

OBAMA'S AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS INITIATIVE:

Even in times of crisis, we're called to take the long view to preserve our national heritage -- because in doing so we fulfill one of the responsibilities that falls to all of us as Americans, and as inhabitants of this same small planet.

-President Barack Obama, April 16, 2010

Basic Goals of the Initiative:

(1) Reconnect Americans, especially children, to America's rivers and waterways, landscapes of national significance, ranches, farms and forests, great parks, and coasts and beaches by exploring a variety of efforts, including:

(A) promoting community-based recreation and conservation, including local parks, greenways, beaches, and waterways;

(B) advancing job and volunteer opportunities related to conservation and outdoor recreation; and

(C) supporting existing programs and projects that educate and engage Americans in our history, culture, and natural bounty.

(2) Build upon State, local, private, and tribal priorities for the conservation of land, water, wildlife, historic, and cultural resources, creating corridors and connectivity across these outdoor spaces, and for enhancing neighborhood parks; and determine how the Federal Government can best advance those priorities through public private partnerships and locally supported conservation strategies.

(3) Use science-based management practices to restore and protect our lands and waters for future generations.

Question Template for America's Great Outdoors Listening Session

Each listening session includes a panel discussion and break-out sessions to discuss four questions designed to help shape the initiative.

Feel free to use the below template as a guide for preparing your youth for the listening sessions.

Keep the goals of the Initiative in mind while going over the below questions.

What Works: What are the most effective strategies for conservation, recreation, or reconnecting people to the outdoors?

* **ex., Better accessibility for inner-city populations**

*

*

Challenges: What obstacles exist to achieving your goals for conservation, recreation, or reconnecting people to the outdoors?

* **ex., Effective public transportation**

*

*

Federal Government Role: How can the federal government be a more effective partner in helping to achieve conservation, recreation, or reconnecting people to the outdoors?

* **ex., Increase in substantial and consistent funding**

*

*

Tools: What additional tools and resources would help your efforts be even more successful?

* **ex., Increase the capacity of federal, state, and local agencies**

*

*

Comments From Previous Listening Sessions Around the Country

America's Great Outdoors Comment Highlights

General Comments:

- “This is long overdue, and deeply appreciated. I love the focus on and priority on conserving water and land AND getting people out to recreate in it. The working lands piece is critical, too.”
- “I have never seen this kind of support at such a high level for sensible conservation.”
- “I have not seen anything like this commitment to start a conservation movement since perhaps the first Earth Day. Please keep this going – talking, listening, and inspiring people to bring their ideas to the table. I will never forget this day. Thank you.”

What are the most critical conservation challenges facing our nation today?

- “Making sure we have another generation ready and waiting to take over as stewards of our lands – and making sure we leave them natural resources worth inheriting.”
- “The public is uninformed about the existence of our public lands system, and therefore is not enjoying the many benefits of recreation or stewardship. To address this, we should develop a public information campaign similar to ‘Smokey the Bear’ or the ‘Crying Indian’ that showcases America’s public lands and the diversity of people who connect with them.”
- “The fragmentation of wildlife corridors, especially in light of climate change; and, the protection of clean air, water, topsoil, and safe food sources.”
- “We need to create more parks, trails, and open space in proximity to urban areas. Too many children don’t have access to safe places to play, ride their bikes, or just goof around.”
- “Conserving watersheds and water resources. Water sustains life and is threatened by climate change, urban development, and certain agricultural practices. We must adopt a sustainable watershed strategy that protects high value fish and wildlife habitat; reconnects fish passages and corridors; and increases funding for federal restoration programs.”

What are the best strategies to address these challenges?

- “Get the next generation involved by listening to them and helping them to become ambassadors of the outdoors. In addition, we must support grassroots efforts and conservation volunteerism.”
- “We must bring new voices into conservation – voices that might not make traditional conservationists comfortable, such as rock stars, community activists, industry leaders, and other spokespeople who resonate with people who feel that conservation is for places they will never see.”
- “We must provide robust and stable federal funding for landscape conservation. In addition, we should engage citizens, particularly youth, in environmental stewardship and outdoor activities to reconnect them to nature. Finally, we must enhance public access to the great outdoors.”
- “Make sure that people of color and youth are exposed to pathways of true leadership and sustainability. Social media is one way to build community and reach audiences of scale with relative ease.”