

MN Outdoor Recreation Task Force Meeting 3 & 4 Notes

Date: 07/20/2020 & 07/21/2020

Location: Webex

Attendance

Task Force Members:

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

Agency Staff:

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

Meeting Notes

SWOT/C Presentations

During this two-day meeting, task force members shared analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats/challenges completed during June workgroup meetings.

Access Workgroup

- Imperative: to understand and remove barriers that prevent all people—especially those disproportionately excluded, including low-income, underrepresented and BIPOC communities—from accessing Minnesota’s outdoors.
- Relevant data shared:
 - Americans are spending more time indoors
 - 90% of time is spent in enclosed spaces
 - Children and youth struggle with increasing mental health and obesity concerns.
 - Concerns about public safety may deter underrepresented communities from accessing nearby parks and green spaces.
 - Minnesota is home to some of the nation’s most egregious gaps in educational opportunity, income equality, homeownership and health, based on race.

- Minnesota’s population is aging and diversifying. By 2030 one fifth of our state’s population will be 65+ and more than 50% of our state’s population will be people of color.
- The most direct route to caring for the environment as an adult is participating in “wild nature activities” before the age of 11.
- Nature can improve academic outcomes, social emotional skills, health and creativity.
- Lack of understanding in central MN or out state
 - Be open and seek to learn about access issues
- Be intentional in hiring diverse staff at all levels in outdoor companies and institutions
- Right-sizing fees
- Innovation during COVID
 - Safe travel, social distancing, access to bathrooms and other amenities
- Public-private partnerships to better understand outdoor consumers
- Outdoor access through park board system in metro area
- Individual user racism
 - Verbal and physical threats toward BIPOC in nature spaces
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- Sustaining interest and focus on equity and access – culture of accessibility

Coordination Workgroup

- Goal statement: to work together to create a strong, sustainable outdoor recreation community that delivers inclusivity, enhances diversity, builds economy, and reduces conflicts.
- Stakeholder map to lay out constituencies and groups to coordinate
- Explore current policies that support or don’t support good coordination
- Identify where there are gaps in people being served
- Creation of an entity to coordinate and elevate voices of stakeholders
- Incorporating outdoor recreation into coordinated health systems
- Leaving out voices of under-represented groups
 - May not be listening to, valuing, or validating experiences
- State Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
 - 5 year management plan to help National Park Service understand comprehensive management of outdoor recreation
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund
 - Investment in outdoor rec opportunities across the nation
 - Funds within MN divided equally between state and local outdoor recreation systems
 - SCORP necessary to receive funds
 - MN is better positioned for coordination through SCORP and Legacy Plan
 - Currently takes 4 pillars from 25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan
 - Connecting people to the outdoors
 - Taking care of what we have
 - Acquisition and new development

- Coordinating with partners
 - Legacy advocates may largely be a part of the system already, but recognize need to broaden inclusivity
 - Legacy Advisory Committee – coordination body of Legacy
- How to engage more meaningfully and provide resources and opportunities that are needed to get more people outdoors

Economic Development Workgroup

- Theme: unite and invest in Minnesota's resources to drive a world-class outdoor economy, that facilitates greater access, promotion, awareness, and stewardship and conservation.
- What is the definition of economic development?
 - Bringing more financial resources to the state through outdoor recreation?
 - Creating more opportunities for people that live in MN?
 - Lack of consistency among experts in the space
 - Helps to understand the customer
 - From there, enhance the customer experience by advancing investments, new themes,
- Traditional populations participating in activities declining, so target population shift in branding and marketing
 - New resources from increased inclusion
- Treating BIPOC synonymously with low income
- Displacing communities – will they be able to participate in and benefit from changes
- Don't overlook indigenous communities
 - Communities have stories and history in places that may be used for outdoor recreation that should be shared

Promotion and Public Awareness Workgroup

- Reaching younger audience
- Focus on Minnesota residents who could then become bigger advocates
- Unify message and cross-promote recreational opportunities
- Promote safety in traveling to and participating in activities
- Partnerships with schools
- Encourage state government and other stakeholders to leverage private industry and non-profits to spread message
- Disparate channels of communication
- Lack of awareness surrounding culturally specific organizations and clubs
- Leveraging unified voice to influence policymakers to think differently, reach new and different customers, and think outside of their own district
- Wording for children's lack of interest in outdoors
 - Adults should be helping facilitate a natural curiosity
- State to state comparisons on promotion
 - Promoting what's available

- Lakes in MN
- Budgets
- Colorado's Generation Wild promotion
- MN lacks the collective voice of industry that promote public awareness in states like Oregon, Utah, and Colorado
- Television and billboard campaigns (Michigan, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming)
 - MN has chosen niches (e.g., mountain biking) and created a digital campaign to target interested users
- More MN resident focus now with pandemic
- Private businesses also promote culture and inclusivity – Gun Flint Trail restaurant

Stewardship and Conservation Workgroup

- Take a unified approach among recreationists to use spaces responsibly and also leave opportunity for future enjoyment
- Cross sector collaboration important to further conversations
- Environmental justice issues
 - Rural and urban communities affected
 - Pervasive and life-altering pollution impacts on human health and recreational opportunities
 - Engage with and give affected people a seat at the table
- View industry success in national effort to actively pursue conservation and stewardship—how can it be replicated and brought to more industries
- Partnerships working together to keep resources in check
 - Lake of the Woods “Keep it Clean” committee to promote ways of decreasing waste pollution by anglers
 - Connect non-profits already doing conservation work with private sector
- Check for work happening in communities
 - May be asking for opportunities to be involved at a higher level
 - Tap into youth movements
 - Individual user groups acting as stewards for spaces they often use
 - Find a way to create a statewide culture of stewardship
 - User group culture also encompasses interpersonal interactions
- Unify the message of stewardship across the state

Discussion

- Consistent themes present across workgroups
 - Bring BIPOC voices and experiences to the table
- Central entity to pull pieces together and coordinate
- Educate Minnesotans about opportunities available
- Use this work to continue conversations and break down barriers and cultural systemic issues
- Opportunities identified by workgroups could be achieved through better communication, creation of a coordinating body, or improving inclusiveness

- Utilize different channels of communication to reach more potential users
 - If a group is not engaging as is with traditional methods, it may be that they aren't receiving the information
 - Should not decrease the value of the effort
 - Harder to receive funding for efforts like this—often 100% volunteer time

Next Steps

- Consolidation and cross-referencing in SWOTs
- Workgroups fine tune SWOTs
 - Reduce threats
 - Elevate strengths/opportunities
 - Remove weaknesses
- 2 day meeting in August
 - Day 1: workgroups report out on potential recommendations
 - Day 2: guest speakers or panel discussion on other states' efforts
- Task force members and workgroups should reach out to EMT or DNR for any additional resources or institutional knowledge needed to move forward

Public Comments, Q&A

- Will SWOT slides and other handouts be made available to the public?
 - Yes, they will be posted on the public website.

Next Meeting

The next official task force meeting is a two-day meeting scheduled for August 26th and 27th.