

MN Outdoor Recreation Task Force January Meeting Notes

Date: January 13th, 2021

Location: Webex

Attendance

Task Force Members:

JR Burke, Megan Christianson, Matt Gruhn, Aaron Hautala, Joe Henry, Hansi Johnson, Greg Lais, Mark Norquist, Perry May, Sarah Milligan-Toffler, Molly Sajady, Asha Shoffner, Steve Voltz

Agency Staff:

Randolph Briley (DNR), John Edman (Explore Minnesota), Gratia Joice (DNR), Leann Kispert (Explore Minnesota), Andrew Korsberg (DNR), Laura Preus (DNR), Erika Rivers (DNR)

Meeting Notes

Objectives for this meeting were to:

- Go over draft recommendations
- Discuss ideas for implementation
- Understand next steps

Draft Recommendations

The draft recommendations were read aloud and task force members offered comments to improve the document. Below are the comments that were discussed within each recommendation category.

Deliver Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity

- Not only agencies like DNR and Explore Minnesota, but non-profits, stakeholders, educators and private industry have a role to play in bringing these recommendations to life.
- In order to implement these recommendations, it will take a cultural shift in thinking. It will take time to be successful in this category.
- This category accurately captures task force conversations and is important to begin from the outset in order to make progress.
- These recommendations can be a focal point for an office of outdoor recreation and an office can own these recommendations and make them happen.
- The language of “deliver” equity, diversity and inclusivity is maybe not the correct wording to get at the purpose of the recommendations; it is suggested to change it from “deliver” to “advance” or “lead with.”

- Diversity, equity and inclusivity intersect with the other recommendation categories and should be a lens through which we view and execute the entire suite of recommendations.
- Conservation and stewardship should also be a lens through which we view and execute the recommendations.

Unite Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation Community

- Engaging and partnering with Tribal Nations should be included in the recommendations.

Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness

- The recommendations address conservation and stewardship, but overall the recommendations related to this could be stronger. The recommendations encourage increased participation and getting more people outside, but should also include strong messaging of stewardship since increased use puts additional stress on natural resources.

Create and Fund Minnesota's Office of Outdoor Recreation

- Cultural connections to the outdoors should be acknowledged as part of the vision for outdoor recreation in Minnesota.
- The recommendation for an office seems like the central recommendation with the other categories of recommendations being the core pillars that fall under this recommendation category.

Ideas for Implementation

The recommendations synthesis team, a subset of task force members, walked through the draft implementation plan they developed. The document is an action plan for how to get the Task Force's recommendations off the ground in a way they feel like will be most successful. Task Force members were able to provide feedback on the draft implementation plan. The following bullet points are a summary of the discussion:

- We need to consider how the state is going to implement the recommendations when there is a hiring freeze and \$2 billion shortfall; it is important to figure out creative ways that we (state agencies, non-profits, private entities, etc.) can be involved in the implementation process together to move this work forward.
- The office should be the connective tissue for organizations that, hand-in-hand, can move this work forward together; the office can serve as a turbo button to make it happen.
- We need to be thinking about creative funding mechanisms to move this work forward, given the current budget situation. For example, perhaps some private partnerships could help fund this and get it off the ground; other states, like Oregon and New Mexico, have had models for offices that try to tap some private dollars.
- Perhaps some of the health systems would be willing to chip in on something like an office since there are clear connections between outdoor recreation and health/well-being.
- There may also be an opportunity to partner with the Education Department, as they recognize the positive impacts of spending time in nature.
- It is worth considering a phased approach to implementation (start small and get bigger) to garner the most buy-in from the Minnesota Legislature, but it is important to be careful not to lose the big picture of what we are hoping to accomplish down the line.
- Some members expressed concern of creating another level of bureaucracy if a whole new entity is created that is independent of DNR or Explore Minnesota—there would be potential for lots of redundancy.
- The task force needs to weigh a phased, step by step approach versus an approach that “goes for the home run.”

- Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion are huge aspects of the overall recommendations and what an office of outdoor recreation would work on. We have identified this as a significant need in Minnesota and that more resources need to be put towards welcoming everyone outdoors.
- More than one person is likely needed to successfully do the work outlined in the recommendations.

Next Steps

It was shared that there was a slight delay in our public engagement process, but we are hoping to launch that process soon. As soon as more information is available, it will be shared with the Task Force and the public.

Public Questions and Comments

- When will the comment period be on the recommendations document?
- Don't forget about local and federal providers and land managers as you consider creating a different advisory group in the future.
- National Park Service staff would like to be involved as a thinking partner to brainstorm ideas for implementation.

Next Meeting

Friday, February 19th, 2021 via Webex