

Connecting Kids and Families to the West's Great Outdoors

*Get Out West! Advisory Group
Report to the Western Governors*



- *Outdoor Recreation*
- *Conservation*
- *Tourism*
- *Volunteerism*



Western Governors' Association

Dear Friends of the West,

When I became Chair of Western Governors' Association in June 2011, I launched an effort to examine and celebrate outdoor recreation and tourism in the West. We branded our effort **Get Out West!** to not only tell outdoor enthusiasts and tourists to come to the West, but also as encouragement to kids and families – particularly in urban parts of our region – to get out into the region's great outdoor places.

The West is blessed with incredible natural areas for outdoor recreation and tourism. Recreation hot spots in our region are known across the globe and we are becoming known as the place to come for world class outdoor recreation adventures. Western Governors consider the West the outdoor recreation and tourism capital of not just the nation, but of the world.

Outdoor recreation and tourism mean jobs and "clean" economic development. But to make sure the West remains the best place for outdoor recreation and tourism we need to make sure we have policies in place that facilitate the growth of these industries and maintain and improve the lands and waters, trails and signage that make the West a great place to visit and play.

To help my colleagues and me identify opportunities to grow the outdoor recreation and tourism economy in the region and to encourage youth to explore the West's great outdoor places, WGA empanelled the Get Out West Advisory Group. These experts have developed three reports, of which this is one. The reports are:

- *The West's Competitive Advantage: Landscapes, Open Lands and Unique History*
- *Connecting Kids and Families to the West's Great Outdoors*
- *Best Practices in Managing Recreation Assets*

The Governors thank the Advisory Committee members for their hard work. The members are listed in the back inside cover of this report.

In order to provide Governors, legislators and other decision makers with information to best understand the breadth and depth of the outdoor recreation industry, WGA brought together recreation industry leaders to commission a survey that has documented the economic contribution of outdoor recreation – in terms of sales, jobs, tax revenues – in the nation and in Western states. This data will help us all comprehend how the complex and multi-faceted recreation sector contributes to our economic base and how we can assist in fostering its continued growth.

I encourage you to review all four reports. The Advisory Committee has outlined a number of strategies Governors can adopt, which we will take under consideration. Western Governors have already taken action on three of them:

- In December 2011 we adopted a resolution encouraging the federal government to streamline and improve the tourist visa application experience and wait time for approval to visit the U.S.
- In December 2011 we adopted a resolution encouraging the use of the conservation corps to do construction and maintenance of recreation assets on public lands.
- In June 2012 we are launching a Governor's Youth Outdoor Recreation Outreach Coordinator pilot program in several Western states.
- In the Fall of 2012 and early 2013, WGA and our recreation industry partners will be announcing industry economic information on a state-by-state basis

I urge you to **Get Out West!** We live in a beautiful part of this great country. Let's not take it for granted.



Christine O. Gregoire
WGA Chair

Connecting Kids and Families to the West's Great Outdoors

Get Out West! Advisory Group

Report to the Governors

June 2012

Introduction

Governor Gregoire, the 2011-2012 chair of the Western Governors' Association, launched the *Get Out West!* initiative in June 2011. The goals of the initiative are to connect kids to nature, and grow the tourism and recreation economies in the West.

To achieve the goals of the *Get Out West!* initiative Governor Chris Gregoire (Wash.) convened an advisory group¹ and asked them to develop recommendations for the Western Governors. This report and its companion reports – *Get Out West!: The West's Competitive Advantage: Landscapes, Open Lands and Unique History* and *Managing the Region's Recreation Assets* – are the Advisory Group's findings and recommendations.

This report examines why children are not connecting to nature, highlights what public and private organizations can do to engage youth in the outdoors, and recommends policies Governors can pursue to make it easier for kids and families to *Get Out West!*.

Background

In his 2005 book, *Last Child in the Woods*, author Richard Louv describes the increasing divide between children and the outdoors. According to Louv, children and families are spending less time outside, and instead are engaging in “wired” activities with minimal activity. Louv believes this trend is to the detriment of our children and society. As he advocates for families and children to spend more time outdoors, Louv cites research to demonstrate that spending time in nature can “boost mental acuity and creativity; promote health and wellness; build smarter and more sustainable businesses, communities, and economies; and ultimately strengthen human bonds.”

Seven years later, the “nature-deficit disorder” Louv identified in today's youth has only grown worse. A recent study² found 8-18 year olds spend more than 7½ hours a day, seven days a week with some form of electronic media. This report examines why kids don't get out into nature, what public and private organizations are doing to engage youth in the outdoors, and recommends policies Governors can put in place to make it easier for kids and families to get outdoors.

Nature Disconnect

Why are not more kids getting outside? The Nature Conservancy conducted a poll³ in 2011 to find out the answer. Their findings revealed:

- Four in five American youth say that the discomfort of nature (bugs, heat or cold, etc.) is a reason they do not spend time in nature.
- Three in five point to concerns related to access (there is no natural area nearby, or they do not have a way to get there)
- Almost half say they simply are not interested.

¹ See inside back cover of this report for a list of Advisory Group members

² GENERATION M2 – Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Old. A Kaiser Family Foundation Study, January 2010

³ Connecting America's Youth to Nature, The Nature Conservancy, 2011

For those in the West, the poll numbers were a bit more encouraging. The poll found:

- Youth in the West were more likely to regularly spend time in nature than their peers in other regions.
- Youth in the West were less likely to see discomfort as an obstacle to being outside (with just 25% rating it a "major obstacle" compared to 36% of the full sample).

A variety of factors could explain youth feelings about getting outside. New leisure time options that were unavailable just 10 years ago – mobile devices featuring games, movies, and social media access, for instance – offer kids more reasons to stay inside. And, with 85% of Western citizens living in urban areas, great outdoor activities are not always right outside of everyone's backdoor.

Another factor is family dynamics. In previous generations, many children were introduced to the great outdoors by their parents. However, as more families are now headed by two working parents or by single parents than were a generation ago, the trend suggests these parents may have less free time or may have different priorities. For example:

- 32% of children in the U.S. were living with one parent in 2007 compared to only 11% in 1970⁴.
- From 1970 to 1993, the proportion of dual-earner couples (with and without children) increased from 39 percent to 61 percent of all married couples⁵.

Moreover, organizations traditionally associated with introducing kids to the outdoors – Boys and Girls Scouts of America, 4-H – have suffered declining enrollments over the last decade and a half (traditional boy scouting membership dropped from 3.4 million in 1998 to 2.7 million in 2011). The impact can be significant. If this window of opportunity in childhood is lost, statistics indicate that it is less likely that adults will return or reconsider the matter later in life. For example, half of all campers today ages 18 and older experienced their first camping trip before they reached the age of seven. Only nine percent of all adult camping participants tried camping for the first time after age 19⁶.

Changes in school priorities and funding availability could have an impact as well. Less than

one-quarter of youth say they go on school field trips outdoors on a monthly basis⁷. Liability concerns and transportation costs have also impacted schools' abilities to include outdoor learning experiences.

Yet, despite trends away from outdoor activity, some young people still make time to get outside. The Outdoor Foundation's *Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2011* found that on a nation-wide scale, a few kids are still spending time outdoors in active recreation.

The *Topline* report does not include motorized recreation, but the Motorcycle Industry Council's Motorcycle/ATV Owner Survey shows that the largest percentage, by generation, of both off-highway motorcycle riders and ATV riders is under 30 years old (Generation Y, born 1980 and after).

Most Popular Youth Outdoor Activities By Participation Rate, Ages 6 to 24

Running, Jogging and Trail Running	26%
Bicycling – Road, Mountain and BMX	22%
Camping – Car, Backyard and RV	19%
Fishing – Fresh, Salt and Fly	18%
Hiking	12%

- 65% of off-highway motorcycle riders are from Gen Y and that 40% of ATV riders are from Gen Y (2009);
- 70% of female ATV riders rank "Family Activity" in the top three reasons they ride.

What Attracts Kids to the Outdoors?

So, if getting kids out into nature can "boost mental acuity and creativity and promote health and wellness" as Richard Louv claims, then what can families, the public and private sectors do to help connect kids to the outdoors near their homes and schools?

For some parents, the first step will be a commitment to be more intentional about making outdoor activities a family priority. Parents could look at outdoor activities as a fresh ways to enhance

⁴ Amato, P.R. 2008. *Recent changes in family structure: Implications for children, adults, and society*. National Healthy Marriage Resource Center

⁵ Francine D. Blau, Marianne A. Ferber, and Anne E. Winkler, *The Economics of Women, Men and Work*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1998), chap. 4.

⁶ *Special Report on Camping*, The Outdoor Foundation, Coleman and Kampgrounds of America (KOA), 2011

⁷ Nature Conservancy, *op cit*

relationships, build family legacies, celebrate milestones, and to pass on life lessons in character development and confidence. For other parents, the first step may be the willingness to be “beginners” along side of their children, and to model for them an openness to try new things. And, as the following information points out, new things do not have to be boring or expensive.

In 2010, the federal government’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative was launched with an aim to find out what attracts kids to the outdoors. The responses kids gave were:

- Make the outdoors relevant to today’s young people: make it inviting, exciting and fun.
- Ensure that all young people have access to outdoor places that are safe, clean and close to home.
- Empower and enable youth to work and volunteer in the outdoors.
- Build upon a base of environmental and outdoor education, both formal and informal.

A poll conducted by The Nature Conservancy, found the outdoor activities in which youth expressed the most interest are:

- “seeing something beautiful or amazing in nature” (78%),
- “having free time in a natural area with your friends to make your own fun” (74%), and
- “doing something outdoors in a natural area you have never done before, to challenge yourself” (63%).

Prior to a pilot project with the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, the Boy Scouts of America undertook concept testing. Youth were asked what activities they like or would like to do. The following all scored at 70% or more. The top ranked, in order, were: swimming, laser tag, camping, ATV riding, boating, hiking, horseback riding, paintball and snowboarding/skiing.

Reconnecting Youth and Families to Nature

The good news is there are public, non-governmental, and private sector efforts and resources available that help families and schools reconnect youth to nature. These efforts exist in every state. Examples of these types of programs are listed in Appendix 4. Governors and state government can play an important role in helping kids and families get outside. State parks are a tremendous asset in getting more families and kids to reconnect to nature. Being more active can help reduce public health expenditures and improve academic achievement.

State Efforts

Several state agencies have developed programs and outreach strategies to connect kids and families to the outdoors. A number of different strategies are being adopted in several states. They include:

Make it free: This year America’s state parks began offering free, guided First Day Hikes in all 50 states on January 1. From Florida to Alaska, more than 14,000 people celebrated the 2012 New Year by hiking in a state park.

Use peer-to-peer outreach: In 2011, state park directors collaborated with Outdoor Nation and created the state park Youth Ambassador program. The Youth Ambassadors are exploring state parks in their area, and collaborating on a nationwide media and marketing program promoting outdoor recreation in state parks. The Ambassadors work with park staff and their own social networks to document their outdoor experiences across the 50 states with articles, vlogs, blogs, and photo essays.

Make it family fun: The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Department recently created the Let’s Camp program to encourage families to get outside at several Colorado State Parks. The *Let’s Camp!* program is a fun-filled, overnight camping experience that gives families hands-on guidance from knowledgeable and friendly staff. The program will include all the fundamentals of camping from set up to break down. The program provides a safe, comfortable, and relaxed setting that is perfect for beginners to develop confidence for rewarding outdoor experiences in the future. Plenty of family-friendly activities are included. The best part is that no prior outdoor knowledge is needed and loaner equipment will be provided through a partnership with outdoor retailers.

Make trying something new easy: Some states, including Washington, have established free fishing in designated state parks. Programs like this help park visitors have enjoyable initial fishing experiences that will create interest in fishing and the purchase of fishing licenses.

Reach out to underserved populations: For example, in Connecticut, the Bank of America purchases annual state park passes for each Connecticut family caring for foster kids. Another example is an initiative launched in May 2012 by the Obama Administration to give active-duty service members and their dependents free passes to national parks and public lands. States can support this effort by also making state parks available to our nation's heroes. Another program that seeks to reach out to underserved populations is done by the California State Parks, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division. It coordinates a youth program that draws on the attraction of off-highway vehicle recreation to forge positive relationships among youth, law enforcement, and public lands. Off-Highway PAL (OHPAL) is a fun "cop to kid" program that provides youth the opportunity to be involved in OHV recreation when they otherwise may not be able to do so.

Make it convenient: Park passes can be checked out in several states – along with information on state park locations and programs. The passes are either purchased at a discount by the libraries or provided free by the state park agency or a sponsor. And when the passes are checked out and unavailable, some libraries actually then sell passes.

Make it a special present: In Canada, all 8th graders receive a "My Parks Pass" and a letter from the Prime Minister inviting them to visit a national park in Canada for free. This could be replicated in the U.S. at the state level, and could even be tied to next year's history or science curriculums.

Involve the whole family: The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks offers classes for people who are new to outdoor adventures in order to give them the skills and confidence to go out on their own. The department offers:

- Outdoors Woman (for women interested in sampling many different forms of outdoor recreation in a setting designed especially for them)
- Becoming an Outdoors Family (a weekend of family fun learning about camping and other outdoor activities)
- Junior Naturalist (an opportunity for youth ages 7-12 to explore South Dakota state parks and learn more about its rich natural and cultural history)
- Youth Conservation Camp (an annual conservation camp for youth ages 15-17)
- Project Wild (a national education program that provides learning activities for students in a way that is fun, while meeting education standards)

Gubernatorial Efforts

Governors can play a large role in connecting kids and families to the outdoors. One action most Governors have taken is to sign letters of support or proclamations supporting two national events geared toward getting Americans outdoors.

- *National Get Outdoors Day (GO-Day)* – a second-Saturday in June event held in several hundred, mostly urban locations across the nation to attract youth and families to find out more about what opportunities are available in the Great Outdoors.
- *National Public Lands Day (NPLD)* – the nation's largest, single-day volunteer event for public lands in the United States. In 2012, NPLD will be held on September 29. NPLD began in 1994 with three sites and 700 volunteers. In 2011, 180,000 volunteers worked at over 2,060 sites in every state, the District of Columbia, and in many U.S. territories.

One Governor who took a strong leadership role in 2007 was Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell. He convened a Governor's Outdoor Conference to examine trends that indicated a disconnect of people from nature, and to explore solutions to stem that disconnect. A subsequent outdoor recreation task force developed a report with proposed strategies in 2008. The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was tasked to implement the recommendations.

The Get Out West Advisory Group believes Western Governors are in a unique position to lead on this important issue and can do more to connect kids and families to nature. The Advisory Group identified the following areas as those most fruitful for direct involvement of the Governors.

Use Governors' visibility: The Governors can use their *bully pulpit* to highlight outdoor recreation opportunities. Focus on more than state parks and federal lands since, for many people, the closer to home recreation opportunities are going to resonate as much or more. Local, state, and federal recreation lands and opportunities are all important for different reasons, but in the daily lives of most people, the local trails, parks, river corridors are where their kids will have their first experience, where people can connect on a daily or weekly basis, and that can be enjoyed at the lowest cost (i.e., they rarely have an entrance fee or high transportation costs).

Promote free days: The Governors can promote state and national park and recreation areas that offer free admission on certain days of the year. Governors can help raise awareness of these opportunities and encourage participation through press releases, proclamations and social media. These free days are held every year. Dates for 2012 for free admission to select parks and recreation areas are:

January 1	First Day Hikes (state parks)
January 14-16	Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend
April 21 to 29	National Park Week (national parks)
June 9	Get Outdoors Day
September 29	National Public Lands Day (state and federal public lands)
October 14	National Wildlife Refuge Week (refuges)
November 10 to 12	Veterans Day weekend

Visit the best places: The Governors can highlight good recreational opportunities for youth and families in their states by visiting them personally with his or her family.

Visit the local Conservation Corps: The Governors can visit and work on a service/work project on public lands. It is easy to do and would promote young people working and providing service on public lands. In many cases these projects are focused on improving recreation infrastructure, so the visits would also promote tourism. Governors of California, Colorado, Montana, and Texas have been personally involved with their local conservation corps in the past.

Nominate, evaluate, and award best programs: The Governors can affirm the best efforts for getting youth outdoors in his or her state. Criteria for awards might include:

- Provides training in responsible recreation and stewardship – i.e. outdoor ethics
- Uses innovative fundraising strategies
- Provides transportation for youth with limited or no access
- Offers a variety of outdoor activities
- Does outreach into local schools

Recognize youth who have taken a leadership role: The Governors can affirm youth who are leading the way in promoting outdoor recreation. One model for this is the 1985-1990 "Take Pride in America" competition that rewarded volunteers. The Western Governors' Association could assist by announcing winners at one of its meetings.

Encourage citizens to purchase passes, permits and licenses: The Governors can encourage citizen participation. The conservation movement has long depended on the voluntary investments of those who use public resources such as land, water and wildlife for outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, off-roading and boating. The revenue generated from these activities through the purchase of licenses, registrations, access fees and passes often not only support continued sustainable access, but also conservation activities that benefit wildlife and landscapes that belong to everyone. Highlighting the connection between these purchases and the sustainability and conservation they support may provide others with the motivation to purchase a license, habitat stamp or park pass, even if they never choose to use it.

Support establishment of a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights: The Governors can support a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. These documents are often a stepping stone for engaging Governors and the broader community in setting forward a vision for how kids might better relate to the outdoors. Many states, notably California and Colorado, have established a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

Promote the Use of the North American Conservation Education Strategy: The Governors can promote these free, downloadable educational tools developed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Pacific Education Institute. The tools have been endorsed by all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies. The strategy delivers unified, research-based concepts and educational guidelines about fish and wildlife conservation, translated into K-12 academic standards to shape students' environmental literacy, stewardship, and outdoor skills. The Governors can recommend that state natural resource, education and health agencies at least link to these curricula materials from their Web sites, if not incorporate them into their own educational curricula. The Governors can also encourage agencies to develop partnerships that support experiential learning outdoors (science, technology, engineering, math, physical education and more) and broader participation in wildlife-related conservation and recreation.

Create Healthy Kids Outdoors Councils: The Governors can issue Executive Orders to establish Healthy Kids Outdoors Councils. These Councils bring together a variety of agencies and non-profit partners to establish comprehensive strategies for reconnecting youth, especially from underserved communities, with the outdoors. Former Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius (now Secretary of the U.S. Health and Human Services Department) and current Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley have laid the groundwork for establishing similar councils that are galvanizing support and providing solutions for connecting kids with nature. The Outdoors Alliance for Kids is working to expand these models across the nation and can provide additional support.

Appoint a youth outdoor recreation outreach coordinator: The Governors can appoint a youth ambassador. The best spokesperson for getting kids interested in the outdoors is one of their peers. Building on the work of Outdoor Nation and state parks, Governors should consider appointing a young person to conduct an outreach campaign using social media and Internet tools to encourage kids visit the great outdoor places in their state.

Broker partnerships: The Governors can facilitate partnerships with cities, counties, federal agencies and other entities to pool resources and provide integrated recreational systems that are accessible for youth and families. The Governors can help flatten the difference between jurisdictions to ensure that cross-agency collaboration is not duplicated, and they can help bridge the state-federal boundary. A potential project to consider is achieving one pass or passport to all public lands in one region – as we do for multiple transportation modes in one region.

Conclusions

People in the West are spending less time enjoying the region's great outdoor spaces. This is especially true of the youngest Westerners.

Today's Westerners are more urbanized and live in more single parent or two-income households than a decade ago making time and money tighter.

We have additional leisure time options not available a few generations ago – gaming devices, 24 hour cable TV and on demand movies on mobile devices. Eight- to eighteen-year-old youth spend more than 7½ hours a day, seven days a week with some form of electronic media.

Research has proven that spending time in nature can “boost mental acuity and creativity; promote health and wellness; build smarter and more sustainable businesses, communities, and economies; and ultimately strengthen human bonds.”

States have a significant investment in state parks, state expenditures for treating an increasingly sedentary population are increasing, improvement in educational outcomes are relatively flat and economies in rural areas (many near state parks) are struggling.

Governor's leadership in encouraging families and youth to get out into nature could have a positive impact on healthcare, education and economic development. In addition, exposing kids to the outdoors early in their lives opens up future job possibilities for them in the outdoors as scientists, rangers, land managers and more.

Recommendations

The Get Out West! Advisory Group applauds Western Governors adoption of a policy resolution in December 2011 supporting the use of conservation corps as a cost-effective mechanism for construction and maintenance of recreation assets on public lands.

The Advisory Group recommends Governors take the additional actions outlined below:

1. Use their “bully pulpit” to promote kids and families getting out into nature. Announce broad call to arms, such as “Western Governors commit to helping every kid and his family in the West who have never been to a nearby state park or natural area visit one before 2014.”
2. Sign an Executive Order or Proclamation promoting outdoor recreation. (see appendix 1 for example).
3. Direct state agencies to cooperatively draft a state outdoor “children’s bill of rights.” (see appendix 2 for example).
4. Direct the state lands/state parks agency to work with schools and NGOs to distribute educational materials encouraging kids to get outdoors.
5. Encourage public, private and non-profit interests to work together in the West to introduce young families and their kids to the great outdoor places⁸.
6. Promote national, free-admission days in state and national parks; the annual National Get Outdoors Day; the annual National Public Lands Day; the use of Conservation Corps; and citizen volunteerism as mechanisms to encourage kids and families to get out into nature for a day.
7. Encourage citizen participation in existing programs that provide volunteer opportunities working to build and maintain recreational assets. Volunteerism is an important way for families to enjoy and learn about the outdoors and bond together. The annual National Public Lands Day provides an easy venue for interested outdoor volunteers to get involved in an effort near them.
8. Support the Outdoor Industry Association’s Outdoor Nation initiative – a youth led program to connect kids to the outdoors – by attending the outdoor youth summits that Outdoor Nation is organizing in each state in 2013.
9. Create a Governors’ youth led outdoor recreation outreach position to help Governors and state agencies reach out and connect with kids to interest them in outdoor recreation. Coordinate this effort with those of state park directors to create State Park Youth Ambassadors in every state.

APPENDIX 1

Draft *Get Out West!* Executive Order

WHEREAS, the Western Governors’ Association is committed to finding solutions that connect families and youth to the great outdoors through tourism, travel, and outdoor recreation opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Get Out West! initiative advise that the community-based solutions we suggest will help empower and connect a new and diverse generation of children and families to the outdoors through innovative and practical recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the Get Out West! initiative is a cooperative effort of numerous qualified organizational partnerships throughout the West whose network mission is to support responsible outdoor recreation and tourism, specifically involving youth and families; and

WHEREAS, the West features vast and diverse landscapes which provide people from all walks of life with opportunities to experience the outdoors by providing access to wildlife, recreational opportunities and the natural world; and

WHEREAS, state and federal agencies are entrusted to maintain sustainable natural resources and healthy places for people, fish and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, state fish, wildlife and habitat conservation is proudly supported by citizens who voluntarily purchase park passes and hunting and fishing licenses and pay excise taxes on hunting equipment, ammunition, fishing tackle and motor boat fuels; and

The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the Get Out West! Advisory Group. The information and recommendations contained herein do not necessarily reflect the views of individual Governors or the Western Governors’ Association.

⁸ Outdoor Nation is funded by the Outdoor Foundation, The North Face, The REI Foundation and The Conservation Fund.

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation, travel, and tourism are some of the most important activities that drive the desire to live in and visit the Western United States; and

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation, travel, and tourism supports a connection to our environment, and promotes a healthy lifestyle; and

WHEREAS, our Western state and national parks and other natural areas are invaluable outdoor educational classrooms where children learn about the natural and cultural history of the West through field science, history, art, and other subjects; and

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation, travel and tourism sustains local and regional businesses and encourages local and regional economic growth; and

WHEREAS, resource stewardship is not possible without a strong sense of connection to the natural world that promotes a sense of place; and

WHEREAS, we support and encourage the responsible use and stewardship of public and private lands and waterways through environmental and natural resource ethics education; and

WHEREAS, Western Governors support existing diverse and important efforts that are currently underway to reconnect people to the outdoors; and

WHEREAS, the North American Conservation Education Strategy, endorsed by all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies, provides an opportunity to translate research-based fish, wildlife and natural resource conservation concepts into K-12 academic standards that will enhance students' environmental literacy, stewardship and outdoor skills;

*NOW, THEREFORE, WE, the Governors of the nineteen Western United States of America and three Pacific Territories, do hereby agree that we will support programs that encourage and provide for youth and families to experience the outdoors responsibly and respectfully, and in doing so we proclaim 2013 to be **Get Out West! Year** and we invite all Americans to observe this year by taking advantage of the many opportunities our Western states and territories offer for youth and family outdoor recreation and activities.*

APPENDIX 2

Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

1. Explore the history of each of our states and our region.
2. Identify the State Flower, Animal, Tree, and Bird in each state in their natural habitat.
3. Camp under the stars.
4. Use a map to follow a trail, and show respect for the others we may meet.
5. Play in a creek, river, or on the shore of a lake or ocean. Paddle, swim, or skip a stone.
6. Experience activities for each of the 4 seasons.
7. Learn how to have fun and stay comfortable and safe even when it is cold, wet, and dark.
8. Catch a fish, hunt a deer, or take a picture of either.
9. Get dirty. Play in the dirt.
10. Explore a State Park, National Park, National Forest, or Bureau of Land Management recreation area.
11. Plant a seed and watch it grow.
12. Help take care of the outdoors. Build a trail, clean up trash, improve wildlife habitat and play your part in helping make the great outdoors special.

APPENDIX 3

Americas Great Outdoors Youth – Four Key Goals and Strategies

Make the outdoors relevant to today's young people: make it inviting, exciting and fun:

- Bridge the gap between technology and the outdoors by developing innovative tools, such as nature-based mobile phone applications, GPS devices, and online challenges.

- Launch a national outdoor youth campaign to raise awareness of the importance of the outdoors to health and our nation's history and economy, including concerts, rallies, and youth summits.
- Create a user-friendly Web portal that shows young people where to go and what to do in the great outdoors.
- Host free events to introduce youth and their families to outdoor activities they can enjoy for a lifetime.
- Help native youth reconnect with their heritage by enabling them to practice traditional outdoor activities, like hunting, fishing and archery.

Ensure that all young people have access to outdoor places that are safe, clean, and close to home:

- Create more parks near and in communities, including networks of connected trails, bike paths, and greenways, and urban gardens and community "pocket parks."
- Improve access to open spaces, both within cities and beyond their limits, by expanding options for public transportation and linking sidewalks and pathways to create safe routes to parks.
- Reduce barriers to using parks by lowering entry fees for young people and families.
- Make outdoor recreation more affordable through innovative concepts like "gear libraries" or other low-cost options for sharing recreational and safety equipment.
- Make parks more welcoming, safe, and usable by cleaning up garbage, and taking better care of existing facilities like trails, signage, and restrooms.
- Work with individual communities to reduce crime and gang activity in neighborhood parks and open spaces, and on native land.

Empower and enable youth to work and volunteer in the outdoors:

- Increase interest in and access to careers in land and resource management through mentoring, training, and internships for young farmers, ranchers, and conservationists.
- Raise awareness of job and service opportunities on public lands and streamline the application process through better and easier access to information online.
- Build a modern Conservation Corps to engage America's young people, veterans, and underserved populations in the stewardship and conservation of our lands and waters.
- Bring communities together for environmental cleanups and restoration projects, including work on native reservations, urban gardens, and vacant lots.
- Promote inclusion and diversity in outdoor recreation, education, and in conservation related jobs and volunteer opportunities.

Build upon a base of environmental and outdoor education, both formal and informal:

- Expand outdoor education programs to engage more young people in hands-on, place-based learning experiences.
- Provide more opportunities for kids to get outside during the school day, through curriculum-based activities, service-learning projects, and outdoor recess and P.E.
- Link outdoor professionals, including park and forest rangers, to local school districts to educate teachers and students on the significance of their natural and cultural surroundings, and inspire them to get out and explore the outdoors.
- Increase cultural literacy and cultivate civic pride by helping families and school groups visit historic sites and landscapes.
- Leverage grants and other existing resources to make it easier and more affordable for school groups to access public and private lands.
- Use mentor and ambassador programs to bring young people outdoors and teach them the skills necessary to connect with and enjoy nature.
- Increase outdoor learning experiences in native schools, and incorporate more lessons about sacred sites and practices.

APPENDIX 4

Examples of the Types of Non-State Programs Helping Connect Kids and Families to Nature

Finding Out Where to Go

The first things kids and families need to know is where they can go to get out into nature. Several organizations have set up national online databases tied to GIS mapping so families and kids can enter their zip code and a map will appear showing them locations of parks, forests and other natural areas. Examples include:

The U.S. Departments on Agriculture and the Interior have created a Web portal that identifies federal public lands with great outdoor recreation options. <http://www.youthgo.gov/>

North Face, the outdoor recreation company, has established a Web portal called Explore Your Parks that allows users to find parks, filter them by distance from their location and the type of activity they are interested in. <http://www.exploreyourparks.com/>

The U.S. Forest Service and the AdCouncil have created a public service campaign to encourage kids and families to Discover the Forest. The campaign includes T.V., radio, print, and billboard ads and a Web site where interested kids and families can go to find forests and parks near them. <http://www.discovertheforest.org/about>

The Washington Trails Association has created an online, searchable, map-based Hiking Guide Web site for people to find hiking trails near them. <http://www.wta.org/go-hiking/map>

Making it Family Friendly

The National Kids to Parks Day (KTP) is an annual nationwide day of play organized by National Park Trust (NPT). Similar in concept as Take Your Child to Work Day, the goal is to engage kids across the country with local, state and/or national parks in their communities and promote environmental stewardship and healthy outdoor living. The inaugural event occurred on May 21, 2011. At the heart of the initiative is Buddy Bison, NPT's mascot whose message to children and their families is "Explore outdoors, the parks are yours!" Equally important, the initiative has been designed to help teachers, especially those in underserved communities, to introduce parks to their students and their families.

Bringing Outdoor Recreation to City Kids

To get urban kids and families interested in outdoor recreation, several organizations are bringing the great outdoors and recreation gear into the cities to let people have hands on experience. For example:

- North Face, Backpacker magazine and REI are convening Adventures expos in New York City and Denver in 2012 with climbing walls and other outdoor gear.
- Keen footwear has created Recess is Back, an urban based outdoor recreation initiative to encourage people to get outdoors – <http://www.keenfootwear.com/us/en/recess/>.

Taking Kids to Outdoor Recreation

While exposing kids to recreation activity and skills in an urban setting can pique curiosity, nothing can compete with actually getting kids into a natural area away from the city. These programs offer good examples:

- (BAWT), a project of Earth Island Institute, was founded with the idea that California's bountiful wilderness areas are a vast – yet untapped – resource for youth-serving organizations. BAWT promotes the responsible use of these national, state and regional parks through their professional wilderness leadership training. They then connect the teachers and youth workers to their outdoor gear libraries. That way, youth organizations and schools may outfit their groups for trips of their own – free of charge. <http://www.bawt.org/>

- The YMCA offers the Outdoor Leadership Development program. It offers programs for boys, girls and co-eds. For example, the Boys Outdoor Leadership Development (BOLD) is for boys in grades 6-12. BOLD offers 5- to 16-day backpacking, rock climbing, and mountaineering expeditions that provide an opportunity for young men from all different backgrounds to build multi-cultural leadership, communication, and decision-making skills through shared challenges, problem solving and fun. With these activities, kids can find the perfect experience for their comfort and skill level. <http://ymcaleadership.com/>
- The National Park Trust has created the Kids to Parks program with a number of partners. The effort is encouraging every family in America to visit a national, state or local park and play outdoors on May 19, 2012. Last year, nearly 200 mayors coast to coast signed official proclamations and many hosted events in their community parks to celebrate the day. In addition, more than 15,300 families participated. The vision is simply to remind adults to take a child in their lives to a park - where they can hike a trail, visit a national historic site, or even canoe on a river. <http://kidstoparks.org/>
- Seventh and eighth graders from East Middle School in Great Falls, Montana participated in an "Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Educational Exploratory," that trained 100 kids over two days to safely and responsibly operate age-appropriate ATVs and off-highway motorcycles. As part of the Exploratory each child had the opportunity to participate in a trail ride and experience the natural wonders abundant in Montana. East Middle School teacher, Brenda Vehrs said, "There is truly an incredible demand for these types of programs, in Great Falls and, I suspect, all across the country. I know first-hand, if you want to get children into the outdoors give them an opportunity to ride an ATV or OHM, and they will turn out in big numbers."

Incorporating Technology

Today's youth spend 7.5 hours every day connected to a screen of some kind (phone, TV, computer, gaming). Getting them involved in the outdoors does not mean they have to leave their mobile devices at home. For example:

- *NatureFind* has created a Web portal and a mobile phone app that lets users view outdoor recreation opportunities near them while they are already out and about. Since NatureFind was founded in 2007, the service has grown to include more than a quarter of a million nature events at over 10,000 carefully selected places. <http://naturefind.com/default.asp>
- *ParksByNature* Network has teamed with state park directors to offer innovative mobile apps that serve as an interactive state parks tour guides. The apps are designed for both the novice outdoorsmen and the more seasoned park-goer. <http://www.americasstateparks.org/Pocket-Ranger>

Revitalizing Existing Programs

Scouts of America and 4-H are updating some of their programming. They are creating partnerships to offer new outdoor recreation experiences to attract non-traditional members. For example:

- The Specialty Vehicle Institute of America partnered with Boy Scouts of America to develop and pilot test a program to deliver ATV training/riding experience as part of the camping experience. Nine BSA councils participated in the 2011 pilot program. More than 40 BSA councils have expressed an interest in having the program in 2012.
- *National Youth Project Using Minibikes* (NYPUM) began in 1969 as an innovative way to engage youth and promote positive youth development. NYPUM combines the incentive of riding minibikes for youth between the ages of 10 and 18, and the love of the outdoors with the support that comes with the relationships that develop among participants and their mentors. NYPUM's National office manages all programs and conducts annual on-site quality assurance visits to ensure consistency. Programs are hosted by well-respected and established non-profit or municipal agencies, such as Boys and Girls Clubs.

Providing Free Opportunities

One way to entice kids and families to explore the West's great outdoor spaces is to offer days where entrance fees to parks, forests and other public lands are waived. For example:

- Working under the umbrella of America's Great Outdoors, federal land management agencies are offering seven fee-free days around major holidays when kids and families might have time off from work and school. <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/AMERICAS-GREAT-OUTDOORS-Secretary-Salazar-Announces-National-Park-Fee-Free-Days-for-2012.cfm>
- Colorado Ski Country USA's 5th Grade Passport Program provides participants with three free days of skiing or snowboarding at each of 21 member resorts. Ski Utah has a similar incentive program. Both offer a smaller package of free days for 6th graders. <http://www.coloradoski.com/passport>
<http://www.skiutah.com/winter/locals/passports/>

Giving Kids and Families a Chance to Volunteer

One way to expose kids and families to the outdoors is to invite them to participate in volunteer efforts cleaning up and maintaining outdoor recreation assets. There are many examples of organizations helping connect kids and families and outdoor volunteer work.

- REI mobilizes volunteers to build trails, clean up beaches and restore habitat. <http://www.rei.com/aboutrei/volunteer.html>
- The Washington Trails Association organizes Volunteer Vacations, week-long work parties that connect hikers with much-needed trail maintenance projects. Trip fees for 2012 are \$195, which provides volunteers with a week of fine cooking and a meaningful project led by skilled crew leaders. <http://www.wta.org/volunteer/vacations>
- National Public Lands Day (NPLD) is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer event for public lands in the United States. In 2012, NPLD will be held on September 29. In 2011, 180,000 volunteers worked at over 2,060 sites in every state. <http://www.publiclandsday.org/>

Connecting Kids through Work Outdoors

For kids who need work and are not able to volunteer, there are options to get paid to do needed conservation work in the outdoors. For example:

- Conservation Corps exist in all Western States and engage young people (typically 16-25 years old) in year-round or summer paid work and training on federal, state and local public lands. Operated as non-profit organizations or – in CA and WA – by state government, Conservation Corps in the West currently employs young people in land stewardship and disaster response activities in partnership with local, state and federal agencies. In addition, Corps provide youth with access to high quality alternative education and job training. There are currently 35 Conservation Corps serving more than 12,000 youth annually in the West. There is also a small federal Youth Conservation Corps operated by the Departments of Agriculture and Interior that hires youth (15-18 year old) for summer employment on federal lands.

Harnessing Young People's Ideas

Web sites, ad campaigns, new technologies, and fee free days can raise awareness and lower barriers, but there is nothing like encouragement when it comes to kids. The Nature Conservancy's 2011 survey found that among youth who regularly spend time in nature, nearly four in five (79%) report having done so with their friends. In addition, more than nine in ten would pay attention to a friend's encouragement to spend more time in nature.

- In 2010, the Outdoor Industry Foundation came to the conclusion that the best way to encourage kids to connect to the outdoors was to let them design projects and programs to get their peers out. The Foundation then gave them seed money to implement their ideas.
- The Foundation launched Outdoor Nation. They convened the Outdoor Nation Youth Summit and Festival and paid the expenses for 500 young leaders representing all 50 states to gather to address the growing disconnect between young people and the outdoors. In 2011, Outdoor Nation hosted five Regional Youth Summits, awarding thousands of dollars for youth-inspired ideas to get their peers outdoors. Plans are to repeat the national and regional summits in 2012 and to fund more of the ideas that come out of the gatherings. The Outdoor Foundation will invest more than \$100,000 in youth-driven projects. <http://www.outdoornation.org/>

Get Out West!

Advisory Group

Lise Aangeenbrug
Executive Director
Great Outdoors Colorado

John Binkley
President
Alaska Cruise Association

Harry Bruell
President & CEO
Southwest Conservation Corps

Jeff Chapman
Member of Board of Directors, Backcountry Horsemen
of Washington and of Washington Trails Association

Mike Collins
Vice President, Public Affairs
REI

Adam Cramer
General Counsel and Policy Architect
Outdoor Alliance

Derrick A. Crandall
President
American Recreation Coalition

Jeri Duran
Montana Office of Tourism
Department of Commerce

Ben Ellis
Director
Alaska State Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Russ Ehnes
Executive Director
National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council

George Harris
President
Northwest Marine Trade Association

Julie Heizer
Deputy Director for Industry Relations
Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, ITA
U.S. Department of Commerce

Frank Hugelmeyer
President & CEO
Outdoor Industry Association

Robin Jennison
Secretary
Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks & Tourism

Aubrey C. King
Executive Director
Western States Tourism Policy Council

Ashley Korenblat
CEO, Western Spirit Cycling
Director, International Mountain Bicycling Association
Public Lands Initiative

Martin LeBlanc
Mission Outdoors Director, Sierra Club
Executive Vice-President, IslandWood School

Rue Mapp
Youth Investment Program Officer
Stewardship Council

Lori McCullough
Executive Director
Tread Lightly!, Inc.

Nancy Merrill
Director
Idaho Parks and Recreation

Eleanor Morris
Policy Associate
The Nature Conservancy

Sandy Pantlick
Director
Oklahoma Travel Promotion

Nathan Rafferty
President and CEO
Ski Utah

Sherry L. Rupert
Board Member and Treasurer
American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association
(AIANTA)

Mark Rupp
Director
Washington State – WDC Office

Andy Treharne
Western States Manager
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Will Shafroth
Councilor to the Secretary
America's Great Outdoors
Department of the Interior

Amanda Smith
Governor's Energy Policy Advisor &
Executive Director, Utah Department
of Environmental Quality

Diane Shober
Director
Wyoming Office of Tourism

Kathy Van Kleeck
Senior VP, Government Relations
Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC)
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA)
Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association (ROHVA)

Claudia Vecchio
Director
Nevada Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs

Esther Worker
Education Account Manager
Esri



**WESTERN
GOVERNORS'
ASSOCIATION**

1600 Broadway • Suite 1700
Denver, Colorado 80202
(303) 623-9378
www.westgov.org