

MN Outdoor Recreation Task Force October Meeting Notes

Date: 10/21/2020

Location: Webex

Attendance

Task Force Members:

Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, JR Burke, Elliot Christensen, Megan Christianson, Katy Friesz, 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:

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), Sarah Strommen (DNR Commissioner)

Meeting Notes

During this meeting, the small group that worked to synthesize workgroup recommendations shared out a draft of collated recommendations.

Public Engagement Overview

- Working with DNR's Office of Outreach and Communication to develop a communications plan
- Planning on using a handful of different tools to get feedback:
 - Virtual meetings
 - Online info sharing and surveys
 - Utilizing task Force member networks
- Aiming to begin public engagement period in mid-November

Review of Timeline

- Now through end of October: tweak recommendations as needed
- November: public engagement
- Early to mid December: finalize recommendations
- Mid to late December: submit final recommendations to DNR and Explore Minnesota

Draft Recommendations from Synthesis Team

The synthesis group organized draft recommendations shared out by workgroups during the September meeting into four common themes— 1) deliver equity, diversity, and inclusivity; 2) unite Minnesota’s outdoor recreation community; 3) unify communication that seeks to position, promote, and create public awareness around Minnesota’s outdoors; and 4) create and fund a Minnesota office of outdoor recreation.

1. *Deliver equity, diversity, and inclusivity*

- Access Workgroup
 - Co-create plans, to remove barriers and improve cultural relevance for BIPOC, LGBTQ+, communities experiencing low-income, and communities with disabilities.
 - Remove the barrier of gear and programming by making it more affordable, removing fees, and providing gear to eliminate barriers to participation.
 - Low cost transportation options for local, regional, and state parks.
 - Private sector investing in and building market share with BIPOC, Differently able, and LGBTQ+ and within the hiring in the sector.
 - Identify and develop responses to current barriers accessing outdoor activity including cost, lack of culturally and gender-relevant outdoor equipment and apparel can be a barrier (e.g. heated gloves sized for men or unisex vs. women; women’s outdoor apparel sized smaller or not accounting for different body shapes; limited availability of women’s bicycle seats; etc.)
 - Outdoor agencies and businesses promoting and facilitating a culture of "welcoming everyone outdoors" by practicing inclusivity and promoting users being inclusive with one another.
- Economic Development Workgroup
 - Ensure that BIPOC, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and women are equally as valued as equal tenants of Minnesota's outdoor brand.
 - As the population of BIPOC communities are 74% of growth in the state of Minnesota, tap in to these as new and growing markets for outdoor activities.
 - Integrating these under-representing populations as customers, employees, vendors, and owners of outdoor recreation agencies, groups, and businesses.
- Coordination Workgroup
 - Bring together outdoor recreation Minnesota stakeholders including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and under-represented genders around a shared plan to build community, drive relationships, and facilitate an inclusive understanding of outdoor
- Promotion & Public Awareness Workgroup

- Presenting a united and integrated marketing strategy to coordinate across agencies and business that promote the value of growing and historically under-represented populations.
- Develop specific approaches for engaging BIPOC, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and women in campaigns.
- Use a consistent practice of identifying new and growing markets to engage in the state.
- Stewardship & Conservation Workgroup
 - Include and educate all Minnesotans who do or may recreate in the outdoors about their role and impact on land, water, and native species.
 - Include all communities and create content that is culturally responsive and relevant.
 - Be a national leader at including historically under-represented groups as thought partners and leaders in advancing and protecting Minnesota's natural resources.
- Member reactions
 - Would like to add component to bring together people from BIPOC, LGBTQ, and white communities to build more cross-cultural relationships and connections, mainly to change perceptions through connections and experience – could move into coordination or promotion and public awareness
 - Creating outreach to the white community on cultural awareness and diversity training – could move into coordination or promotion and public awareness
 - Should it be explicit that all who use Minnesota’s resources and not only residents?
 - Ideally both groups would be included, but stewardship and conservation workgroup prioritized residents
 - Could be signage or creative ways to educate all who use Minnesota’s resources
 - Adopt consistent language with elements and groups in recommendations
 - Justice piece of equity, diversity, and inclusion
 - Synthesis group was hesitant to include justice with explicitly backing it up and further discussing
 - Task force members interested in pursuing justice as a topic more in depth will email Greg Lais
 - Equity – systematic equality over time and by specific experience measured in groups
 - Justice – planning for when crimes or harassment or assault is committed in a jurisdiction

2. *Unite Minnesota’s outdoor recreation community*

- Access Workgroup
 - Encourage private sector to recognize the market potential of underrepresented audiences (BIPOC, people with disabilities, LGBTQ communities) and approach with an asset-based lens.
 - Increase diversity, equity, and inclusion regarding hiring and retention practices in both private and public outdoor recreation sectors.
- Economic Development Workgroup

- Bring together the outdoor recreation stakeholders and resources to collaborate on behalf of our shared parks, forests, trails, transportation corridors, and destinations.
- Establish communication partners to distribute Minnesota’s positioning statement/brand to the unique/niche/target audiences outside of Minnesota.
- Do more with less through communication partnership creation. Local, Regional, State, National, International tactics
 - 1. Build/strengthen/grow public-private partnerships;
 - 2. Ensure all of Minnesota’s varied geographies and landscapes are positioned as equal tenants within Minnesota’s brand;
 - 3. Share resources, wisdom, best practices — merge silos of content;
 - 4. Seek to see the unseen, hear the unheard, always question status quo.
- Promotion & Public Awareness Workgroup
 - Unite MN's fractured outdoor community & industry by promoting shared dialogue on challenges and opportunities and identifying new ways to promote a bigger outdoor experience together in MN.
 - Develop cohesive messaging + form a cohesive voice. Establish new narratives for MN outdoors.
 - Develop outreach to new groups.
- Coordination Workgroup
 - Bring together outdoor recreation stakeholders throughout Minnesota around a shared plan to build community, drive relationships, and facilitate a unified understanding of outdoor recreation.
 - Convene stakeholders annually. Include Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other communities of color, LGBTQI, people with disabilities, and people with low economic status.
 - Share and make clear the “Plan” the State of Minnesota is currently implementing.
 - When more of Minnesota knows the plan, be open to adjusting the plan based on the feedback of a greater response from Minnesota.
 - Measure and share benefits of coordinating at annual event.
- Stewardship & Conservation Workgroup
 - Identify common conservation priorities for different outdoor recreation communities (e.g. water quality as it relates to fishing, boating, kayaking, etc.) and get the groups to work more together.
 - Aquatic Invasive Species as an example are something all users of Minnesota’s waters need to be educated on and can all help to defeat, through coordination.
 - Create partnerships with National Organizations to promote the best practices of responsible recreation.
 - Promote Public Private Partnerships between communities, conservation and stewardship groups as well as outdoor user groups to maintain recreational infrastructure and preserve Minnesota’s natural spaces.
- Member reactions
 - How would some of these recommendations be funded?

- Team did not really consider cost, but ideally if an office were created, it would be done through a channel that will be able to fund and prioritize recommendations
 - A lot that can and cannot be done in the current economy

3. *Unify communication (position, promotion, & public awareness)*

- Access Workgroup
 - Co-create plans, remove barriers and improve cultural relevance with those who have been disproportionately excluded from outdoor recreational experiences, such as individuals with disabilities; Black, Indigenous and People of Color; individuals with lower financial resources or education, and LGBTQ communities.
- Economic Development Workgroup
 - Lean out, simplify, make effective the system of both information creation and information sharing that is intended for the consumption of Minnesota residents.
 - Create a pathway to get government communication out of government circles, make this communication mainstream content any Minnesota resident can find without having to google it.
 - Create powerful metrics of every dollar spent on the outdoors equals X for both Minnesota residents (primary goal) and Minnesota businesses (secondary goal).
 - Create a path where economic development within Minnesota's outdoors has the ability to economic impact our residents as well as our businesses.
 - Make better known the plan (SCORP) Minnesota outdoors is being created from, position and reference the plan, as decisions are being made, ongoing.
 - Refresh communication tools (digital) to speak the language of the 21st century mobile customer. (An app for Minnesota's outdoors, all your maps, all your regulations, all your permits ((purchasable through the app))).
- Promotion & Public Awareness Workgroup
 - Unite MN's fractured outdoor community & industry by promoting shared dialogue on challenges and opportunities and identifying new ways to promote a bigger outdoor experience together in MN.
 - Develop cohesive messaging + form a cohesive voice.
 - Establish new narratives for MN outdoors.
 - Develop outreach to new groups.
 - New mediums: Media appropriate to reach target audiences. Apps & mobile-first strategies for maps, brochures, and collateral.
- Coordination Workgroup
 - Promote and facilitate a culture of "Welcoming Everyone Outdoors".
 - Identify and state the values of how we will all treat each other, when we are outside together Minnesota has world-class outdoor resources and should build on these assets, to create a welcoming culture that ensures the safety of everyone, and encourages inclusivity, togetherness, and stewardship.
 - Minnesota will be a destination because of our inclusive outdoor culture, not just to experience the beauty of our outdoor resources.

- Recognize the health and wellness benefits and align with Minnesota Department of Health and health care providers.
- Create guidelines, training plans, and promotions around Minnesota’s culture of “Welcoming Everyone Outdoors.” Inform Minnesota residents about the outdoor opportunities available to them.
- Stewardship & Conservation Workgroup
 - Educate all people who recreate in the outdoors of Minnesota about effective land and water stewardship and how this needs investment and attention to be effective.
 - Promote outreach efforts to open Minnesota’s outdoors to people of all walks of life, thus creating more people to help steward those resources.
 - Create a statewide PR Campaign that would help communicate to Minnesotans the importance of going outdoors, but also the fragility of the resources we have as a state and involve them in protecting those resources.

4. *Create and fund Minnesota’s office of outdoor recreation*

- Access Workgroup
 - Create bi-partisan, independent, representative, and inclusive coordinating entity to facilitate cross-sector collaboration to advance outdoor recreation and equity in Minnesota.
 - Invest in outdoor infrastructure, such as increasing boat ramps, campground modernization and wifi connectivity, and outdoor accessibility.
- Economic Development Workgroup
 - An office of OR exists that can coordinate, create, design, implement, and deliver upon these goals:
 1. Fund and staff this office appropriately prioritizing Minnesota residents first;
 2. Build real relationships/unity amongst the varied and different outdoor recreation groups and industry within Minnesota;
 3. Seek to understand and deploy economic development tools and investments where the outcome/end product has the ability to first build the economy of all of Minnesota’s residents first, and business and industry second.
- Promotion & Public Awareness Workgroup
 - Increased funding to properly staff or achieve goals.
 - Eliminate overlap and inefficiencies within state agencies.
 - Work for parity of outdoors (compared to other interests) by noting and using and building on the significance of Minnesota's outdoor recreation economic contributions and ensuring outdoor rec's voice is on equal level of other industries.
- Coordination Workgroup
 - This Office should continue to ask what Minnesota residents feel they are missing in going outside and then, evolve, adapt, grow opportunities to do so.
 - The OREC Office should promote Minnesota’s outdoor benefits to broader world.
 - The OREC office should focus on building real relationships/ unity amongst the varied and different outdoor recreation groups within Minnesota.
 - Create and maintain a database of outdoor recreation stakeholders.

- Track outdoor recreation trends and use patterns.
- Stewardship & Conservation Workgroup
 - Create an entity that can help Minnesota Achieve the Stewardship and Conservation Recommendations (as noted to the left within this spreadsheet).
 - Secure new funding sources for conservation in the future.
 - Utilize this new Entity to recommend a model of funding that replaces or augments the current funding model which relies mainly on license sales.
 - Coordinate funds to help maintain Minnesota's high-quality recreation infrastructure (Trails, campgrounds etc.) as well as the sense of place that infrastructure exists in.
 - Prioritize and address the States Backlog of deferred recreational infrastructure needs.
- Member reactions
 - Does having a separate recommendation for an office cause a structural issue in recommendations?
 - An office would be able to strategically guide the other recommendations, as well as the other points helping to flesh out the role of the office
 - Would license sales be the right source of funding?
 - Recommendation was more to explore that method of funding or the model of funding

Grand Vision for Minnesota

Guide all of Minnesota residents how and why to access Minnesota's outdoors within our newfound culture of outdoors. Create Minnesota's obstacle-free pathway to mentally and physically benefit from the Minnesota outdoor experience. Through collaboration between residents, users, businesses, visitors, and State, make boldly known our "Only in Minnesota" difference fueling increased lifestyle opportunity for all residents, economic development for business, and stewardship for the outdoor resources.

Discussion with Agencies

DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen and Explore Minnesota Director John Edman joined the task force meeting to have a discussion based on the recommendations and share thoughts for moving forward.

- Recommendations have the interest of Minnesota's outdoors and citizens in mind and appeal to what we should achieve as a state
- When the idea for an office of outdoor recreation was introduced a couple of years ago, it was initially placed in Explore Minnesota and support by the Director and staff
 - Fiscal challenges – put together a fiscal note and the legislature was skeptical of the cost
- How will these recommendations come to fruition?
 - State budget deficit poses a challenge
- 25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan
 - Opposite of robust implementation of non-capital investments outlined in the plan
 - Less than 5% spent
 - Funding and plan should have been supplemental to ideas similar to recommendations

- Resources available that are not being used as intended
- Explore areas of compatible work within Agencies
 - Budget situation is going to be tough both for general fund and Legacy funds, which are created through sales tax
 - Identify places where work can be done with existing resources, structures, and voices
 - If the focus on an office is less about structure and staffing, and more about function and work to be done, DNR and Explore Minnesota working in collaboration with the task force can apply creative thinking to further goals
 - Need to be explicit about that work will look like to ensure the public agencies are being good stewards of the available resources
- Opportunity for a public/private partnership advisory group with authority to hold Agencies accountable for activities and advise on recommendations
- Outdoor economy is thriving right now
 - Seize on the opportunities
 - Use has also probably created a strain on infrastructure, so need to invest before it could dilapidate
- Office could more of connector and collaborator than a solo effort
 - Need a timeline, process, and budget, but even one person could move the effort forward
- Task force members and agency staff will take time to individually brainstorm ways to get work done and determine priorities in the body of work

Public Comments

How will you create awareness of public engagement opportunities? What does the communication plan reference include?

Anticipating promotion of opportunities using social media channels along with some additional media placement. Those signed up for GovDelivery will be notified as well. If anyone has specific ideas to further awareness, DNR staff would love to hear from them.

Next Steps

An additional meeting is needed before we are ready for public engagement.

Next Meeting

The date for the next official task force meeting has not been set.