# Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Task Force Public Engagement Feedback Summary

## Feedback from 209 People

The draft recommendations developed by the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Task Force were out for public review through the Minnesota DNR’s engagement website from January 25th through February 15th. In total, **209 people** submitted input through the online form. Below is a summary from this public engagement effort.

## Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Recommendations

### Summary of Comments from the 3 Follow Up Questions (See Appendix for Questions)

The above graph represents the respondents’ general feeling about this recommendation. The comments below represent multiple responses from each person. Each person was able to submit up to 3 comments.

| **Category of Comment** | **Total Number of Comments from 3 Questions** |
| --- | --- |
| Supportive | 94 |
| Opposing | 44 |
| Other/NA/Questions | 59 |
| General Comments or Suggestions | 235 |
| **Total** | **432 Total Comments from up to 209 People** |

#### Summary of General Comments or Suggestions

* Access – Expand outdoor recreation opportunities for all people
* Barriers
  + Address socio-economic barriers to the outdoors, including harassment in the outdoors
  + Increase programming, education, and language offerings
* Collaboration
* Details – Add more specifics on how to accomplish vision
* Education
  + Focus on youth; including grants to organizations or schools
  + Outdoor etiquette
* Funding – Provide more funding for outdoor recreation
* Hiring – Hiring practices in the public and private outdoor sector
  + Show all types of people career opportunities in the outdoor industry
  + Welcoming and integrating fair representation in hiring practices
  + Concerns about hiring people because of their identity instead of their qualifications
* Inclusivity – Include everyone
  + Make sure to include urban youth in the outdoors
  + Make sure to include everyone, including seniors, youth, veterans, disability community, and geographic diversity
* Marketing
* No barriers – A number of comments were from people who did not think there were barriers to the outdoors.
* Other
  + Broaden definition of outdoor recreation
  + Increase public land
  + Infrastructure
  + Health and Well-being

## Unite Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Community Recommendations

### Summary of Comments from the 3 Follow Up Questions (See Appendix for Questions)

The above graph represents the respondents’ general feeling about this recommendation. The comments below represent multiple responses from each person. Each person was able to submit up to 3 comments.

| **Category of Comment** | **Total Number of Comments from 3 Questions** |
| --- | --- |
| Supportive | 69 |
| Opposing | 26 |
| Other/NA/Questions | 55 |
| General Comments or Suggestions | 178 |
| **Total** | **328 Total Comments from up to 209 People** |

#### Summary of General Comments or Suggestions

* Implementation – Suggestions for how the task force, or a potential office, should go about its work
  + In-person events and programs are important for building connections
  + Use social media, forums, virtual events, and coordinated communications, including new techniques that have been adopted during the pandemic, to reach people
  + Recognize the role of local/informal networks and organizations to convene groups around the state
  + Funding and resources are needed to support this body of work
  + Several comments about governance of an office of outdoor recreation and next steps that are needed
* Engage Stakeholders – Suggestions for who should or should not be engaged in this work
  + People suggested that we engage with schools, organizations serving youth, local activity clubs, and other specific stakeholder groups
  + Expand who you think of as outdoor recreation stakeholders
* Add Specifics – The recommendations are at such a high level; more detail is needed
  + Add strategies and actions for how this work will be completed
  + Add defined outcomes, results, or goals to track success
  + Specify the roles for different organizations and stakeholders in executing this body of work
* Power – Consider that groups come to the table with unequal power
  + Including some stakeholders (e.g. industry groups, certain recreational groups, or agencies) may compromise important values of others
  + The structure of the task force and an outdoor recreation office may perpetuate structures that marginalize some communities
* Accept Conflicts – There are inherent conflicts between recreation groups
  + Recognize that different user groups have legitimate conflicts in how they use the outdoors
  + It is naïve to aim for uniting the outdoor recreation community; instead begin by convening groups, listening, and celebrating shared values
* Messaging – Emphasize different topics in education, promotion, communication, and engagement efforts

## Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness Recommendations

### Summary of Comments from the 3 Follow Up Questions (See Appendix for Questions)

The above graph represents the respondents’ general feeling about this recommendation. The comments below represent multiple responses from each person. Each person was able to submit up to 3 comments.

| **Category of Comment** | **Total Number of Comments from 3 Questions** |
| --- | --- |
| Supportive | 37 |
| Opposing | 29 |
| Other/NA/Questions | 57 |
| General Comments or Suggestions | 166 |
| **Total** | **289 Total Comments from up to 209 People** |

#### Summary of General Comments or Suggestions

* Education – Outreach and education will be needed
  + Educate visitors on good outdoor etiquette and stewardship
  + Educate communities on local outdoor recreation opportunities
  + Educate visitors on passive and active recreation
  + Focus on youth; incorporate outdoor experiences into academic curriculum
  + Educate all on current events related to the environment and what they can do to help; i.e. pollution, climate change, etc.
* Inclusion – Make sure to include everyone and not give a group(s) priority over others
  + Include under-represented communities; i.e. native and immigration communities, women, families of poverty, etc.
  + All user groups; i.e. equestrians, hunting & fishing, hiking, birding, cycling, etc.
  + Include local businesses and organizations
* Marketing – Get the word out to more people
  + Social media
  + More methods to disseminate information to those with disabilities; i.e. braille, sign language interpreters, audio recordings, etc.
  + Diversify employment and marketing materials; include BIPOC in advertisement/promotions
  + Tailor advertisements for parks based on each park’s recreational opportunities
  + Increase informational boards throughout park system rather than solely at trailheads
  + Unify communication with stakeholders to prevent misinterpretation
  + Advertise MN parks through the eyes of Minnesotans; more platforms for visitors to share their experiences
  + Advertise the importance and correlation between environmental health and mental/physical health
  + Information provided in more languages
* Preservation – Maintain the integrity of the environment
  + Do not over develop the parks to the point where the wilderness is removed
  + Do not promote more visitors unless parks can handle higher traffic
* Collaborate – Partnership with user groups to achieve goals
  + Work with large corporations to spread awareness and increase funding
  + Collaborate with communities on communication and engagement methods as a means for promotion; partner with organizations of faith, youth, elderly, etc.
* Events – Host more events and opportunities
  + More volunteer opportunities such as invasive species removal or park clean up
  + Celebrate other ethnic groups’ special days
* More Specifics – The recommendations are at such a high level; more detail is needed
  + Need specific examples, ideas of how recommendations will be executed

## Create and Fund Minnesota’s Office of Outdoor Recreation

### Summary of Comments from the 3 Follow Up Questions (See Appendix for Questions)

The above graph represents the respondents’ general feeling about this recommendation. The comments below represent multiple responses from each person. Each person was able to submit up to 3 comments.

| **Category of Comment** | **Total Number of Comments from 3 Questions** |
| --- | --- |
| Supportive | 53 |
| Opposing | 75 |
| Other/NA/Questions | 26 |
| General Comments or Suggestions | 96 |
| **Total** | **250 Total Comments from up to 209 People** |

#### Summary of General Comments or Suggestions

* Funding – Focus on expanding or getting funding for the outdoors
  + Funding should come from private sources
  + Office should be staffed appropriately with adequate funding
  + More funding is needed for outdoor recreation
* Overlap – Make sure the office does not duplicate or overlap with existing agency work
  + Make sure office does not overlap with existing agencies, such as DNR or Explore MN; seems like some of this work should be done by DNR, or is already being done
  + Make sure the office is not responsible for outdoor recreation policy
  + How will the office be structured?
  + Beware of too many layers in state government
  + Better state the goals of the office: are they to advance outdoor recreation or advance outdoor recreation and advance equity?
* Inclusion – Make sure to include everyone
  + More multi-lingual signage
  + Expand the range of outdoor opportunities beyond stereotypical options; engage users directly
  + Programs to educate people on the equity barriers so they can learn to remove them
  + Include hunting and fishing
  + Recreation community is quite varied, and one size does not fit all
  + Reach out to eldest and youngest
  + What is unequal about the outdoors now?
* Engage Stakeholders – Make sure to engage existing and NEW stakeholders
  + Bring people together, but make sure powerful voices do not overwhelm
  + Equal representation for all outdoor groups as well as geographic representation
  + Do not just ask for input, act on it
* Politics – Try to keep politics out of it
  + Bi-partisan suggestions two sides only, should be non-partisan
  + Keep politics out
* Education – Outreach and education will be needed
  + Add an educator to the office
  + Use current experts to help teach new users of the outdoors
* Marketing – Get the word out to more people
  + Use social media marketing to promote outdoors
  + Better market the outdoors to increase use and participation
* Economics focus – Promote the economic benefits of outdoor recreation
* Stewardship – Promote taking care of natural and cultural resources
* Increase Participation – More programs to increase participation in the outdoors

#### Summary of Opposing Comments

* MN does not need another agency, streamline existing agencies and bureaucracy
* Creating another agency wastes tax dollars and user fees
* Disagree with the premise, the stated purpose and benefits of the office are not necessary
* There are higher priorities in MN than funding this office
* New office would compete with existing agencies for priorities and resources and duplicate efforts
* Use resources to manage and protect resources instead of funding administration, meetings, etc.
* Scarce resources could be better used on other efforts to support outdoor recreation
* The recommendations are too broad and the office should not proceed without more details about implementation, funding, roles, etc.
* The office will not solve the identified problems because of the stakeholders involved in this process

#### Summary of Supportive Comments

* Love the idea of the office
* The office will help improve communication and coordination across stakeholder groups and around the state
* Appreciate the recommendations’ focus on access and inclusion
* Appreciate the opportunity to provide input and would like to be involved
* Creation of the office sends a message emphasizing outdoor recreation, and economic, health and other benefits
* Important to have a single source of leadership on these issues
* Support funding and staffing this organization
* Other states have seen benefits of offices like this

## Overall/Additional Comments

### Summary of Additional Comments in Survey

| **Category of Comment** | **Number of Comments** |
| --- | --- |
| Supportive | 37 |
| Opposing | 19 |
| Other/NA/Questions | 22 |
| General Comments or Suggestions | 67 |
| **Total** | **145 Total Comments from up to 209 People** |

#### Summary of General Comments or Suggestions

* Collaboration
  + Use the office to bring people together and coordinate across different stakeholder groups
  + A unified group can help when working with large landowners and stakeholders
  + Include local clubs, governments, businesses, networks, Tribes, etc.
* Education
  + Educate users about conservation, outdoor ethics, and current disparities in the outdoors
  + Use volunteer events, classes and programs to teach people about the outdoors
  + Work with schools and youth organizations
* Inclusion – comments about diversity, equity and inclusion
  + Increase diversity within leadership of outdoor recreation sector
  + Work to remove barriers to participation in the outdoors
  + Include diverse stakeholders in the office and process
* Action – ideas and considerations for next steps
  + Complete more planning, need to identify objectives and results
  + Work to expand buy-in necessary to make these recommendations happen
  + Rethink our approach to outdoor recreation and how existing organizations work
  + Use funding to support and build on existing successes
* Marketing – It is important to communicate and market the outdoors, and tell MN’s story
* Access – Focus on expanding access, both physical access and reducing barriers to the outdoors
* Detail – Specific comments about revising the document, and seeking more information about some of the statements
* Preservation – Focus on preserving resources rather than expanding development and recreational opportunities
* Other – Comments disagreeing with the premise of the recommendations, about funding necessary to support this work, and about health benefits of outdoor recreation

## Email Feedback Received

In addition to the survey feedback, we received 30 emails from the public directed to the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Task Force email account (mortf.dnr@state.mn.us).

Of the 30 emails we received, 25 of them expressed opposition to the creation of an office of outdoor recreation in Minnesota. Of the 25 emails expressing opposition to the creation of an office, 14 were from people who identified themselves as off-highway/motorized recreation stakeholders. The remaining 10 emails did not identify a particular outdoor recreation affiliation.

Those who expanded upon their opposition to the creation of an office cited the following:

* No need to fix a system that is not broken
* Opposition to another layer of bureaucracy/red tape
* A need to focus on improving existing channels as opposed to creating new ones
* An additional burden to taxpayers
* No need for another policy-setting agency

Of the five remaining emails received, two had suggestions that are outside the scope of the task force’s objective, two requested additional information, and one was in support of the recommendations and offered substantive feedback and ideas to enhance the recommendations.

## Organization Letters Received

In addition to the survey feedback and emails, we received 4 letters from the following organizations. These letters are attached.

* Amateur Riders Motorcycle Association
* All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota
* Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association
* Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (National Organization)

## Appendix: Public Input Form Questions

### Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Recommendation

1. What is your overall feeling about the recommendations to Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity to all who wish to explore and enjoy the outdoors?
   1. The recommendations to Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity would help the outdoor recreation community in Minnesota meet or improve the needs or experiences of all people.
   2. I feel neutral about the recommendations to Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity in outdoor recreation.
   3. The recommendations to Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity will not help the outdoor recreation community in Minnesota meet or improve the needs or experiences of all people.
2. We want to know what’s important to you for a safe, protected, and inclusive outdoor recreation experience. Please reflect on the Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity recommendations, and share what ideas connect most with your own experiences or needs.
3. If you could change anything about our Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity recommendations, what ideas would you add or modify?
4. Your feedback is important. Please share any other ideas or thoughts that could strengthen the recommendations to Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity.

### Unite Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Community Recommendation

1. What is your overall feeling about the recommendations to Unite Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Community?
   1. The recommendations to Unite Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Community provide solid ideas to build relationships, industry partnerships, and outdoor opportunities
   2. I feel neutral about the recommendations to Unite Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Community\
   3. The recommendations to Unite Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Community are lacking strong ideas for building relationships, industry partnerships, and outdoor opportunities.
2. We want to know more of your thoughts on building relationships and increasing connections across the outdoor recreation community. Please reflect on the Unite Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Community recommendations, and share what ideas connect most with your own experiences or needs.
3. If you could change anything thing about our Unite Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation Community recommendations, what ideas would you add or modify?
4. Your feedback is important. Please share any other ideas or thoughts that could strengthen the recommendations to Unite Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation Community.

### Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness Recommendation

1. What is your overall feeling about the recommendations to Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness of outdoor recreation in Minnesota?
   1. The recommendations to Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness provide important ideas for telling the unified story that Minnesota is an inclusive and beautiful state for everyone to explore and enjoy.
   2. I feel neutral about the recommendations to Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness of outdoor recreation in Minnesota.
   3. The recommendations to Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness are missing important thoughts, ideas, and perspectives.
2. We want to hear your thoughts on creating a culture of “welcoming everyone outdoors” where Minnesota is a world-class destination for people of all backgrounds and abilities. Please reflect on the Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness recommendations, and share what ideas connect most with your own experiences or needs.
3. If you could change anything thing about our Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness recommendations, what ideas would you add or modify?
4. Your feedback is important. Please share any other ideas or thoughts that could strengthen the recommendations to Unify Communication, Promotion and Public Awareness.

### Create and Fund Minnesota’s Office of Outdoor Recreation Recommendation

1. What is your overall feeling about the recommendations to Create and Fund Minnesota's Office of Outdoor Recreation?
   1. I support the recommendations to Create and Fund Minnesota's Office of Outdoor Recreation
   2. I feel neutral about the recommendations to Create and Fund Minnesota's Office of Outdoor Recreation.
   3. I oppose the recommendations to Create and Fund Minnesota's Office of Outdoor Recreation.
2. We want to know what you think about creating a bi-partisan, independent and inclusive office that focuses on work to advance equal outdoor recreation and equity in opportunities and offerings for Minnesota’s people. Please reflect on the recommendations to Create and Fund Minnesota's Office of Outdoor Recreation, and share what ideas connect most with your needs and experiences.
3. If you could change anything thing about our recommendations to Create and Fund Minnesota's Office of Outdoor Recreation recommendations, what ideas would you add or modify?
4. Your feedback is important. Please share any other ideas or thoughts that could strengthen the recommendations to Create and Fund Minnesota's Office of Outdoor Recreation.

### Overall/Additional Comments

1. Please share any additional comments you would like the task force to consider before finalizing their recommendations for creating a more connected outdoor recreation community in Minnesota.