

Meeting Notes: Outdoor Recreation Task Force Meeting 1

Date: 04/28/2020

Location: Webex

Attendance

Task Force Members:

Ray Aponte, Mary Bauer, JR Burke, Elliot Christensen, Megan Christianson, Katy Friesz, Matt Gruhn, Aaron Hautala, Breanna Hegg, Joe Henry, Hansi Johnson, Greg Lais, Perry May, Sarah Milligan-Toffler, Mark Norquist, Stephen Regenold, Molly Sajady, Asha Shoffner, Steven Voltz

Agency Staff:

Sarah Strommen (DNR), John Edman (Explore Minnesota), Randolph Briley (DNR), Gratia Joice (DNR), Leann Kispert (Explore Minnesota), Andrew Korsberg (DNR), Shannon Lotthammer (DNR), Madison McGovern (CCMI/DNR), Laura Preus (DNR), Erika Rivers (DNR)

Goals

The primary goals of this first meeting were to allow task force members and facilitating staff at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Explore Minnesota to get to know each other, as well as share background information and expectations surrounding this process.

Welcome

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Sarah Strommen and Director of Explore Minnesota John Edman introduced themselves and welcomed members to the task force.

Task Force Member Introductions

Task force members spent time introducing themselves, including information on their background and their reasons for wanting to be part of the Outdoor Recreation Task Force.

- Reinaldo Aponte, adventures director, The Loppet Foundation.

- Mary Bauer, registered nurse, VA Medical Center, representative of the Minnesota Canoe Association.
- Steven JR Burke, director of government affairs, Polaris.
- Elliot Christensen, tobacco prevention coordinator, Lower Sioux Indian Community.
- Megan Christianson, executive director, Visit Grand Rapids.
- Katy Friesz, corporate responsibility, Winnebago Industries.
- Matt Gruhn, president, Marine Retailers Association of the Americas.
- Aaron Hautala, Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Crew.
- Breanne Hegg, vice president, programs for Girl Scouts River Valleys.
- Joe Henry, executive director, Lake of the Woods Tourism.
- Hansi Johnson, director, Recreational Lands for Minnesota Land Trust.
- Greg Lais, founder, director, strategic initiatives, Wilderness Inquiry.
- Perry May, director at large, All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota.
- Sarah Milligan-Toffler, executive director, Children and Nature Network.
- Mark Norquist, founder, Modern Carnivore.
- Stephen Regenold, founder and publisher, GearJunkie.com.
- Mollika Sajady, DO, MPH, University of Minnesota Health.
- Naomi Sam, coordinator and director, Cultural Resources for the Mille Lacs Band DNR. (absent)
- Asha Shoffner, founder, Fiwygin Outdoors.
- Steven Voltz, store manager, REI Roseville.

Agency staff involved with the task force were briefly introduced.

Meeting Notes

Background

Sarah and John provided a background as to why the task force was convened and what the agencies want to achieve through the task force.

- Minnesota is well positioned to capitalize on its strengths and chart the course for the future of outdoor recreation.
- Work done in other states should be acknowledged, but maintain a Minnesota perspective.
- For the member selection process, the project team looked at a variety of interests that directly and indirectly affect outdoor recreation, including equity, health, and activities.
- A major component of the task force is public engagement.
 - While a hope is to give everyone a seat at the table, it's not possible to hear all voices with only 20 members.
 - Task force members are expected to facilitate additional engagement within their networks to bring outside perspectives to the meetings.
- The two main purposes of the task force are to bring measured growth and enhance experiences in outdoor recreation and to organize and implement collaborative work.
- The task force should provide actionable recommendations to move forward and implement.

- Specific values of the task force include quality of life, equitable access, environmental stewardship, and economic development.
- The task force should avoid promoting specific outdoor recreation activities or perspectives and contentious policy initiatives that promote one constituency over another.
- The task force should promote Minnesota and its natural resources and recreation industry.
 - These areas fuel a \$16 billion industry and 175,000 jobs.
- With the current pandemic, leisure and hospitality industries are experiencing declines, but some outdoor opportunities are available—most communities have access to experiences within a few miles of their homes.
- Minnesota’s natural resources are the top reason for outside visitation and tourism.
- The idea to create an office of outdoor recreation specifically within Explore Minnesota was proposed.
 - In researching other states processes where such offices have already been created, there were no solutions to fit Minnesota.
 - To further the process into reality, we need to understand opportunities, needs, and what is already being done currently.

Shared Expectations

Task force members were contacted prior to the meeting to discuss their expectations. These were summarized and distributed to members for review. During this time, members were given the opportunity to share what stood out to them, what ideas they wanted to further discuss, and share any other ideas.

Members emphasized:

- Collaboration
- Inclusion
- Public engagement
- Accentuating the variety of Minnesota’s landscapes
- Long-term sustainability
- Environmental stewardship
- Validation of a wider range of outdoor activities
- Public health
- Accessibility
- Building relationships with communities
- Understanding barriers
- Communication

Concerns

Members were given the opportunity to share any concerns.

- Timeline
 - Hoping for actionable recommendations by December 2020 to keep in line with the legislative session
- Guardrails

- Recommendations should be “actionable.”
- No recommendations promoting any one outdoor recreation industry or organization over others.
- No contentious policy initiatives that pit one outdoor recreation/natural resource constituency against another.

Q&A

- How can outdoor recreation and tourism offer communities opportunities for place based jobs?
 - Unable to answer at this time.
- Will handouts be made available to the public?
 - There will be information posted on the Outdoor Recreation Task Force webpage throughout the process. The agenda, charter, and meeting minutes from April 28 will be posted.
- Will public comments be kept on record?
 - Yes; the meeting is recorded and live captioning is in place.

Charter

The charter was presented to members. Notable items include:

- Specific activities of the task force are laid out in charter
- Important to engage others in communities and in the public throughout process
- Members should send any feedback to Randolph Briley or Gratia Joice.

Homework

Task force members were given a homework assignment to complete in advance of the next meeting.

- Reflect on top areas of interest
- Brainstorm information needed to move forward
- Work with others in network to explore interests and opportunities

Next Meeting

Date: 05/18/2020

Time: 1-4pm

Location: Webex