattractive
YH3	No safe way to get to urban parks, smaller historical sites are not always in safe neighborhoods or you need to go through rough neighborhoods to get to them
YH3	Historic sites are not relevant youth
YH3	People don't know where these outdoor spaces are.
YH3	People don't make the time.
YH3	Too many distractions, technology is good but keeps people out of the outside world.
YH3	From Arizona, take the outside spaces for granted. They are seen as permanent and don't make visiting a priority.
YH3	Labeling system, trail or recreation directory - where is someone in a park - how do you get from point A to point B on trails. A ranking system that will gradually introduce people to outdoor activities and can contribute to awareness.
YH3	Transportation for youth - Fish and Wildlife buses kids from cities and having that be more widespread would be helpful and would facilitate awareness and experiences.
YH3	Programs offered at parks are not fun for youth/ programs dumb down materials for youth
YH4	Get the word out that has information on all of the things that are available to do in your community. Don't have one place to look for information.
YH4	NYC has organization that organizes hiking trips for students and other activities.
YH4	Hiking for a reason like cancer research. That would appeal to some.
YH4	We can't say what would interest us because we are already here. Need to get the word out to people who are not already interested. Convince your friends to go who wouldn't already. Enticements work. Like to an event like this - bribe people with free food. A niche group is interested in this and you need to expand it to a broader audience. You are preaching to the choir.

YH4	I go to school in lower Manhattan and we gather in the open spaces but it is passive activity being outside but not active. It is nice to be outside but not as much benefit as if something is going on.
YH4	A main problem of getting people to go to parks is being outside is nice but can't compete with big and flashy and that is more immediately gratifying than going into a park. Harder to go outside than turning on TV. Much more accustomed to do the easy thing.
YH4	Where I work, I go to Washington Square to have lunch, to be outside in a park in the city. Relaxing. A lot of history in Washington Square.
YH4	National Geographic - You are already interested in being outside. Video games are more appealing. Integrating parks / nature into popular culture would help. A poor example, when smoking was put into movies, cigarettes became popular. Maybe put parks in movies and people will be more interested. Other than the big parks people already know about. I saw on slideshow parks that I didn't know existed and I live in New York. Not straight advertising but subliminal messaging. Get the message out in mainstream media and other youth-oriented interests.
YH4	Hard to connect what's on tv with actually getting outside. The sheer volume of the things that won't help far outweigh the things on tv that inspire you to go outside.
YH4	Community organizers that advertise activities for people who are home but might want to go out. Example - community organized walk in central park versus having to go for a walk in central park on your own. City park rangers.
YH4	More people to give information (interpretation) rather than signs / wayside exhibits
YH4	Work to attract high schools and universities - through special student admission / student events with a well known name to attract them.
YH4	Communicate opportunities (internships, youth employment, volunteerism)
YH4	Volunteer for a day - insider experience, bond on another level.
YH4	I never see ads about National Parks or anything.
YH4	Programs / packages that make it easy to visit or volunteer. Alternative spring breaks - in parks, service-oriented. Hard to find programs like the one Habitat for Humanity has. Programs that include transportation would be good. Big thing is once you're there - so many other places you can go for leisure that have cheap places to stay. Connecting through schools / colleges, that stuff is already set up. But other programs, it's not all set up. Not easy. Lodging and stuff for volunteers and interns. In a place like Point Rey Park - if you don't live near the park, there's no access to lodging. Could camp - but what about cost of

	camping equipment! Showers? Storms?
YH4	Another issue is cost of transportation budget.
YH4	Information - about where to go, what to do, programs, volunteer packages, funding, etc. Would be great if there were a place online that you could go find it all
YH4	Field trips. I used to live in New Jersey, but now I'm at Temple and live in Philadelphia. At Temple, every one of my classes has gone on field trips - Elfreth's Alley, etc. I wouldn't know half of Philadelphia area historic sites if it weren't for professors taking us on these trips. Starts with educators knowing about the resources and taking their classes on the trips.
YH4	There's this mentality that the world is scary and it's a liability issue if you take kids away from school for field trips.
YH4	There's this Purell vs. dirt mentality now. Everyone worries about accidents, predators, etc.
YH4	Young woman tells story of trying to go for a run in a park; the police stop her at the entrance and tell her to go home. Some negative activity there that they can't control. Single woman is not safe.
YH4	Hands-on programs. Raise the mast and the sail, walk through the salt marshes. More than walking around with a tour guide leading you.
YH4	Our school is environmental school - get a lot of funding - hiking, etc. All environmental based - beach clean-up, see what it all means.
YH4	Important to understand your own community - in LA, kids who live 10 miles from the beach have never been there.
YH4	I lived on Lake Michigan and there are kids at my school who have never seen it.
YH4	STEP program into Independence Hall - so maybe I can get into NPS. Temple has a Pro Ranger program - one of only 2 in the whole country. I get to work on Independence Hall bell tower; it makes my work exciting. Should be more of that.
YH4	Hands-on.
YH4	Festivals, carnivals - "National History Day," re-enactments, but you never know when those things are happening.
YH4	Hopewell has an apple picking day every year but no one knows about it.
YH4	Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP); internship, training, and your application goes to the top of the list as long as there's a position open, but there aren't a lot of jobs. Would be great to see that program for high school kids too.

YH4	Host events that would attract a portion of the public that would not necessarily otherwise visit
YH4	Engage the Locals
YH4	Instill a sense of pride in the Locals. Create content/ programming that speaks to the Locals and the underserved population
YH4	Provide internships and summer jobs for youth. Youth want to be in the parks, but they can't find the opportunity to contribute and stay engaged
YH4	Focus on interaction with the public and put less focus on reading signage
YH4	Develop youth oriented programs
YH4	Partner with schools and educators
YH4	Provide more opportunities for educators to use the parks as classroom
YH4	Provide funding for you to visit the parks
YH4	Encourage / sponsor friendly competition for youth to engage with parks and spark interest in parks. Trash clean ups, hike x# of trails, take a photo of x# of places, visit x# of parks
YH4	Provide low cost activities for low income families.
YH4	Partner with schools to have a "museum" day where kids are required to go to a museum on a certain day for school credit. Solve problem of time.
YH4	Create programs and activities that are relevant to youth.
YH4	Organizations that encourage youth to visit (boy scouts) should be augmented.
YH4	Be hands on especially with history - what happened there? Don't only teach through books and Internet. (service learning).
YH4	More school programs with schools for internships, field trips, volunteer opportunities - reaching out to schools for awareness of programs and opportunities.
YH4	You have fun in the program you are learning so much about what is going on outside of the city - you forget you are even being paid.
YH4	Advertising in print and on tv.
YH4	It takes a lot to engage kids and have them understand the importance of historic sites and what do they mean that would be better accomplished on a park by park basis since the approach is individual.

YH4	People tend to be more aware of large national sites and that promotion on a local level so people know what is in their own backyard.
YH4	Better promotion and advertising for smaller sites - beyond signage.
YH4	Database or rating system.
YH4	Care of artifacts and buildings it is not just the outdoors - there is much more to the park service.
YH5	Communication - Get the word out including in mainstream media where people who are not already interested will see and perhaps become inspired. How do you get movie makers to put national parks and historic sites into movies? As a setting. Government sponsor an environmental movie or a substantial documentary in theaters. More casual, constant placement of national parks rather than one big ad campaign. Send mailings to communicate with park information on special events. Look at past successful ad campaigns.
YH5	Getting students out into parks and historic sites every year. Field trips with follow-ups. (Not a great idea to force everyone to do an activity because may react against. If it is a requirement, will get negative energy. For example, I have to do service hours but it is a requirement so I don't want to do it. Make it positive rather than negative. Give options - natural or historic park or alternate).
YH5	Preserve what is tangible to keep it real.
YH5	Schools incorporate outdoors into curriculum - annual field trip.
YH5	Parks as settings for movies.
YH5	Government sponsor documentaries to be in theaters.
YH5	Consistently placing parks and sites in movies.
YH5	Mailings / pamphlets on park special events.
YH5	Parks should market less as schools / learning, more as recreation and fun, more activities, less passive visiting
YH5	More funding for parks
YH5	More access to resources
YH5	More internships and college resources
YH5	Market via radio and television

YH5	Encourage universities and businesses to visit / volunteer
YH5	Make going outdoors more part of the classroom, afterschool curriculum or environmental education.
YH5	Make part of curriculum.
YH5	Better access to information
YH5	Better access to transportation
YH5	More advertisements / commercials / marketing
YH5	Central information - consolidated information resource.
YH5	Social media - use more - is there an ipod app for NPS?
YH5	Integrate to infrastructure - transport etc. - public bus you can hop on for \$1, even if, once a week, the bus went to a different park. A sort of Megabus learning trip. Direct, safe, easy inexpensive, youth friendly.
YH5	Is it a big scary world? Challenge of a single female feeling safe.
YH5	More programs and less expensive programs. Young man hunted the internet - community serve teams for \$4,000 plus \$1,000 for stuff. \$5,000 to go volunteer?
YH5	Park passes are expensive. Is there a youth pass for NPS? What is "youth" cut off? Is it 18 years old adult or youth?
YH5	Make more incentives for families - if Six Flags has family passes so should parks and historic sites.
YH5	If there's a Megabus for \$5 to Buffalo - then why can't you run cheap trips to parks or historic places?
YH5	Offer volunteer discounts
YH5	Integrate more environmental education into school curriculums.
YH5	Better information access.
YH5	More advertising about what's going on
YH5	Discounts for transportation to parks.
YH5	Disheartened by Stimulus Bill because we didn't use the Depression era model where we improved existing places. "Shovel ready" is ridiculous way to choose projects.

YH5	Go to where the audience is! Facebook, Twitter, television, radio, celebrity spokesperson
YH5	Partner with educational facilities
YH5	Have local celebrities talking about local issues / parks / history. (Similar to how musicians native to Philadelphia area featured at the Ben Franklin PW July 4th Celebration each year.)
YH5	Expand funding for youth programs that help them to take steps toward their future. Start targeting younger grades to spark interest at earlier age.
YH5	Start a remote ranger program where rangers go into the classroom instead of expecting the classroom to go the park.
YH5	Establish / maintain a community focus and partnership.
YH5	Provide opportunity for community locals to be a leading voice through internships.
YH5	Fund school community service programs and provide incentives for youth.
YH5	Expand Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program.