



American Recreation Coalition

Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right to health and happiness through recreation.

NEWS

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2014 Beacon Award Winners Use iPads, QR Codes and Social Media to Enhance Recreation on Public Lands and Waters

Washington, D.C. (June 9, 2014) - Seven federal efforts have won Beacon Awards in 2014 from the American Recreation Coalition (ARC) for outstanding successes in harnessing the power of technology to improve public recreation experiences and federal recreation program management. Winners were selected from efforts of four federal agencies and the Office of the Secretary of the Interior. Beacon Awards were first presented by the American Recreation Coalition in 2005. Nominations are made by federal agencies and are judged against the award criteria, which are:

- 1) Innovative use of technology for visitor services or recreation management;
- 2) Use of partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit organizations;
- 3) Efforts to share news of creative solutions within the agency; and
- 4) Community support for the work of this initiative.

The recipients of ARC's 2014 Beacon Awards will be honored on Monday, June 9th, at a presentation in the U.S. Department of Interior. Recipients are:

U.S. Forest Service: Interpretive Mobile Tour, Shawnee National Forest

This award is for mobile access to interpretive tours of the forest and associated opportunities on cell phones, smartphones or tablets. An interdisciplinary team led by the forest has assembled visitor information which can be managed and revised quickly and cost-effectively to reflect fire danger, severe weather events, and forest and road closures. The tour also complies with 508 standards for video and web content accessibility. The platform has the capability to upload JPEGs, PNGs and GIFs, as well as hotlink to partner websites for volunteering and e-commerce opportunities. Design support has been provided by the Rocky Mountain Region's Center for Design and Interpretation to establish an agency "brand" for adoption nationally. Partners websites

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are linked to the tour to cross-promote additional visitor opportunities both on and off the national forest. The mobile tours also feature a map showing other visitor information sources and services. The first "installment" of the Shawnee's interpretive mobile tour can be viewed at: <http://myoncell.mobi/shawneenf>.

Bureau of Land Management: Salmon (ID) Podcast Trail

For innovative delivery of facts and history of the community to residents and visitors. Initiated in September 2012 by BLM outdoor recreation planner Liz Townley, the project has grown into a thriving partnership of BLM's Salmon Field Office, Salmon Valley Stewardship (SVS), the National Park Service, the Student Conservation Association, local students and the National Park Service. The project began with a BLM-led design of a loop trail. Salmon High School students created the podcasts and designed markers and other signage. SVS hosts community tours and provides iPods for rent at the local library and museum. The podcasts – 6 completed and 7 underway – contain unique facts and the history of the area and can be downloaded from iTunes and a local source. The entire Salmon Middle School 8th grade was hosted on tours of the loop. Interpretive signage includes an embedded QR code so first-time visitors can download podcasts during visits.

National Park Service: Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau

For an Instagram social media initiative entitled #TakeOnPocono. The partners implemented a strategy beginning in 2013 to let pictures "do the talking" about the region's offerings. #TakeOnPocono encourages photographers and smartphone camera users to take pictures of scenic national park areas and other areas in the Pocono Mountains, and then tag their pictures on Instagram with the hashtag #TakeOnPocono. Tagged photos are automatically featured on the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau website and its contributor becomes eligible to win weekly prizes and a grand prize getaway to a local resort. Information about the program is shared through the park and partner websites and signs at scenic park areas. Six influential Instagram users were hosted on a 3-day familiarization tour of the area. The photos uploaded have included professional-level shots and created a new channel for sharing the park's diversity and beauty. Analytics show that this initiative is immediately successful. The park shared #TakeOnPocono for consideration by the 2016 National Park Service Centennial Planning Team as a sustainable initiative involving integration of social media technology, cost effective promotion, partnering with a nonprofit organization, intra-agency sharing, and significant visitor engagement.

National Park Service: Law Enforcement Real-time Mapping, Mojave National Preserve

For innovative use of iPads and free ESRI software to better manage OHV use in and around the 1.6 Million Acre Preserve through enhanced mapping and geospatial locations. Using a grant from the California State Off Highway Vehicle Program, NPS

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Ranger Brian Cooperider purchased iPads and found partners to adapt GSI software to create a mapping database and data collection process. Using this new resource, rangers know their exact location, the ownership of the land and more, and can input data on incidents. All of this is then accessible in real time in the field and at headquarters. A ranger can enter a photo of the damage, measurements and create on the damage, for example, so that other rangers will know it has already been reported and documented and plans made to make repairs. This use of off-the-shelf hardware and software has now been shared within NPS and with other agencies and is being adapted to use for other programs, including road maintenance, vandalism at cultural sites, utility corridor management and more.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: National Conservation and Training Center - Knowledge Resources and Technologies Division

For its work integrating technology within the many programs and courses offered at the National Conservation and Training Center. The Knowledge Resources and Technologies Division provides NCTC and partners with instructional television, video, print and electronic products such as interactive distance learning, video for training, print publications, and computer-based materials. Products include e-courses, recorded and live webinars, access to scientific literature, and immediately accessible training videos, podcasts, imagery, and online communities for collaborative interaction. Examples of specific programs are: Human Dimensions of Natural Resources Conservation Series, addressing the relationship of people to land and wildlife; Partners Outdoors 2013 Conference at NCTC with live video available nationwide and an interactive meeting between participants and FICOR; National Wildlife Refuge System Urban Refuges Academy; the NCTC Bald Eagle Webcam; and Conservation Connect, a web-based video series connecting youth ages 10-14 with the great outdoors.

U.S. Forest Service: Partnership with Yonder

For use of interactive social media to raise awareness of recreational opportunities. Yonder is an app whose partnership with the Forest Service exemplifies how cooperation between federal and private entities can benefit everyone involved. Yonder is a free, mobile app that allows sharing of outdoor experiences and activities among outdoor enthusiasts. Created for everyone from backyard explorers to backcountry adventurers, Yonder connects through geolocated photos, videos and commentary. Yonder makes it easy to search for experiences both near and far by activity, places or people. It is a key force in driving people who might otherwise not know about outdoor company behind Yonder is Green Mountain Digital. Green Mountain Digital is firmly committed to partnerships with public agencies and has been a central force in Get Outdoors Colorado, which began with a focus on Get Outdoors Day and is now a remarkable, year-round effort of more than 100 organizations seeking to connect all with Colorado's outdoors. Yonder was nominated for the 2014 Beacon Award by the Forest Service as a vital partner of its recreation program.

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U.S. Department of the Interior: Secretary's Office of Digital Strategy

For use of social media to reach new audiences. The Digital Strategy Team has been an innovative leader at the Interior Department for four years, achieving successes described by an expert observer as a transformation “from digital dinosaur to social pioneer.” It has created a social media platform which allows the Department to interact with the public in new ways. Interior now has one of the strongest social media profiles within the federal family, with large bases of Facebook fans and Twitter and Instagram followers. These efforts have been praised by Interior Secretaries as key to connecting of all Americans to America’s Great Outdoors, encouraging recreation and support for protection of our natural, cultural and historic assets. The Team has used its expertise to strengthen the social media programs across the Department, aiding major new efforts by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Bureau of Land Management. The Digital Team has expanded Interior's use of video, including "This Week at Interior," a short weekly video sent to over 100,000 stakeholders. The Office of Digital Strategy strives to do things bigger and better and its vision, leadership and determination have made a real, positive impact. Interior’s Digital Team includes Tim Fullerton, Tami Heilemann, Larry Gillick and Tim Bergling.

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About the American Recreation Coalition:

AMERICAN RECREATION COALITION — is a nonprofit, Washington-based federation founded in 1979. The association provides a unified voice for recreation interests to ensure their full and active participation in government policy-making on issues such as public land management. ARC membership consists of more than 100 organizations, including national and regional associations and corporations that represent a major share of the \$600+ billion a year recreation/leisure industry and enthusiast groups representing millions of recreationists. Since its inception, ARC has sought to catalyze public-private partnerships to enhance and protect outdoor recreation opportunities and resources. ARC conducts research, organizes national conferences, and disseminates information through a variety of means, including its Web site www.funoutdoors.com. ARC plays a leading role in several key coalitions and organizations, including the Coalition for Recreational Trails, Scenic Byways Coalition and Coalition for Recreation in the National Forests. ARC also supports and promotes the WOW - Wonderful Outdoor World outreach to urban children and was instrumental in the re-launch of Take Pride in America. ARC was also instrumental in launching National Get Outdoors Day, a national effort dedicated to helping children enjoy healthy, active outdoor lives.