

OUTDOOR COMMUNITY FORUM
Inspire Youth
Saturday, June 29, 2019

Participants:
John Pollpeter
Aviva Yasgur
Felicia Bates
Betsy Allison
Kelly Sopko
Joe Baust

Forest Service Staff:
Matt Helt
Patrick Holcomb
Kelsie Bewley
Tina Tilley (part of the meeting)

Participants of the meeting were welcomed by Matt Helt. Matt discussed the purpose of the meeting:
1) First, to discuss 1 of 3 strategic sustainability goals for Land Between the Lake's recreation and environmental education programs. These goals were identified following a Community Visioning Session we held in December 2018.

2) Second, to help identify specific, community-supported objectives to support these goals, and
3) Third, to explore opportunities for collaboration to fulfill these goals.

Matt then discussed the desired outcomes of the meeting:

- Hope to have open, honest and respectful dialogue
- Hope to encourage a feeling of shared responsibility and aspiration towards meeting the goal
- To identify community-supported objectives to work towards
- To take advantage of the deep well of community creativity and expertise gathered at the meeting through brainstorming new, creative and innovative strategies
- Hope to strengthen our existing relationships and consider opportunities to expand our partnerships where there is mutual interest

Matt provided background information on the planning process that has taken place prior to this forum and reminded participants of the Vision, Strategic Areas of Focus and the Goals.

Forward to the Future is a strategic planning initiative which began in December 2017. It focuses on the future of recreation and environmental education at Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area. The purpose of this effort is to develop the organization's first Strategic Sustainability Plan. The plan will steer program-level direction, priorities and resources for the next ten to fifteen years through identification of 3 things:

1. vision, priority areas of focus, and set of goals and objectives
2. Strategies which will help Land Between the Lakes, as an organization, to be more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable; and
3. Ways in which Land Between the Lakes can help to cultivate regional sustainability through collaboration and partnership.

Public engagement has been an important part of this initiative from the beginning. There have been several opportunities for public input, comment and dialogue. Starting in July of 2018, LBL sought input to better understand public needs, values, interests and concerns. This input was collected through an online engagement tool called MindMixer and through open houses. In December 2018, a Community Visioning Session was held to help understand what the public wants to see in the future. Many of you

have participated in these engagement opportunities and we thank you for taking the time to be a part of this process.

The Outdoor Community Forum builds upon what has been done through the Assessment and Visioning Steps. It uses the vision, areas of focus and goals as its foundation and seeks to identify specific objectives and strategies that should be met to achieve the goals.

VISION		
Working together with visitors and local communities to bring positive, sustainable change through exceptional nature-based experiences that inspire all generations.		
STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS		
21st Century Recreation	Healthy Habitats	Inspire Youth
STRATEGIC GOAL 1	STRATEGIC GOAL 2	STRATEGIC GOAL 3
Anticipate changing recreation needs, demonstrate innovative management practices, and sustainably transform to meet 21 st century expectations.	Restore and sustain healthy habitats to be a destination for hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing of abundant and diverse species.	Inspire youth in neighboring counties and states to connect with their natural lands and cultural heritage.
MANAGEMENT AREA OF FOCUS		
Create a Culture of Innovation		
MANAGEMENT GOAL		
Respect the past and innovate for the future.		

Matt talked about the challenges that the Forest Service is facing:

- Screen Time
- Less Outdoor Time
- Less time in nature = less likely to have positive environmental attitudes and behavior
- Funding

There was then an opportunity for questions and comments.

- Is there not adult education?
- Could there be educator/teacher outreach?
- Not as many teachers coming to use facilities in LBL
- The youth can't get here without parents to drive, need adult participation/education
- Discussed why we are focusing on youth and feedback from first forum

Points of Connection:

- Patrick has 3 kids and works at Brandon Spring
- John grew up in the outdoors, didn't really visit nature centers, before college was passionate about education

- Aviva saying kids do not go outside even in suburbia and thus may lack the consciousness to think and know about nature. Need to create experiences that help them form emotional attachments; develop emotional attachment/connection for care and preservation of the land, family doing things together is a big push for what drives people to be here. Sometimes the best teacher is a parent by giving them the opportunity to be an educator.

Success: Also previously described by points of connection

- Need present and future generations to want to CARE about long term sustainability and use
- See lots of adults: Teachers, grandparents, parents, etc.
- Bring the students here!
- Need to identify ways to bring adults and help them connect since they are bringing children
 - Teacher escape weekends idea
 - Parent night event with a contest?
- Diverse learning environments/opportunities that appeal to families that might not be entirely nature lovers or outdoor enthusiasts to draw in new people
- We need future generations to be emotionally attached and need adults to help form those emotional attachments and think about awareness, appreciation, knowledge, support, and stewardship
- Spread out the knowledge that Land Between the Lakes isn't far from places like Nashville and to people/groups that don't normally do outdoor activities, geographical targets. Provide opportunities for new and experienced people. Reach out to diverse groups in Nashville, St. Louis, Memphis, Chicago, etc.
- Better communication in the form of a website or something else such as agendas for half or full day activities

What is the goal with diversity?

- We need to define diversity: experiences, economy, ethnicity, diverse backgrounds
- Diversity in experience levels with the outdoors and level of connectedness
- Making sure that educators can adjust to the needs of diverse individuals
- Becoming more aware of people who might care to spend time here
- All staff should be welcoming to diverse backgrounds
 - Be able to break through barriers of adults to give students opportunities
 - Reach out to principals and administrators
- Getting info to teachers about standards
 - Study of why or why not teachers come to Land Between the Lakes
- What is the leverage point for the schools
 - School districts understand the importance and gravity of having Land Between the Lakes
- A day for administration to come out and familiarize themselves with Land Between the Lakes and let staff build a connection with them
- Tremont at Smoky Mountains site lists all the benefits on site for them to know

Ways to help young teachers:

- Need to alleviate the stress on teachers and make it easy for teachers to pick it up/get out here
- Ways to make it worthwhile for young teachers to come, to risk it
 - Set as a positive experience
 - Get them out to experience it

- Get them to understand the emotional connection and worth the experience
- Long term relationships with places
- Get them where they are, in their style of learning and leadership and people skills

GOAL: Inspire youth to connect with natural lands and cultural heritage

Objectives/Areas of Focus:

- Families
- Formal Educators
- Young adults/young at heart

Identify strategies and specific tasks to meet goals in each area

Split into three groups:

- Group 1 Families - Aviva, John
- Group 2 Young Adults & Young at heart: Kelsie, Patrick
- Group 3 Formal Education - Joe, Felicia

Formal Education: Make advisory Corps/admin/teacher/group leaders

- They help build curriculum
- They are liaison for the schools
- Important People:
 - Professors, teacher, admin, homeschool teacher, board members, retired teachers, volunteer coordinator, other formal groups
- Is there people who would participate?
 - Easier for them to participate
 - Provide incentives
 - Awareness of what the problem is
 - They come to Friends of LBL board so hopefully come to this too

Young Adults & Young at Heart:

- Murray State
 - Talk to teachers to offer service hours
- Student groups/organizations
 - Austin Peay University
 - West KY Comm. Tech College

Families:

- Grants and local business
- Target marketing
- Kaboom has grants with inclusive play. Create a natural play area, not a playground
- Children's forests
- Lucas training consulting
- Bernheim Forest
- Youth incentive volunteer coordinator to encompass everything

Collaboration:

- LBLA, REI, bike shop in Murray
- Local Universities development of education of the Land Between the Lakes area for curriculum development (feeder system)
- Governor School for the Arts (GSA)
- Governor's Scholars Program (GSP)
- Fort Campbell active military families
- VA system – whole health wellness programs
- Nashville region:
 - New large influx of people
 - Universities
 - Music City

What do we need to do moving forward?

- Gather more momentum.
- We will be getting together again to discuss and finalize
- Putting everything together and make key objectives more specific
- Why are we not going to the people?
 - Have in the past but maybe need a different strategy
 - Look and compare present and the past?
- Find out more communities and their needs for meeting

Today is the start of a tactic phase. We are taking ideas from here to make them possible. There are people here who could us help reach out. Use connections to help build support.

Flip Chart Notes

Flip Chart 1

What does success look like?

- Develop emotional connections equals desire for care/preservation/conservation and sustainability
- Helping adults connect and find ways to help them bring kids to LBL
 - Teacher escape weekends
 - Parent night outs
- Offer diverse opportunities at different learning levels
 - Peer to peer
 - Mentors for others
 - Volunteer role as educators to mentor
- Extend awareness of LBL to greater surrounding areas
- Re-engage people, organizations, and programs
- More outreach to community
- Target specialty interest groups

Flip Chart 2

What needs to be done for success?

- Getting adults engaged so they will bring their children to get emotionally attached
- Provide more diverse opportunities at different levels of awareness and learning styles

- Reach a diversity of people/backgrounds
 - Need to define diversity (economics, ethnics, etc.)
- Reaching different experience levels
- All staff be able to be agile and welcoming to all visitors
- Develop longer term relationships with schools

Flip Chart 3

Strategies: Tasks, action items, methods, approaches

- Put everything in context of levels of connection
- Bring awareness to specialty groups
- Create suggested itineraries/agendas from perspective of teachers, parents/families, etc.
 - “If you have a ½ day, you can do these things _____ at Land Between the Lakes”
- Make website more friendly, teacher tab on website
- Provide and train staff to be able to connect with diversity of public

Flip Chart 4

Goal: Inspire youth to connect with natural lands and cultural heritage

Objectives/Areas of Focus:

- 1.) Families
 - 2.) Formal Educators and Group leaders (public, private, homeschools, church youth groups, scouts)
 - 3.) Young adults and young at heart (special interest groups, peer group/mentor, volunteer corps for specialty areas)
- Strategies: Specific tasks to meet the goal for each area of focus (keep in mind levels of connectedness)
 - Partnerships
 - Collaborative groups

Flip Chart 5

Families:

- Enhance day-use facilities so there is enough to do to make a trip worth their while
- Family-focused programming, friendly trails, natural playgrounds/play areas
- More user-friendly website (including mobile app), itineraries, etc.
- Tapping into wellness/health programs to encourage outdoor activity for kids/families with lifestyle health problems
- Incentive for return visits (membership with reduced admission fee, etc.)
- Programs and activities targeted at different experience and awareness levels
- Targeted marketing to family-oriented media outlets
- Continue offering family-friendly events
- Offer self-guided itinerary/exploration ideas for parents (backpack checkout)
- Specialty days for different communities (Ft. Campbell Day, etc.)
- Market to nearby metropolitan areas for overnight vacation potential (family-friendly focus)
- Maybe partner with other area attractions to create attractive vacation packages
- Packages that blend campgrounds and day-use facilities
- Increase promotion of facilities by our own facilities
- Update/improve info boards at all facilities
- Email blasts/daily/weekly reports of events and activities

- All weather facility, solar panels, expand EE approach
- Interactive sensory trail at Homeplace
- Nature play space at Nature Station
- Therapy/trauma informed

Flip Chart 6

Young Adults and Young at Heart:

- Offer more adventure-based opportunities with partnerships that are structured and planned (biking, kayaking, canoeing, archery)
- Expenditures
- Bio-blitzes
- Partner with ACA (American Canoe Association)
- Mentors and Volunteers
 - Youth Conservation Corps
 - Apprenticeships/Internships
 - Resource Assistantships
 - AmeriCorps
 - Resident Attendants in different areas
 - Environmental Clubs/Science Clubs
- Training Certification (Safety)
- Volunteer Corps: Retirees, teacher corps, student teachers, resident assistants
- Service learning and service projects
- University/Sorority/Fraternity Clubs Service Projects
- Graduation and Scholarship requirements
- QR codes/Tech/FS mobile app
- Instagram photo contest
- iNaturalist and Discover Life in America
- Improve website

Flip Chart 7

Formal Educators and Youth Leaders:

- Calling an awareness to action and participation
- Building Buy-in from Educational and Youth Leadership
- Sphere of Influence
 - Teacher leaders
 - Supervisors
 - Principals
 - Superintendents
 - School Board members
 - Youth organizational board members
 - Youth Organizations (summer camps, clubs)
 - Teacher advisory corps (operational in KY, needed in TN)
 - Religious Groups
 - Homeschool organizations
- Value of nature studies (Environmental Education, Homeplace, Planetarium, etc.) for social, emotional, and intellectual growth of children/adults (Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv)
 - Facilitating Project Wild, Project Wet, Project Learning Tree

- Connecting Environmental Education offerings to Land Between the Lakes
- Meeting needs of diverse groups; learning styles
- Connecting to the cultural heritage of Land Between the Lakes and surrounding area
- Communicating value of outdoor, space, and history, curriculum to teach integrated content in English Language Arts, Math, Science, & Social Studies
- Lieberman and Hoody-Using the Environment as an Integrating Context