



American Recreation Coalition

Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right to health and happiness through recreation.

Partners Outdoors 2011 Report

January 23 - 26

Gaylord Texan, Grapevine, Texas

Partners Outdoors 2011 Draws Top Recreation Community Leaders

Leaders from the recreation industry and federal agencies met at Partners Outdoors 2011, held January 23rd to 26th at the Gaylord Texan in Grapevine, Texas. The dual themes were *Health and the Great Outdoors* and *Getting More Americans into Their Great Outdoors*. It marked the 20th year of the invitation-only meeting. Organizations in attendance are centrally involved in efforts to link Americans to the outdoors.

Participants discussed key public and private efforts to connect the American people to the outdoors at the national, state and local levels, including the Obama Administration's new America's Great Outdoors initiative. Discussions built on the groundbreaking dialogue at last year's Partners Outdoors meeting between the healthcare and recreation communities. There is growing agreement that real promise exists for improving the health of the American people through recreation, including redirecting focus from traditional spending on drugs and surgery to investments in recreation facilities and opportunities. General session topics included: The Future of Recreation; America's Great Outdoors Initiative: Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We're Going; Partners Working to Keep Americans Fishing and Boating in the Great Outdoors; Getting Americans Back Outdoors; Healthy People, Healthy Places: Building the Link; Opportunities for Partnerships Promoting Active Lifestyles in the 21st Century; Education and the Outdoors; Making Great Outdoors Month a Vehicle for Action; and People and the Great Outdoors: The Challenges and the Opportunities. Presentations are located on the [Partners Outdoors blog](#).

Partners Outdoors Resource Book Available

Copies of the Partners Outdoors Resource Book are available on a flash drive for \$100. The resource book contains valuable information on Health and the Great Outdoors, on recreation trends and links to key websites – including direct links to key federal agency information. To see the table of contents, [click here](#). To order it, please call ARC at 202-682-9530.

Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works, Opens Partners Outdoors



Col. Thomas Kula, Division Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, left, with the Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works, and Derrick Crandall, President of the American Recreation Coalition.

On Sunday, January 23rd, Partners Outdoors attendees were welcomed by American Recreation Coalition President Derrick Crandall, right, and Col. Thomas Kula, Division Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), left. He noted the Corps' support for Partners Outdoors and said the USACE appreciated the opportunity to collaborate on efforts "to get people outdoors." He then introduced the Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works. She noted that the Corps of Engineers is the Nation's largest provider of outdoor recreation, managing 12 million acres of lands and waters and attracting nearly 400 million visits annually. Eighty percent of the Corps recreation projects are within 50 miles of major metropolitan areas, Ms. Darcy said, and the Corps seeks partnerships with state and local governments, Native American tribes and with private and public groups. She spoke about the *Let's Move! Initiative* and the *Value to the Nation* study which demonstrates how the Corps impacts Americans and our economy. She noted www.recreation.gov is the most visited section of their website and announced that Heather Burke will serve as the new National Advisor for Partnerships for USACE.

Opportunities Facing Partners Outdoors 2011

American Recreation Coalition President Derrick Crandall spoke about current challenges and opportunities facing Partners Outdoors 2011 participants. He assessed the overall situation as exciting and promising, and applauded the efforts of Ms. Darcy and soon-to-be Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior Will Shafroth to participate in Partners Outdoors, which has joined energized and action-oriented leaders since 1992.

"Partnerships between the private and public sectors have contributed greatly to making America's Great Outdoors a prized and shared legacy," he told the group. He noted that the roots of Partners Outdoors were the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (1985-87), where Congressional leaders and recreation executives united to craft a vision, and the 50th anniversary of Mount Rushmore in 1991, where recreation industry executives and federal agency heads committed to bringing together future leaders from the public and private sectors to share ideas, explore cooperative efforts and focus on seamless delivery of great experiences for outdoor visitors.

Academic Leader Delivers Keynote on the Future of Recreation



Sunday's third session was about the *Future of Recreation*. Participants were captivated by the keynote speaker, Texas A&M University Distinguished Professor John Crompton (he is also the Mayor of College Park, Texas). Professor Crompton spoke about the interconnection between travel and parks, and how parks serve as "economic engines."

Texas A & M Professor John Crompton, left, the keynote speaker, with American Recreation Coalition President Derrick Crandall.

He said recreation meets basic human needs but warned that people who do not use park and recreation services are less likely to value them and, if not valued, they are less likely to be supported. He challenged the group to see recreation through a "transformational lens," repositioning recreation and park services so that they are perceived to be a

central contribution to alleviating the major community problems identified by taxpayers and decision-makers.

He cited reduced health care costs, less juvenile crime, more community cohesion, higher property values and economic development as some of the contributions of recreation. The "big idea" associated with repositioning is that funds are invested in solutions to a community's most pressing problems.

He cited Mustang Island State Park as an example of an economic engine. It had an operating loss of \$52,000 but generated 47 jobs and more than \$1.4 million in income to Nueces County residents. Thus the cost to the state is \$1,100 per job, a leverage ratio of 1:27. Each net State dollar invested generates \$27 of income for local residents.

He concluded by saying economic success depends on what happens *inside* a facility and made the analogy to a retail store. Investment in services and amenities means more visitors, more per capita expenditures, and thus more jobs and income to local residents. View his presentation on the [Partners Outdoors blog](#). (Note, this is a large PowerPoint). To visit his website, [click here](#).

Interior's Shafroth Addresses America's Great Outdoors Initiative

The White House America's Great Outdoors Initiative (AGO) was the topic covered by Will Shafroth, incoming Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks and a prime player in the Presidential effort to chart a new blueprint for conservation and connect Americans to the outdoors.

He said the AGO report would be issued in February, linked to the President's FY2012 budget proposal. "This is a non-partisan issue – everyone shares a passion for the

outdoors," he said, and described AGO as a huge catalyst for the outdoor health and recreation movement. "AGO is going to be an interdepartmental partnership effort that will depend upon cooperation with the media, retailers, technology, such as improving the recreation reservation system, and working closely with the recreation community." The federal agencies involved are committed to financial support as well as communication. There will be a federally led rollout to engage the public but it will be "locally driven, from the bottom up," he said. "We will need your help to keep the commitment going," he added.

He noted that the scope of public participation in AGO sessions beginning in April 2010 was huge, involving listening sessions – and special outreach to youth – and websites and more. Among the themes of the AGO report will be: health and the outdoors; access to lands and rivers; connecting people to the outdoors closer to home; access to rivers; protecting large rural landscapes; reconnecting young people to the outdoors and making open space relevant; and making the federal government a better business partner through more efficient collaboration.

He added that Interior Secretary Ken Salazar has recently emphasized the Department's economic contributions, especially in the area of sustainable jobs, and credited recreation as a primary force in this arena.



William Shafroth, left, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, with Frank Peterson, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation President, center, and American Recreation Coalition President Derrick Crandall.

Grapevine's Mayor and Gaylord Enterprises Exec Describe Partnership

On Monday morning, Partners Outdoors 2011 participants heard from Grapevine Mayor William D. Tate and Gaylord Enterprises Senior Vice President and Gaylord Texan General Manager John Imaizumi. Grapevine, located just north of DFW airport, lies between Dallas and Fort Worth and has capitalized on its location as an urban recreation destination. The city sought the right partners to make the "best overall use of the land," said Mayor Tate, who has served as Mayor for more than 30 years. The results today are a big project with big benefits. Grapevine's lake and marinas attract two



Atrium gardens of the 4.5 acre Gaylord Texan. The hotel's exciting partnership story was showcased at Partners Outdoors 2011.

million visitors annually; 25 miles of trails have been created; and the lake's Vineyards Campground is ranked as one of the Top 100 U.S. campgrounds.

In 2000, the Gaylord Texan chose Grapevine as the site for its resort to be built on 137 acres, mostly U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) land leased to the city of Grapevine. The destination hotel has 4 ½ acres of indoor gardens, 1,511 guest rooms and employs 1800 “Stars.” “Partnerships are everything,” Mr. Imaizumi said. The combination of the lake, responsive local government and USACE flexibility has also helped to lure more recreation-related businesses, including high-end outdoor retailer Bass Pro Shops and Great Wolf Lodge, with 600+ guest rooms and extensive indoor recreation offerings. Mayor Tate credited vision, patience and determination to find the right partners as key ingredients of Grapevine’s success. He added that Grapevine’s Convention and Visitors Bureau is now the 4th largest in the state with a marketing budget of \$12 million. USACE plans to use Grapevine as an example of a successful water resource partnership option. USACE’s Regional Partnership Program Manager Douglas Cox said, “This project is scalable, sustainable and exportable as a great public-private recreation effort.”

Partners Keep Americans Fishing and Boating in the Great Outdoors

Monday’s program featured Frank Peterson, President of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF). He spoke about partnership efforts of federal agencies, state agencies and the recreation industry to sustain and grow boating and fishing participation. He told participants that boating and fishing are the top “gateway activity” to outdoor recreation. Forty-eight million people take one boating or fishing trip a year. Of that total, 3.2 million people (18%) are new participants, but retention is a big problem. An equal number (18%) do not return. To address this issue, RBFF has moved from awareness building with its feel-good “Take Me Fishing” campaign to more direct connection efforts on the web and through smart phones, focusing on “how to” and “where to.” “Overall, the RBFF has invested \$24 million to enhance its programs and \$85.2 million has been generated,” noted Mr. Peterson, who has led the nonprofit organization for four years. He added, “Our goal is to make it easy for people to find out where to go fishing or boating. We also had to find partners to help deliver our message.”

A searchable list of all state and federal boating and fishing locations was added recently to the Take Me Fishing website, developed with the help of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and others. The website draws four million visitors, up from 300,000 in 2007. In addition, the RBFF mobile app has had 25,000 downloads in less than a year. RBFF also pursues “pledges” by anglers to take someone fishing, and is launching an exciting three-year campaign in partnership with Discovery Channel Education®. “We must find and promote to the next generation,” Mr. Peterson said. The new outreach effort, called Explore the Blue (www.exploretheblue.com), has a goal of engaging 1.2 million youth annually. The RBFF has also enhanced its Passport to Fishing program – a fun introduction to fishing for children. The program can now be downloaded from the RBFF website.

Getting Americans Back Outdoors Focuses on Youth

The next Monday session was a panel discussion on *Getting Americans Back Outdoors*. It featured: Jim Terry, Assistant Chief Scout Executive and Chief Financial Officer, Boy Scouts of America; Martin MacDonald, Director of Conservation, Bass Pro Shops; and moderator Ruth Coleman, Director of California State Parks and Vice President, National Association of State Park Directors.



Ruth Coleman, Director, California State Parks and Vice President, National Association of State Park Directors, moderates a panel with Jim Terry, Assistant Chief Scout Executive and CFO, Boy Scouts of America, center, and Martin MacDonald, Director of Conservation, Bass Pro Shops.

Ms. Coleman said it was crucial to learn to ride a wave rather than get pummeled by one. The wave in her home state of California has three components: the economy, health and politics. Recreation there is a \$40 billion industry, but park use has dropped 15% and no new campgrounds have been built in state parks for 25 years. In the area of health, she said, people have less outdoor interest and ability, pursuing a “learned sedentary” lifestyle. In the political area, she noted that people value what parks have to offer, but aren't willing to pay for them. Less than one-tenth of 1% of the state budget goes to parks, but a referendum to protect park budgets failed and there will be more funding cuts. Her goal is to learn to ride out the wave with partners.

Martin MacDonald spoke about Bass Pro Shops' efforts to reach out to more Americans with proof that being outdoors is fun. He

explained the company's new “Outdoor Fitness Festival,” begun at its Springfield, Missouri headquarters with plans to expand to 40 states. The goal is to get more youth to experience a taste of the outdoors through the festival, featuring partners from parks, the health community, trails, biking, kayaking and retailers in a village setting with events, contests and education components. He also described the company-wide Santa's Wonderland store event, the new Wonders of the Ozarks Learning Facility (WOLF) school for 5th graders and the Wonders of Wildlife Museum. The school has tracked student achievement and reports scores higher than standard classrooms. “We believe if kids are interested, they will be engaged and learn better,” he said.

Jim Terry of the Boy Scouts talked about numerous partnership examples tied to its 100th anniversary last year. AT&T and Exxon were lead partners in year-long events beginning with a float in the Rose Bowl Parade in January and a concluding at the Intrepid in New York. New initiatives included a “*Boy Scouts Adventure Base 100*” national tour, a truck-based Ropes Course which visited 42 cities. A first-time Boy Scouts Indy Car was sponsored. The U.S. mint created a centennial coin which raised

\$3.2 million in matching funds, with proceeds going toward minority outreach. New programs include: a merit badge for geocaching; a new pilot program with MIT for Lego Robotics; a Scouting for State Parks program; and Arrow Corps efforts putting thousands of scouts to work on a week of service in national forests. “We are more open to partnerships and *we know youth development*,” he said. Ms. Coleman concluded the session by saying, “We need to better track outcomes of these various health and wellness programs and brag more about the connection.”

Doctors Speak Out on Healthy People/Healthy Places: Building the Link

Monday’s next session featured a panel addressing the topic of *Healthy People/Healthy Places – Building the Link*. Guest speakers included Eduardo Sanchez, M.D., Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, BlueCross BlueShield of Texas, and Nancy Herron, National Chair, Grassroots Leadership Team, Children & Nature Network. It was moderated by Michael Suk, M.D., Chair, Physicians for Healthier Americans Through Fun Outdoors and a former White House Fellow.



Dr. Michael Suk, Physicians for Healthier Americans Through Fun Outdoors, and Ruth Coleman, Director, California State Parks, and Vice President, National Association of State Park Directors.

Dr. Suk referred to the [Park Prescriptions](#) program he helped launch with the Institute at the Golden Gate and the American Recreation Coalition, designed to increase the connection between public lands and healthcare. Dr. Suk said, “The outside has a holistic image compared to a gym.” He encouraged “changing the language” to better draw the connection between mind, body and spirit. He highlighted the important role that outdoor recreation can play in fighting childhood obesity, which he believes might be today’s most important public health issue. “We also need to attract people when they’re young, because 90% of active outdoor adults first experienced the great outdoors in some form between the ages of five and 18,” he said.

Dr. Sanchez energized the group with his passion and his strong belief that the Great Outdoors is part of the delivery system to help prevent obesity and disease. He offered three reasons to use outdoor recreation as a health tool: it reduces medical costs, improves the workforce, and helps national security. “We need to institutionalize the concept of the great outdoors,” he said. He also noted that there is a growing focus on “healthy aging” and building a patient risk profile to help make the case for prevention. In addition, he said the challenges to optimizing health are age, obesity and demographics. In many places, there is low access to safe outdoor places.

“Unstructured play is very important and if it takes place in the great outdoors, what better combination is there?” he said. The most promising action steps, he offered, are [Green Ribbon Schools](#) which help students reach their potential by the following: promoting healthy living for students, parents and staff; connecting to nature; creating an environmentally friendly campus; encouraging physical activity and cooperative outdoor play; fostering healthy habits; and using nature as a learning tool. “Overall when we talk about community benefits and increased prosperity for everyone, outdoor recreation fits very well,” Dr. Sanchez said.

Nancy Herron with the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) said the organization firmly believes the “connection to nature starts locally.” Its goal is to increase youth resilience, confidence and self-esteem through more time spent in nature. She said C&NN is making progress with outreach efforts to engage the health community. She referred to new research compilations covering Health and Education Benefits with the goal of making “healthier, happier, smarter children.”

Based on this research, she reported the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Dr. Howard Frumkin said, “We know enough to act.” C&NN has recently made inroads with the American Academy of Pediatrics, including a well-received speech by Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Wood: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, at the 2010 AAP conference. She explained the new C&NN Grow Outside! Tools and [Resources for Pediatricians](#) and referenced several other partnership tools including: Nature Rocks; Nature Clubs for Families; and the Natural Leaders Network. She concluded with a statement made by U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin at the Healthy and Fit Nation 2010 meeting: “Children should be having fun and playing in environments that provide parks, recreational facilities, community centers, and walking and bike paths.”



Guest speaker Eduardo Sanchez, M.D. MPH FAAFP, Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, Medical Division, BlueCross BlueShield of Texas, at the podium, with moderator Michael Suk, M.D. J.D. MPH FACS, Chair, Physicians for Healthier Americans, and panelist Nancy Herron, National Chair, Grassroots Leadership Team, Children & Nature Network.

Agriculture, Interior Officials Tout Youth Efforts

U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment Meryl Harrell and Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Youth at the U.S. Department of the Interior, spoke to the group by telephone. Ms. Harrell said, “Partnerships are critical and we appreciate the work of the recreation community in working closely with the agency to connect with youth and build the next generation.” She provided highlights of Forest Service education efforts including: Kids in the Woods for first-timers; the Ad Council’s “*Discover the Forest*”

program which provides a searchable database online for parents to find nearby forests for visits with children; the *Conservation Connection* program; and the *Monarch Live* initiative. Julie Rodriguez added that the *Youth in the Great Outdoors* initiative provides opportunities to America's young people to participate in various conservation projects throughout the western United States. She said her work centers on leveraging resources within agencies to better align partnerships and reach out to non-traditional partners and to provide more resources for public education teachers. She noted technology would play a larger role in reaching youth and cited the successful electronic field trips offered through the National Park Foundation as an example.

Education and the Outdoors: Outdoor Classrooms Enhance Fun and Learning



Cathy Ahern, center, Vice President of Member Services, American Recreation Coalition, welcomes guest speakers from Prince William, Virginia, County Schools, Associate Superintendent Keith A. Imon, left, and Steven Walts, Ed.D., Superintendent, right.

The Superintendent of Prince William, Virginia, County Schools, Steven Walts, Ed.D., and Associate Superintendent Keith A. Imon were guest speakers at Monday's lunch, discussing Education and the Outdoors. Their comments focused on the ED OUT Program: Head Outdoors for Education and Fun, held during the final days of the school year. Dr. Walts explained that ED OUT, launched during Great Outdoors Month in June 2010, uses parks, forests and refuges as outdoor classrooms to enhance fun and learning during the summer, better prepare students for the next school year, and encourage outdoor recreation experiences that help youth fight the epidemic of childhood obesity. In addition to the school system, organizing partners for ED OUT include the American Recreation Coalition, the National Wildlife Federation and the U.S. Forest Service. In addition, a variety of agencies and organizations, including NASA, provided adjunct faculty. The program boasts nearly 30 partners.

Dr. Walts told the group he was motivated to launch the program because studies show a strong correlation between outdoor experiences and achievement. Prince William is Virginia's second largest district with 89 schools and approximately 79,000 students. The pilot ED OUT day involved 524 students in 4th and 7th grade in 25 outdoor learning stations. For 2011, plans are to increase participation dramatically and start pilots in other systems.

Building Partnerships to Promote Active Lifestyles in the 21st Century

The Monday afternoon session included an off-site education tour of Great Wolf Lodge, Bass Pro Shops, the Vineyards Campground, and two marinas on Lake Grapevine – Silver Lake and Twin Coves – linked by a cruise aboard the Lone Star Lady.

Prior to the excursion, a briefing was provided by Regional Partnerships Program Manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Douglas Cox and Grapevine Parks and Recreation Department Director Doug Evans, along with Marinas International Vice President of Planning and Operations Gilbert Welch.

The city has leased 770 acres of land from the USACE for its recreational program. All revenue generated on the leased lands goes into an enterprise fund and is used for park maintenance and improvements on site.

The tour allowed the group to view creative public-private partnerships and outdoor-focused operations within a major urban area, and also to learn about new competition facing public lands and waters for leisure time and dollars. Roundtable discussions about the off-site seminar took place the following morning.



Douglas Cox, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



Vineyards Campground, Texas, location of the off-site seminar.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Major Emphasis To Expand Partnerships

Mike Enschede, Chief, Operations and Regulatory, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), spoke at the Monday evening dinner. "We are important to the public because of our significant economic benefits – \$18 billion annually – to local communities in and near the projects," he said. He said 90 percent of recreation at Corps sites is day use and that visitation has remained extremely high.

Recent challenges include partial closures, flat budgets, and maintenance backlogs. Over 50% of its facilities are over 50 years old. He said there is a major emphasis to maintain and expand partnerships. "We would like to be able to work cooperatively with organizations to jointly manage our parks.

Our current authorities are *very* limited in our abilities to share management responsibilities and costs,” he said. In response to the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, he said the Corps' budget will affect its ability to meet the program's goals; however, it will continue to focus on working with youth and collaborating with others to continue access, particularly to urban areas and communities.

Off-Site Seminar: What We Saw and Heard, What We Need to Do

Tuesday's opening general session featured discussion about applicable ideas from the previous day's off-site seminar, with a focus on opportunities for partnerships promoting active lifestyles in the 21st century. Doug Cox with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said transportation is a big need in order to get youth to parks and recreation sites and events. He is considering asking the Lions Club for a possible scholarship to fund transportation. He also strongly emphasized that technology is not the enemy: it's how we use it that matters. “We need to help kids extend their life outside,” he said.



Great Wolf Lodge Director of Sales & Marketing James Keaveny, right, lodge tour host, talks about family recreation ideas with Ruth Coleman, Director, California State Parks and Vice President, National Association of State Park Directors.

Susan Alden Weingardt, Partnership Liaison for the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service, said the Great Wolf Lodge idea to recruit “Mommy bloggers” in their marketing was a very useful way to expand awareness. She also cited the Lodge's “Magic Quest” treasure hunt, using electronic wands, and noted that the idea could be applied to outdoor exploration and education. “We can learn from what we see in a built environment and find ways to adapt ideas that kids like to the outdoors,” she said.

Gilbert Welch with Marinas International said he felt Bass Pro's emphasis on selling the experience was applicable to outdoor recreation. “We're not just selling boat ride tickets, we need to sell the experience better,” he said. He noted that Bass Pro staff reported that a remarkable number of boats had been sold to non-boating families who came for birthday parties at the store, saw the boats displayed on the floor and opted for “staycations” utilizing Lake Grapevine.

Making Great Outdoors Month a Vehicle for Action

Tuesday's second panel focused on How to Make Great Outdoors Month a Vehicle for Action. Featured speakers included: Meri-Margaret Deoudes, Senior Director, Corporate Relations and Special Events, National Wildlife Federation; Frank Peterson, President, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation; and moderator Ruth Coleman, Director of California State Parks and President-Elect, National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD).



For Great Outdoors Month, Ruth Coleman's ideas included plans for a "best practices" section on the NASPD website to promote health and the outdoors. She also plans a first-time meeting with the state private campground owners association to collaborate on current public outreach, such as co-sponsorship of county fair events. Tapping the philanthropic community for planned giving is another idea. "Parks are the new sanctuary," she said.

Meri-Margaret Deoudes, Senior Director of Corporate Relations and Special Events for the National Wildlife Federation, right, talks recreation with Michelle Mitchell, Regional Partnership Manager, U.S. Forest Service Southern Region.

Frank Peterson strongly recommended considering "what success looks like" for Great Outdoors Month. He recommended defining criteria for success and a coordination site for all efforts. He challenged the group to define its primary audiences and test tools to get them outside. He expressed concern that the Outdoor Industry Association has announced plans for targeting April as an outdoor month, but has no plans for including fishing or boating. He offered to serve as a liaison on the issue.

Meri-Margaret Deoudes said the National Wildlife Federation will again use the 4th Saturday in June during Great Outdoors Month for its [Great American Backyard Campout](#).

Now in its 7th year, the program reaches more than 100,000 campers, 60% of whom are first-timers. She said additional support would be provided through efforts such as its [Mom Blog](#) network.

View the NWF presentation on the [Partners Outdoors blog](#).

Poster Session Highlights Partnership Initiatives

This year, representatives from four organizations exhibited during the poster-session portion of the program:

Michelle Johnson with [America's Byways Resource Center](#); Susan Alden Weingardt, [National Get Outdoors Day Denver](#) (U.S. Forest Service - Rocky Mountain Region); Ladoska Darnell, right, with [Our Lands and Waters Foundation](#), and Lisa Young with [Take Pride in America](#).



Ladoska Darnell with Our Lands and Waters Foundation.

People and the Great Outdoors: The Challenges and the Opportunities

Tuesday's closing session featured the Honorable Robert Abbey, Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), who shared insights into the challenges of leading a major federal land system with important recreation offerings. The moderator was ARC's President Derrick Crandall. America's Byways Resource Center Director Michelle Johnson and Publisher and *American Park Network* Editor-In-Chief Mark Saferstein served as responders to the BLM Director. Mr. Abbey noted that BLM manages 270 million acres of land, including key destinations for "all things outdoors."

The priorities of the Bureau are: the new energy frontier, climate change, treasured landscapes, and engaging America's youth. He said the agency hired 3100 young people last year and that BLM's recruitment program is a model for the Interior Department. Challenges facing the Bureau include funding reductions and growth in demand for recreation and other uses of the lands it manages. He said, "The success of the BLM will be determined by the effectiveness of its partnerships." He added, "We need to use innovative ways of protecting our lands and waters while providing sustainable recreation. Trends are changing very quickly in the recreation field and we need to ask whether we're adding value to the people that we serve and if we are relevant."

In the panel discussion, Mark Saferstein asked how the private sector can best work with federal agencies. Mr. Abbey said BLM is not in competition with the private sector, it is in partnership and that enhancing the quality of experience on public lands should be the mutual goal. When asked how to engage the medical community, he replied that corporate America can play an important role in getting Americans outdoors. Ms. Johnson asked how gateway communities can be part of the BLM's positive message.

Mr. Abbey said, “I recommend conveying the positive message that being outdoors together provides families the time to build relationships, to experience America and engage with natural history. Nature is not something you can get on the internet.”

Action Team Presentations Outline Real-World Strategies

As part of Tuesday’s closing dinner, three action teams presented their summaries to develop real-world strategies in the three areas below.

All actions contribute to the overall theme of Health and the Great Outdoors: how to attract Americans to the outdoors as well as how to encourage them to engage in the outdoors as a means to better health. The following are highlights:



Action team flip charts from afternoon session.

- *Making Great Outdoors Month a Vehicle for Action:* The team said a consistent message is needed as well as top-level support at all agencies involved. A centralized calendar of events is recommended as well as templates for news releases and fact sheets including benefits, and using both traditional and new social media. Long-term suggestions include securing major corporate sponsors and developing a new logo.
- *Healthy People/Healthy Places: Building the Link. Strengthen the Bridge Between Health and the Outdoors* – and focused on the need to engage local community health organizations, the education community, for-profit and nonprofit groups, interagency cooperation, and summarizing current and needed health research on health and the outdoors.
- *Responding to the America's Great Outdoors Initiative:* The team recommended identifying current partners and primary contacts for the AGO and creating a platform for outcome-based results. They also recommended making AGO an over-arching brand and finding bold leaders to make a long-term commitment.

[Click here](#) for the presentation links on the Partners Outdoors 2011 blog.

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