We Need YOU!

Youth Advisory Council

“As we peer into society’s future, we - you and I, and our government - must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow.”

President Dwight Eisenhower
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Executive Summary

The Youth Advisory Council was formed to address the decreasing outdoor engagement of today’s youth. The council concluded this is primarily the result of ineffectively publicizing recreational opportunities. The goal of this council was to facilitate recommendations and develop an action plan through which governmental and non-governmental organizations can re-engage young Americans in outdoor recreation. This council’s recommendations also help accomplish President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative to engage young people in the implementation of AGO.

Council members initially used the S.W.O.T. method to evaluate recreation engagement, information technology, safety and volunteer and job opportunities. After reviewing these subjects several recurring themes were identified. This report provides a detailed account of those six areas of concern and presents recommendations for each matter.

Perception

When visiting public lands and waters, youth want to feel conformable and welcome. Current policies and regulations make visitors feel apprehensive. Additionally, visual perception, diverse staff, and semantics are important when conveying messages regarding outdoor recreation.

Outreach

Youth are unaware of the many resources available to them. Capitalizing on outlets such as schools, emerging technologies, and social media, can increase youth participation in the outdoors.

Volunteer and Job Opportunities

Marketing towards youth interests and providing incentives will encourage young professionals to take advantage of volunteer and job opportunities on public lands and waters. This benefits the agencies and organizations managing these areas and provides youth with relevant work experience and job opportunities.

Accessibility

Youth access to public lands and waters is hindered by an inability to drive a car, safety concerns, and financial limitations. Addressing these issues will enable youth who already want to get outdoors do so.

Legislative Support

Legislation can provide crucial support to ensure outdoor recreation on public lands and waters effectively reaches today’s youth. Cooperation between agencies and across party lines is necessary for the enhancement of outdoor recreation for today’s youth and for the preservation of our outdoor spaces for the next generation.

Partnerships and Programs

There are many programs already successfully engaging youth across the country. By learning from the success of these programs new policies can be implemented in regions where there was previously no model for increasing youth involvement in outdoor recreation.
Introduction

Background

To address declining youth involvement in outdoor recreation the American Recreation Coalition, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the USDA Forest Service, partnered to create the Youth Advisory Council. The goal of this council was to facilitate recommendations and develop an action plan through which governmental and non-governmental organizations can re-engage young Americans in outdoor recreation. This council’s recommendations also help accomplish President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative to engage young people in the implementation of AGO.

The Youth Advisory Council was unique among action committees because it was composed of interns and young professionals as representatives of American youth. This council was a great opportunity for interns and young professionals from various organizations and agencies to address an unfortunate trend in American culture and expand their network of professional contacts.

Purpose

Our main concern originated from the growing nature deficit disorder of today’s youth. In a world of instant media and social interaction, young people are becoming disconnected from the natural world. Studies show that today’s youth are spending half as much time outside as your parents did--and over seven hours per day in front of a screen. This increases the risk of diabetes, ADHD, and depression among children; and endangers the viability of our environment and natural resources. Our mission is to reconnect today's youth with the great outdoors, to strengthen a natural connection to nature that exists within us all, and help promote healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship. As federal agencies managing public lands and waters, we have the responsibility to protect our resources for present and future generations to use and enjoy. To do this, agencies must adapt to our ever-changing world.

Methodology

The main subjects addressed during the conference were recreation engagement, safety, information and technology, and volunteer and job opportunity. To address the subjects, the council members divided into small groups using the S.W.O.T. system to highlight the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within each subject. This allowed for greater discussion and more voices to be heard. After all subjects had been addressed, the group reconvened as a whole to present their ideas. When compiling the information from the conference council members noticed reoccurring themes within each subject. Rather than readdress each of these themes in each subject, we highlighted six areas of concern. They are: Perception, Outreach, Volunteer and Job Opportunities, Accessibility, Legislative Support, and Partnerships and Programs. This report is a detailed account of those six themes identified and addressed by the council.

*This report was compiled based on the opinions of the council members which may not reflect the position of their affiliated agencies or organizations.*
Perception

The overall perception and appearance of policy, staff, and resources, associated with recreation on public lands and waters plays a significant role in their appeal to youth.

Policies

Zero-Tolerance Alcohol Policy

There is an understood value to zero-tolerance alcohol policies on public lands and waters to ensure the safety of all visitors. However, this has a negative effect on responsible patrons. Recreationists who want to have a beer or alcoholic beverage on an overnight camp trip or afternoon on the lake will not take advantage of the recreation opportunities on public lands and waters for this reason.

- The council suggested designated responsible drinking areas in parks and campsites. Increased fines for violating park regulations and park patrol could help maintain public and environmental safety. Additionally requiring all members of a party to present valid identification when checking in will limit the risk of underage drinking.

Uniform Hunting/Fishing/Boating Policies

Policies regarding hunting, fishing, and boating vary from state to state. Because many public lands and waters cross state lines different sets of state regulations govern parts of the same park. Many hunters, boaters, and fishermen do not recreate on public lands and waters for fear of being prosecuted by stricter regulations than those where they entered the park.

- The council suggests uniform regulations for public lands or defined boundaries where regulations change.

Visual Perception & Ethnic Barriers

Uniforms

Most ranger uniforms are modeled after law enforcement uniforms. While this is good for preventing criminal activity, it hinders the approachability of the ranger as the majority of youth are not inclined to interact with law enforcement. Park rangers have valuable knowledge and skills to enhance the outdoor experience of visitors. Unfortunately if a visitor is not impelled to approach a ranger that knowledge is useless.

- The council suggests altering park ranger uniforms to appear less like law enforcement or beginning a marketing campaign advertising rangers as guides to the park rather than law enforcement.

Diverse Staff

The largest demographic of the American population recreating on public lands are white males. Today most visible staff in parks are white men as well. People want to feel they can identify or relate to those around them. For new visitors to public lands and waters this connection cannot be built on a mutual love and familiarity of the outdoors.
The council suggests an increased emphasis be placed on hiring a diverse staff. This will make a more diverse group of people feel more comfortable as they are introduced to the great outdoors. Additionally a diverse staff will be able to address the concerns of a diverse population through improved programming and outreach efforts.

Visual Perception

Much of the information currently being used to promote outdoor recreation on public lands is extremely outdated. The current brochures for Volunteer and Job Opportunities with the Forest Service were produced in the mid 1990’s and have an image of an elderly woman on the front. Similar material is still used by many other federal agencies. These sources of information are unappealing to youth who interpret the elderly as the target audience.

The council suggests agencies and organizations update their brochures and information regularly and market programs such as volunteer and job opportunities focused specifically to youth, adults, and retirees through separate marketing campaigns.

The age and appearance of structures and resources can also negatively affect the appeal of recreation on public lands and waters. Degraded structures and resources reduce the public’s perception of the safety and quality of facilities. The average Army Corps of Engineers project is approximately sixty years old. These projects are serviced by recreation facilities built around the same time. These factors deter visitors who want to recreate in a safe environment. Maintaining a new and fresh appearance is vital when attempting to appeal to youth.

The council suggests renovating outdated facilities and increased focus on maintaining both the functionality and appearances of these facilities.

The semantics of language used to market outdoor recreation is a concern when attempting to appeal to youth. Words like “exercise” have a negative connotation to most youth. A good example of marketing towards a younger demographic can be found on the Let’s Move Outside! web page. Let’s Move Outside! is a program targeted towards keeping families and school-aged youth more active. It reads, “Kids need at least 60 minutes of active and vigorous play each day to stay healthy, and one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to meet this goal is by playing outside.” Additionally, the visually stimulating design of the webpage is more likely to catch the attention of parents and children, whereas a text-based web page will probably be overlooked. This topic is more thoroughly discussed in the Outreach section of the report.

The council suggests utilizing words like ‘play’ and ‘fun’ which have a positive connotation with youth rather than ‘exercise’ and ‘fitness’.
Outreach

Although there are many web pages, printed materials, and a variety of outdoor programs aimed at getting youth outside people are unaware of their availability. Federal agencies and organizations must take the initiative to engage the public. Council members addressed several targets for agencies to expand their outreach.

School Involvement

Grade School Level

School involvement plays a key role when engaging youth in outdoor recreation. Currently the majority of involvement in grade schools is limited to park rangers visiting classrooms to teach kids about water safety or being environmentally friendly. While these are good programs, more can be done to engage youth in outdoor recreation. Agencies and organizations should take responsibility to facilitate environmental education materials to schools. Organizations like the National Park Trust are working with many agencies and outdoor supporters to facilitate materials for schools. Legislative action regarding this effort is more thoroughly discussed in the Legislative Support section of this report.

Many schools and/or clubs within schools, such as BETA, National Honors Society, and Key Club, require students to complete a determined amount of service or volunteer hours prior to graduating. Providing schools and clubs with information about how to get involved on public lands and waters is a great outlet to engage youth and make them aware of outdoor recreation opportunity.

- The council suggests agencies and organizations seek more active involvement in grade school curriculum. This can be accomplished through informational sessions with schools’ directors, teachers and parents, to further develop the current school curriculum and include environmental education and interactive recreation programs to enhance the students’ learning experience. This can also be accomplished through increased collaboration with the Department of Education on a National and State level.

University Level

College is a period of personal growth and learning, which is further enabled by the new-found freedom college students enjoy. Council members identified multiple campus based programs through which college students can be reached.

School-Based Media Outlets

Students are constantly exposed to their school’s newspapers, magazines, and websites. This exposure makes these outlets are ideal for organizations and agencies to easily reach students and inform them of the many opportunities offered by their local public lands and waters.

Interest Groups

Working with preexisting groups on campus such as outing clubs, Greek organizations, service groups, and volunteer organizations is another way to reach college students.
Outing Clubs

Student-led outing clubs are increasing in popularity across the United States at an exciting rate. Programs like the Dartmouth Outing Club\textsuperscript{1} and Mississippi State’s Outdoor Adventures\textsuperscript{10} are great examples of these programs. These programs are popular because they are student led. People are more perceptive to their peers, and the largest factor discouraging young adults from taking advantage of potential outdoor recreation is the lack of knowledge. These programs provide a comfortable and social environment to learn.

Foreign Exchange & Study Abroad Programs

There is a potential opportunity to enhance foreign students’ college experience by familiarizing them with the American great outdoors. Another opportunity is to reach out to student organizations, clubs, and Greek life, and leverage their network to increase youth outdoor engagement. By using these outreach mediums, students will be able to identify with other peers and be less apprehensive about engaging with outdoor programs.

Service Groups

Many colleges and universities have student groups which are involved in community outreach and service. Students involved in these groups are passionate about making their community a better place, which for many schools includes public lands and waters. Additionally some schools require athletic teams and Greek organizations to give back to the local community. This offers additional student groups through which organizations and agencies can reach college students.

\begin{itemize}
  \item The council suggests agencies and organizations seek more active involvement at the university level through clubs and interest groups. This demographic is often overlooked when attempting to market outdoor recreation to youth. However, the council concluded that these students are the most likely to respond to outreach.
\end{itemize}

Information Access

The outdoor experience begins with accessing recreational resources. In a world of constant technological advancement it is imperative that agencies adjust their outreach efforts accordingly to educate staff and take advantage of these new technologies. The council members expressed concern regarding how information can be accessed.

Outdated Websites

Many recreation web sites are neither user-friendly nor engaging and interactive. Websites that look crowded or outdated do not capture the attention of today’s youth. Another concern is how easily websites can be navigated. Youth want straight forward information that is visible and easily located.

There are also multiple websites that present similar material to each other. This redundancy of information reduces the validity of the material. One example addressed was recreation.gov vs. reserveamerica.com. Both sites allow users to make reservations on public lands via the Internet. However, because both are used for the same purpose, patrons are confused where reservations should be made. For this reason, most people will not take advantage of this excellent resource.
The council suggests agencies and organizations update and re-organize their web content to remain relevant and appealing to today’s youth. Also, agencies and organizations should make an effort to consolidate information from multiple sites and remove outdated material.

Emerging Technologies

Technology has been blamed for pulling children and youth away from outdoor recreation. However, it also has the potential to re-engage them as well through interactive smartphone applications and the public’s increased access to broadband Internet.

Smartphone/Web Applications

The increasing popularity of smart phones and applications ‘apps’ associated with them create a new opportunity of outreach for managers of public lands and waters. The introduction of these ‘apps’ bring a wave of new, unconventional forms of recreation such as geocaching. These applications not only engage today’s technology-focused youth, but also provide a greater sense of comfort and security for outdoor recreationists by providing them with tools and information regarding their recreation of choice. Many existing recreational apps rely on GPS/GIS technology to function, which could also be used to relay safety and weather alerts to users and location information to emergency response teams.

Increased Broadband Service

The increased availability of high-speed Internet access to homes and schools allows for countless opportunities to engage youth in the outdoors. This is the medium through which agencies and organizations will most effectively reach the next generation of outdoor recreationists and environmental stewards. Programs like the National Park Service’s WebRangers\textsuperscript{17} target young children by combining education and interactive fun. Emerging technologies like park webcams and Skype chats allow students to see and learn about the great outdoors from the convenience of the classroom. This technology enables schools that do not have physical access to public parks and lands the ability to visit via the Internet.

Social Media

There is a growing interest with social and networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube, among today’s youth. These pages are a representation of the individual, their friends, and their interests. Therefore, by advertising outdoor recreation opportunities through social media outlets, organizations will be able to effectively reach youth interested in preserving the environment through a medium they understand.

Although some agencies have their own social media pages, they are not being used efficiently or effectively. Current media policies do not allow new ‘wall posts’ or ‘tweets’ to be posted quickly, losing the ‘latest news’ effect. If training is offered to designated personnel in each department and more trust
is given to those individuals, then the events, news, and comments, can be posted promptly keeping individuals constantly aware of what is happening.

- The council suggests agencies and organizations update archaic policies that reduce the effectiveness of social media use to promote outdoor recreation to youth and keep them informed.

Public Forums

Social media and websites, like Reclink.us, can be utilized to allow visitors to share stories, photos, and videos of their experience on public land and waters. Online forums focused on public lands and waters enable park visitors to voice their opinions and park managers to respond to concerns. Incentives such as waived fees or reserved campsites during peak seasons would encourage people to submit their reviews. As mentioned throughout this report, people are more perceptive of peer-to-peer reviews and recommendations than a television or pop-up advertisement.

- The council suggests agencies and organizations take advantage of social media to create public forums to interact with patrons. This gives agencies and organizations a direct connection with visitors to gain their input and determine how they can continue to improve and appeal to today’s youth and young adults. This medium also connects visitors with other recreationists to receive peer-to-peer reviews and recommendations.
Volunteering and Job Opportunities

Youth in their junior and senior years of high school and college are poised to enter the next major part of their life. For high school students this means considering what they would like to study in college, joining the armed services, or finding a job. College juniors and seniors face similar difficulties when applying to graduate programs or entering the workforce. In each of these situations there is a high demand from students for opportunities to advance themselves in environments which foster growth and help them determine what it is they want to do with their career.

To effectively engage today’s youth in outdoor recreation organizations must address these concerns in a manner which plays to the needs and strengths of today’s youth. The primary concerns of these young adults with regards to volunteering and employment opportunities are; incentives to volunteer, the role of volunteers and young staff members, and streamlining the hiring process. To accomplish this, organizations have a multitude of resources and opportunities through which they can engage youth and entice them to participate in volunteer activities. These resources and opportunities include; universities, volunteer.gov and usajobs.gov, and the technology savvy nature of youth.

- The council suggests that agencies market themselves through mediums which are familiar to today’s youth.

Concerns

Incentives to Volunteer

Between school, work, and their social life, most youth feel there are simply not enough hours in the day to complete everything they have to do while still leaving time for their hobbies. To entice these students to participate in volunteer programs the program must be marketed to engage perspective applicants through one of these facets of their lives.

School

Many colleges and universities already have co-op and work study programs in place. For example, business students work with local small businesses and political science students help refugees seeking asylum. In these partnerships the community benefits from the free labor of the students, the university strengthens its relationship with the community, and the students gain valuable real world experience. With regards to preserving and enhancing America’s nature lands there are numerous possibilities for students from a variety of disciplines. Environmental science majors can study the impact of industrial complexes on the land, economics students can focus on the financial implications of a natural reserve on the community, and psychology majors can research the effects visiting the reserve has on people’s psyche. These programs not only give students experience in their field of study, but universities can also offer academic credit and/or scholarships to students. Career centers offer another means to expose students to volunteer and employment opportunities. Almost every college or university campus has a career center program. Working with the students and staff to educate them about programs and opportunities on public lands and waters in those areas is a great way to outreach to an already job-focused group of students.

- The council suggests agencies partner with local universities to effectively offer volunteer and job opportunities to young adults. Additional benefits like academic credit and scholarships can further entice students to take advantage of these opportunities. An
increased presence on campuses also raises student awareness of recreation outlets in their area.

Work

While a high GPA is important, employers are more concerned with an applicant’s applicable experience. As with the numerous opportunities for students to volunteer through their school, there are many possibilities for parks and reserves to manage their own programs in a variety of fields. These programs would offer beneficial services to the park at little to no cost. In turn the volunteers would gain valuable experience in their field. Summer programs could also employ volunteers two days a week in a support role for park facilities and allow them to volunteer three days a week in the programs of their choosing.

- The council suggests agencies emphasize the skills and work experience youth will gain from working or volunteering with them. The council also advises that student workers can serve as energetic seasonal employees during busy summer seasons when visitation is up and students are on summer break.

Social Life

Youth have always had an interest in doing social activities with their friends or as a way to meet new people. To this end projects seeking volunteers to clean up a park should be marketed as a networking event and an opportunity to ‘do something’ with one’s friends.

- The council suggests agencies seeking large groups of one time volunteers market the project as an opportunity to meet new people and do something good for the community. Venues like meetup.com offer convenient mediums through which to recruit large numbers of young people looking for a social event.

Roles of Volunteers and Staff

There are many different roles and positions youth and young adults can fill when volunteering or working on public lands and waters. Many youth genuinely enjoy meeting new people and sharing their knowledge. These, combined with a natural energy make youth ideally suited to work as visitor assistance staff at public lands and waters.

- The council suggests agencies utilize energetic youth in public relations roles like park guides and information assistance. This is based on the simple logic that no one can relate to youth better than other youth.

Stereotypes

Stereotypically the primary responsibilities of an intern are making copies, running errands, and answering the phone. In response to this perception, organizations should emphasize the field work aspect of many of their internship opportunities. It is also important for these organizations to emphasize that they employ numerous lawyers, financial consultants and engineers to disprove the stereotype that everyone is a park ranger.

Youth entering the workforce are often overwhelmed by the daunting task of finding a job relating to their field of study with an organization offering room for advancement. Many of these young
professional are further limited by the false perception that the overall mission of the organization must be aligned with their personal interests and ambitions. Therefore the responsibility lies with organizations to advertise the broad spectrum of positions they employ.

- The council suggests organizations emphasis their non park ranger roles like economists, public policy officials, and marketing experts.

**Work Environment**

Few prospects are less appealing to a student than performing medial tasks in a cubical. Although many youth are spending around 8 hours a day in front of computer screens this does mean they want to work in that environment. This fear plays directly into one of the greatest strength of programs offered by environmental agencies, that being the opportunity to work outside wearing hiking boots and a backpack instead of a tie and dress shoes.

**Streamlining the Hiring Process**

A major concern voiced by council members was the difficulty of gaining federal employment. To address this concern President Obama released a Presidential Memorandum in May of 2010 for a streamlined process to federal employment for students and recent graduates. The end result of this Executive Order is the creation of an Internship Program and a Recent Graduate Program.

- Internship Program: This program will provide students from high school through graduate school with the ability to explore federal careers while being paid for their work.
- Recent Graduate Program: This program will place young professionals in two-year career development programs.

The Youth Advisory Council applauds the vision of this program and all organizations and agencies that support it. This topic is more thoroughly discussed in the Outreach section of this report.

**Resources for Agencies and Organizations**

Improving the ability of young professionals to find opportunities with environmental organizations and making these programs more marketable toward youth are not the only improvements that can be made to increase youth involvement in the great outdoors. Organizations can reach out to perspective volunteers and employees through colleges and universities, and online resources.

**Universities**

Institutions of higher education offer high concentrations of ambitious pre-professionals excited to make the world a better place. Additionally these students are very receptive to any organization offering post graduate opportunities. By building relationships with facility and departments, organizations can rely on schools to refer promising pre-professionals to them.

**Online Resources**

Established resources like Volunteer.gov and Usajobs.gov already give visitors a complete guide to opportunities with the federal government. The problem with these services is poor advertising and ease of use. This topic is more thoroughly discussed in the emerging technology section.
Accessibility

A limiting factor on youth involvement in the outdoors is a lack of accessibility. Many young people want to get outside but are unable because they do not have the means to get to public lands and waters from their urban or suburban home on their own. Additionally, safety concerns about being in a strange and uncomfortable environment limit how accessibly a byway seems. A final limitation on youth accessibility to outdoor areas is financial limitation. Many of the more logistically accessibly outdoor spaces charge visitors for parking, entrance fees, and rental fees.

Logistical

Most youth are either too young to drive or do not have a car. This is detrimental to their ability to access public lands and waters as most outdoor spaces are located beyond the reach of public transportation.

- The council suggests managers of public lands and waters work with communities to organize shuttles between towns and recreational facilities. These shuttles can be operated by youth at little cost to the community or management of the public space. This also serves to engage youth in the enhancement of their community.

Safety

Youth coming from crowded and noisy urban environments are often uneasy about entering an alien outdoor environment. There are several solutions to ease this transition and provide a sense of security.

Blue Phones

This system is already used for security on campuses across the country. In a wooded park these phones could be located every mile along trails or at major sites. Such a system would offer the peace of mind that if necessary help can be reached within a few minutes.

Cell Phone Service

Advertising that a park has cell service allows individuals to make their own choice as to how disconnected from the world they want to be. Those wishing to fully escape can simply leave their phone in the car while individuals who want to be able to call for help will have the ability without the need for unsightly phones along the trail.

Rangers

Having rangers patrol trails and publicizing their schedule would reassure visitors that there are other people on the trail capable of handling any situation. This also decreases the risk of vandalism and illegal activity.

Financial

Students and recent graduates do not have a disposable income and are averse to spending what little money they do have. This is easily resolved by offering a number of deals on park entrance and rentals applicable only to visitors who are students or under a certain age.
The council suggests implementing one of the following deals or passes to increase youth engagement on public lands and waters.

- **2 for 1**: Two passes or rentals for the price of one. This also encourages youth to bring their friends.
- **Weekend deals**: Every first weekend of the month entrance fees are half price.
- **Volunteer Passes**: Free passes for volunteers.

**Wi-Fi Access**

Wi-Fi access within public lands and waters raises many concerns. Some argue this level of access will limit the outdoor experience and escape from daily life. Others believe such measures are necessary to entice the next generation of park visitors to get outdoors. The council concluded that implementing this technology creates greater benefits than harm.

- The council suggests the implementation of Wi-Fi ‘hotspots’ where Internet access could be restricted to certain areas within park. This presents a potential revenue source as public land and water managers can charge for use of the Internet by the minute or kilobyte.

Having Wi-Fi access creates many advantages. Some council members stated that parents can be apprehensive about taking their families outdoors for extended periods due to a lack of communication with work and other responsibilities. Additionally many people are comforted knowing they have access to the outside world while outdoors, whether they take advantage of it or not. This technology also gives visitors access to information regarding wildlife, recreation, and safety material on demand while recreating. Implementation of this technology on public lands and waters can increase recreation engagement and safety of today’s youth outdoors.


**Legislative Support**

Legislation can provide crucial support to ensure outdoor recreation on public lands and waters effectively reaches today’s youth and addresses the needs of a growing population. The council addressed two areas of concern regarding current legislation: funding and environmental education incorporation.

**Funding**

Increasing budget cuts are causing agencies to lay off staff and close facilities. As expressed by several employees of public lands facilities, operating with a smaller staff makes it more difficult to keep up day to day operations and maintenance. This worsens the experience of visitors to the facility, which in turn lowers public land visitation. This gives ample justification to limit or cut the budget of a failing facility.

- The council suggests working with federal, state, and local representatives to protect the budgets of public lands and waters from this downward spiral.

**Environmental Education Incorporation**

The No Child Left Inside Coalition\(^8\) is working to pass the bipartisan No Child Left Inside Act to improve the environmental knowledge of today’s youth. This legislation is crucial to combating childhood obesity and the shrinking role of environmental education in schools’ curriculum. The coalition’s goal is to keep kids engaged in outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship to preserve our lands and waters for future generations. This topic is more thoroughly discussed in the Outreach section of this report.

- The council supports the No Child Left Inside Act and its mission of improving the health of today’s youth and the sustainability of our public lands and waters for the next generation.

**Improved Pathways to Public Service**

The Obama Administration is working toward streamlining the hiring process of federal agencies.

*To deliver the quality services and results the American people expect and deserve, the Federal Government must recruit and hire highly qualified employees, and public service should be a career of choice for the most talented Americans. Yet the complexity and inefficiency of today's Federal hiring process deters many highly qualified individuals from seeking and obtaining jobs in the Federal Government...*Agency heads shall take the following actions no later than November 1, 2010\(^13\)*

The Youth Advisory Council strongly urges all federal agencies to comply with this memorandum to ensure highly qualified young professionals want to work for the Federal Government.
Partnerships and Programs

Across the country there are dozens of programs successfully engaging youth in outdoor education and involvement. To increase the effectiveness of these programs more effort needs to be invested in raising public awareness of their existence in regions not currently serviced by their efforts. To accomplish this, national and federal bodies should be responsible for maintaining a dialogue between regions through which programming successes and failures can be shared for the benefit of all. Below are a few examples of partnerships and programs making a difference in their communities that some federal agencies and organizations have already taken advantage of. The Youth Advisory Council supports the efforts and actions of the following:

Smartphone Applications

*Naturefind*

At home or away, this mobile app helps you find nature nearby. Everything is at your fingertips: places, events, maps, directions, phone numbers, links and more. The NatureFind app is free from the Apple App store. Just enter 'NatureFind'.

*Pocket Ranger*

Pocket Ranger provides a vast amount of features for the outdoor recreationists. The application can be downloaded for free or a more advance version for a small fee. The free features include: “search by activity of interest on-the-go; search by park, forest or region; stay current on park and forest events; receive news, alerts, and location-based weather updates; access park information such as hours of operation; view maps of facilities, trails and campgrounds; learn about state park or forest history; get directions; get contact information; access online reservations; network through Facebook and Twitter; and share photos on Flickr.”

Paid features include: ability to work with content, maps and features offline; GPS mapping options include road, satellite, hybrid and terrain; pre-programmed state park GIS and points of interest will help guide you; a friend-finder feature lets you keep track of companions while on a trail; a built-in compass can help point to your direction; record, save and recall tracks or waypoints; and let your family and friends know your whereabouts with the alert communication feature.

*Wandermap*

Wandermap puts over 17,000 different trails, spanning over 240,000 miles, at your fingertips. This application is free. Create a personal account to save personal favorites, create your own trails, and build a training profile.

*Yellowstone (NPS)*

“Ultimate Yellowstone includes complete maps of Yellowstone at 1:17,000 scale, including all thermal areas, contour lines and trails with a mileage guide to backcountry campsites. These maps pick up where Google Maps leave off.

The wildlife guide includes photos of Yellowstone's "Big 8" wildlife, including where to find, the latest ecology information, traits of each animal, and a scat and tracks guide.
There is also a guide to activities such as horseback riding, rafting, safaris and boating on Yellowstone Lake. Additionally, there are maps to show you where to buy fuel and where to find a cell phone signal, should you need to make a call.

Additionally, there is a guide to the Park's emergency facilities as well as a history of Yellowstone by the official park historian, Dr. Lee Whittlesey. Everything you need to enhance your Yellowstone vacation is packed in this app.”

Dartmouth Outing Club¹

“The Dartmouth Outing Club is the oldest and largest collegiate outing club in the country. Anyone — member or not — may stay at our cabins, go on our trips, rent our gear, and take our classes.”

The Dartmouth Outing Club is composed of several internal clubs which include Bait and Bullet, The Big Green us, Boots and Saddles, Cabin and Trail, Cycling Club, Environmental Studies, Ledyard Canoe Club, Mountaineering Club, Organic Farm, Ski Patrol, Ski Racing Club, Snowboarding Club, Winter Sports Club, and Women in the Wilderness.

Handshake Partnership Program (USACE)²

This program provides financial support to Corps facilities to partner with local communities to implement projects that benefit public lands. Between 2004 and 2011 USACE has provided $1.15 million to 94 partnership project which have enhanced recreational capacities across the country through habitat restoration, trail construction, and campground improvements.

Healthy Parks, Healthy People US (NPS)³

Healthy Parks, Healthy People in an international program maintained in the United States by the National Park Service. It works with national, state, and local parks as well as local business, health, and scientific leaders to reconnect people to nature and enhance the health benefits parks can provide for our society.

Hour for Earth⁴

“An Hour for Earth is an effort to educate elementary and middle school children on issues such as recycling, conservation and sustainability. The program will be brought to schools with a topic of the month, educating children on current environmental issues, to help foster understanding and passion at an earlier age.”

Let’s Move Outside!⁵

This program is part of First Lady Michele Obama’s Let’s Move! initiative, “The goal of Let’s Move Outside! is to get kids active so they see the physical activity they need not as a chore but as a fun way to explore our country.”

No Child Left Inside Coalition⁸

“Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Congressman John Sarbanes (D-MD) introduced the bi-partisan No Child Left Inside Act of 2011 into the 112th Congress. As in the past, many of their Congressional colleagues joined them in co-sponsoring this historic legislation. We are grateful to them
for their vision and leadership in working to make environmental education an integral part of every American child’s education."

Outdoor Action Pack

“The Outdoor Action Pack is very similar to a project that is currently present in many Colorado State Parks. The program will create daypacks for families to check out from local libraries and include materials such as guides, maps and tools to help them explore local outdoor spaces. The goal of this project is to create community support to get youth outdoors.”

Outdoor Adventures

Started in 2005, Outdoor Adventures (OA) is a student led outdoor interest group at Mississippi State University that continues to drastically grow year to year. During the week the OA staff manages a belay wall. They also offer clinics for a variety of outdoor-related skills ranging from water rescue, backcountry cooking, and rock climbing. Throughout the year the OA staff plan several outing trips all across the country including caving, rafting, climbing, camping, and hiking adventures, at a low price. Students can also rent outdoor gear when planning their own adventure. The OA website offers many outdoor links for planning trips, too. Whether you are planning your own trip, looking to buy gear, or just want more information, view our favorite links.

Outdoor Nation

“Founded by a community of young Outsiders, Outdoor Nation (ON) is the place to fuel your passion for the outdoors. We host awesome Summits, award $ for great ideas, lead outdoor outings, work with youth and connect with others like us—all in an effort to mobilize an outdoor movement that is fun, meaningful and impactful.”

Urban Treehouses (BLM)

Urban Treehouses are environmental education centers that have been developed and are operated by partnerships between government agencies, businesses, community groups, and nonprofit organizations. These centers teach youth about the environment through programs with the Boys and Girls Club, field trips and in class programs, and teacher workshops. Urban Treehouses are located in Washington, D.C.; Atlanta, Georgia; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Expanding this program to other cities will greatly increase the number of students who are involved in outdoor education.

Volunteer Pass (NPS, USDAFS, F&WS, BLM, BR)

After completing 500 service hours with any of the five participating agencies volunteers receive a free Volunteer Pass. The pass covers the holder and all other passengers in a non-commercial vehicle and is good for one year from the date of issue. Park entrance for children age 15 and younger is free.

Web Ranger (NPS)

The online Web Ranger program is an interactive children’s game available through the National Park Service’s website. This program not only appeals to kids interests but teaches them the roles and responsibilities of a National Park Service Ranger while educating them about recreational safety and environmental stewardship.
Youth Partnership Program (NPS)¹⁹

The Youth Partnership Program provides internships and educational opportunities to increase the number of youth participating in park activities. The program supports youth-oriented projects which are designed to influence the career decisions of youth through three approaches:

  o Engage youth in public service opportunities.
  o Enhance science-based programs offered through communities, schools and partners.
  o Improve curricula of national environmental education programs.

Youth to Parks and Buddy Bison (NPT)⁶

National Park Trust (NPT) works to inspire a passion for parks and cultivate the next generation of conservationists through its Youth to Parks initiatives. Buddy Bison, NPT’s official mascot challenges children to “Explore Outdoors, the Parks are Yours! Buddy has proven to be an effective catalyst in getting kids excited about and engaged with our nation’s parks. The program features:

  o Where's Buddy Bison Been? program which encourages kids and families to visit parks and share their experiences with NPT.
  o Buddy Bison Partner Schools: NPT and its partners provide innovative resources and programs to teach students about parks, and to help educators integrate parks into existing academic programming.
  o Youth to Parks National Scholarship Fund provides under-served youth with experiential learning opportunities that include both recreation and preservation activities in local, state and national parks.
  o National Kids to Parks Day (NK2PD), sponsored by NPT, this day provides an opportunity for families and communities to celebrate and enjoy a local, state or national park. NK2PD 2012 is Saturday, May 19.
Conclusion

The Youth Advisory Council concluded the key to increasing youth involvement in outdoor recreation is improving awareness of programs that already exist. This can be further divided into six sub categories through which government agencies and non-governmental organizations can increase youth involvement in outdoor recreation. This report provided a detailed account of those concerns and presented recommendations for each matter.

The perception of a program or agency by the general public is taken to be the truth. For this reason it is crucial that agencies and organizations be aware of how youth view their actions and policies. Updating alcohol policies to accommodate the interests of today’s youth demographic while preserving a family friendly environment will satisfy a broader audience of recreationists. Furthermore, establishing uniform hunting, fishing, and boating regulations, employing diverse staff which reflects America's demographics, and updating information materials will improve how the public views public lands and waters by enhancing the capacity of these resources to service the needs of today’s youth.

Most of the public is unaware of the opportunities offered in their communities. Effectively informing the public of these programs must happen through preexisting mediums which are trusted and utilized by the public. An increased presence of park rangers in grade school classrooms and curriculum is an engaging way to bring the outdoors to students in schools without access to public lands and waters. Enhanced collaboration with college organizations offers agencies an advantageous way to reach large groups of students who are already organized and want to recreate outdoors. Finally, technologies such as social media and Smartphone applications offer agencies a platform to easily reach youth around the world and inform them of the opportunities around them.

Volunteer and job opportunities not only engage youth in the great outdoors, but also provide them with skills and experience that will benefit them throughout their lives and careers. To capture the youth audience, agencies must market these opportunities in ways which appeal to them. Organization should break stereotypes, outreach through existing areas of interest, and provide incentives for their work. Youth involvement in the workforce will provide a great asset to the agencies and organizations they represent. These youth are a valuable form of advertisement and outreach. After experiencing the outdoors first hand, they will return and share their knowledge and experience to friends, family, and others. Many young adults are willing to get involved, but their willingness is inhibited do to lack of awareness and the tedious and time consuming hiring process.

Youth are limited from accessing public lands and waters by a variety of factors that are not present with adults. Not being able to drive is a major hindrance because many outdoor recreation facilities are isolated from population centers. This problem can be addressed through partnerships between public land and water management and community organizations such as college interest groups, youth groups, and community centers to organize shuttle systems between communities and recreation facilities. Today’s youth have grown up with cell phones and the ability to call for help if necessary. The prospect of losing this lifeline in an alien environment such as the outdoors is often enough to prevent youth from getting outside. By providing and marketing cellular service in recreation areas these youth will be more willing to explore the outdoors. Finally, youth do not have very much disposable income and are therefore reluctant to spend what small amount they do have. By offering discounts to students for park and recreation fees these youth will be able to afford a weekend on public lands and waters rather than being forced to remain at home.

Staying informed with National and State legislation is paramount to remain relevant to today’s youth and young adults. Supporting legislation that has a positive direct effect on visitors and voicing the concerns of abhorred legislation should be a high priority to agencies and organizations managing public lands and waters. These actions must originate at the grass-roots level because it is here that these effects are felt, where the
provider and patron interact.

The partnerships and programs described in this report highlight some of the numerous efforts across the country and online resources which have successfully engaged youth in the great outdoors. Broader adoption of these examples and the creation of new programs like them will lead to increased youth involvement in outdoor recreation.

Like any other business, federal agencies and non-governmental organizations must adapt policies and strategies to appeal to current needs of the consumer. During President Dwight Eisenhower’s Farewell Address to the Nation, he said, *As we peer into society's future, we - you and I, and our government - must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage.* His words are inspiring. If we do not take responsibility for motivating the next generation of recreationists and environmental stewards today, we will sacrifice America’s greatest assets, our public lands, waters, and resources, for the children of tomorrow.
### Appendix 1: Demographics

The Youth Advisory Council was composed of twenty-two participants and four moderators. Diversity was key in selecting participants. Eleven different agencies/organizations were represented, with representatives from multiple offices within each agency/organization. The agencies/organizations represented were, the American Recreation Coalition, American Forest and Paper Association, Bureau of Land Reclamation, Census Bureau, Hardwood Federation, National Park Service, National Park Trust, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Department of Commerce, USDA Forest Service, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Prior to leaving the conference, participants completed a questionnaire. The results of those questionnaires are presented below. See Appendix 2 to view the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency of Outdoor Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male 59.1%</td>
<td>Very Often 18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 40.9%</td>
<td>Often 0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rarely 0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency on Public Lands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18 35.5%</td>
<td>Very Often 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>Often 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>Rarely 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Recreational Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American 40.5%</td>
<td>Hiking 18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian 22.7%</td>
<td>Rock Climbing 18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latine 22.7%</td>
<td>Fishing 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White 45.5%</td>
<td>Canoing 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Ethnicity</td>
<td>Hiking 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Residence</th>
<th>Recreation Outlets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural 54.5%</td>
<td>Res gov 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban 36.4%</td>
<td>Lebmove 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban 9.1%</td>
<td>AGO gov 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meetup:c 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google, e 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Sample Questionnaire

Youth Advisory Council

Demographics Information

*Note: The following survey is absolutely anonymous and voluntary. Its purpose is to have a better understanding of Y.A.C.’s participants. All collected data will be used by Y.A.C.’s coordinators and/or other agencies.

**Please circle the best answer**

A. Gender
   1. Female
   2. Male

D. What type of area do you live in?
   1. Rural
   2. Urban
   3. Suburban

B. Age
   1. Under 18 years old
   2. 18 to 20
   3. 21 to 23
   4. 24 to 26
   5. 27 to 29
   6. 30 or Older

E. How often do you participate in outdoor activities?
   1. Very Often
   2. Often
   3. Rarely
   4. Never

C. Race/Ethnicity
   1. African American
   2. Asian
   3. Latino
   4. Pacific Islander
   5. White
   6. Mixed Ethnicity
   7. Other

F. How often do you visit Public Lands?
   1. Very Often
   2. Often
   3. Rarely
   4. Never
G. What type of recreational activities do you enjoy?
*Circle all that may apply.*

1. Hiking
2. Rock climbing
3. Fishing
4. Canoeing/Kayaking
5. Horse Riding
6. Rafting
7. Other

H. When searching for recreation activities/ programs which website(s) do you visit? Please list:

________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
Appendix 3: References

1. Dartmouth Outing Club
   http://www.dartmouth.edu/~doc/

2. Handshake Partnership Program
   http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/handshake/handshake.cfm

3. Healthy Parks Healthy People
   http://www.healthyparkshealthypeoplecongress.org/

4. Hour for Earth
   http://www.outdoornation.org/group/anhourforearth

5. Let’s Move Outside
   http://www.letsmove.gov/lets-move-outside

6. National Park Trust
   http://www.parktrust.org/

7. Nature Find
   http://www.nwf.org/naturefind/

8. No Child Left Inside
   (http://www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687)

   http://www.outdoornation.org/group/outdooraction-pack

10. Outdoor Adventures
    http://recsports.msstate.edu/outdoors/index.php

11. Outdoor Nation
    http://www.outdoornation.org/

12. Pocket Ranger
13. Presidential Memorandum


14. Urban Treehouses


15. Volunteer Passes

http://store.usgs.gov/pass/annual.html

16. Wandermap

http://www.wandermap.net/

17. Web Rangers

http://www.nps.gov/webrangers/

18. Yellowstone App

http://www.yellowstone.ws/iphone.html

19. Youth Partnership Program

Appendix 4: Points of Contact

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