Initiatives to Encourage and Sustain Family Participation in Nature-based Recreation

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Outline

• The growing need to get kids in nature
• Why should public land management agencies care?
• What professionals think should be done
  • Barriers to participation
  • Strategies to encourage participation
• Conclusions
Nature-Deficit Disorder

• Growing sentiment that humans are becoming increasingly disconnected from nature.
  2. Scientific journal articles that focus on family outdoor recreation.

• Growing movement to reconnect kids with nature.
Role of Public Land Management Agencies

- Millions of Americans use U.S. public lands for nature-based recreation each year; however, Louv does not address the role of public agencies in overcoming the challenges to participation in nature-based recreation.

- This study will begin to look at the role these public agencies play and have the potential to play to encourage children and families to participate in and experience the many benefits of nature-based recreation.
Benefits- Why we care

Nature-based recreation has the potential to greatly enhance the health and life quality of children and families.

1. Personal benefits
2. Social benefits
3. Economic benefits
4. Environmental benefits
Benefits- The problem

Many public land management agencies don’t think in these terms of providing opportunities for people to benefit.

As a result, these city and federal government agencies don’t actively plan nature-based recreation activities to achieve the benefits previously listed.

Instead agencies make the mistake of
1. Put up do not enter signs.
2. Or put up a traditional trailhead.
Role of Families in Nature-based Recreation

• Families require opportunities to achieve their desired benefits.
• Families are the outlets by which children experience nature.
• Parental choices today are sedentary activities; it should be of no surprise that children are also spending less time in outdoor recreation.
Goal

Move beyond one-time programs or events that bring children into nature, instead generate practical strategies to inspire regular, long-lasting participation by families.
What’s Already Out There

- Local land management agencies and organizations are beginning to develop programs to encourage children to get outdoors and play in nature.
- However, many agencies may only be using one strategy to encourage children to become active in the outdoors.
Methods

• Delphi Study - Gets experts to focus on open ended questions.

• The group “Get Outdoors Florida!”

• Objectives
  a. Determine what natural resource professionals in Florida see as barriers to families coming out into nature.

  b. Determine what initiatives natural resource professionals in Florida think have potential to encourage and sustain family participation in nature-based recreation.
Results- Barriers to Participation

#1 Lack of knowledge
#2 Time constraints
#3 Safety concerns
#4 Fear of the outdoors
#5 Rules and regulations
#6 Lack of money and/or equipment
Barriers to Participation in Nature-based Recreation

1. Lack of knowledge (expertise, not knowing when/where to go).
2. Time constraints (family and work obligations).
3. Safety Concerns (getting lost, falling in the water, twisting an ankle, hooking yourself—things that might happen to you).
Barriers to Participation in Nature-based Recreation

4. Fear of the Outdoors (like animal attacks, insect bites, poison ivy—things found in nature).
5. Rules and Regulations (don’t go off trails, no dogs allowed).
6. Lack of Money and Equipment
Results – Initiatives to Increase Participation

#1 Build confidence of children and adults in nature-based recreation activities.

#2 Identify new and creative ways to market and promote local nature-based recreation areas.

#3 Bring park managers and naturalists to the kids.

#4 Make “gateway” recreational activities easier to get involved in.

#5 Improve ability of children and families to get to nearby nature-based recreation areas.
Build confidence of children and adults in nature-based recreational activities

1. 7-12 week long programs, which meet every Saturday.
   a. Take children and adults from beginner to established, self-sufficient participants in nature-based recreation.

2. Start family nature clubs.
   a. Offers a network of families to learn and experience nature with.

• Examples in Action:
  FamCamp - California
  Nature Strollers- Orange County
Identify new and creative ways to market and promote local nature-based recreation areas

1. Advertise local natural areas/nature events on popular websites (e.g. twitter, facebook, You-tube).
2. Promote nature activities that involve electronics (e.g. geocaching, digital cameras, etc.).
3. Provide regional books geared for different school aged children that focus on local city, state, or national parks.

Examples in Action:
Bridging the Child and Nature Gap with Digital Cameras – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bring park managers and naturalists to the kids

1. Local natural resource employees (botanists, wildlife biologists, etc) visit classrooms and engage children in nature activities.
2. School field trips sponsored and run by local regional and state parks.
   a. Children have the opportunity to experience nature first hand.
3. Interaction with boy scouts, girl scouts, 4H, etc.

Examples in Action:
Project Learning Tree
Make “gateway” recreational activities easier to get involved in

1. Rent simple equipment (binoculars, birding and tree books, tents, fishing poles, etc.).
2. Provide ideas of fun activities for families (for children and youth of all age levels) to participate in at different natural areas.

Examples in Action;
Universities (Outdoor Recreation Center, TRIP)
Grand Staircase-Escalate National Monument
Improve ability for children and families to get to nearby nature-based recreation areas.

1. Partnership between mass transit agencies with public agencies (from city parks departments to national parks on the outside of cities) to help improve access to natural areas.

2. Create more near-by natural areas.
   - Work with city and county decision-makers for more nature-based recreation areas
   - Partner with non-traditional groups to increase access to local natural areas

Examples in Action:
- Golden Gate Recreational Areas
- Camanche Recreation Area is a public facility operated by agreement with the East Bay Municipal Utility District
The Future