



American Recreation Coalition

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

APRIL 2012 NEWSLETTER

In this issue:

- [Byways Advocates Hold “Next Chapter” Discussions](#)
- [Rachel Jacobson at April Recreation Exchange](#)
- [SAFETEA-LU Extended, Again](#)
- [Great Outdoors Week and Great Outdoors Month 2012 Will Showcase Economic, Health Benefits](#)
- [White House Convenes Group on Games to Boost Outdoor Activities](#)
- [International Pow Wow Features Parks and the Great Outdoors](#)
- [Recreation Community Prepares Response to USDA Challenge](#)
- [Change to Volunteer Pass Requirements](#)

Byways Advocates Hold “Next Chapter” Discussions

Leaders of key national organizations supporting a national byways program are meeting to discuss the “next chapter” of the byways program. Created in 1991, the current program relies heavily on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and faces challenges as Congress consolidates programs and reduces federal expenditures. Advocates also feel that the byways effort needs a new marketing “leg,” joining the three original “legs” of designation, technical assistance and funding.

Byways are now designated by the Secretary of Transportation for intrinsic qualities defined by statute, following nomination by states and tribal governments. Byways proponents note that the current 150 All-American Roads and National Scenic Byways are not subject to any kind of re-qualification or reconfirmation of eligibility for designation, designed to protect the byways “brand.” Proponents feel that FHWA could face political obstacles to involuntary removals of designation. Periodic re-qualification could also help sustain local byways efforts, which sometimes dissipate once the goal of designation is achieved.

Especially interesting are discussions about new marketing efforts that tie to efforts to welcome international visitors to the USA. A new byways partner, Rand McNally, has offered a range of ways to increase the visibility of byways domestically and internationally.

Byways leaders feel confident that Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and leaders of the Federal Highway Administration will be receptive to a proposal to

transition current byways efforts to a sustainable, partnership-based program. To read more about the work of the byways coalition, which is considering formalization of its efforts as **Byways USA: Routes of the Real America**, click [here](#).

[Return to top](#)

Rachel Jacobson at April Recreation Exchange

Rachel Jacobson, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, spoke at April's Recreation Exchange. James Kurth, Chief of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System, and Bert Frost, Associate Director of the National Park Service for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, accompanied Ms. Jacobson. She discussed the America's Great Outdoors Initiative (AGO) and the National Travel and Tourism Strategy, which she labeled "cornerstone" initiatives of the Obama Administration.

Ms. Jacobson discussed financial challenges facing the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Each agency faces a maintenance backlog several times larger than current total annual budgets. Mr. Kurth noted that the refuge system had grown dramatically during his career but was now using easements and establishing what he called "working landscapes" to deal with funding limits. Mr. Frost explained that park units "can't exist as islands" and described efforts to engage partners from areas surrounding the parks. He noted urban park initiatives which broaden awareness and support for the National Park System. Ms. Jacobson reinforced those comments, noting that "partnerships are crucial" and that urban areas offer excellent opportunities both for partnerships and for introducing conservation values.

Ms. Jacobson acknowledged that the agencies need to do a better job of selling their economic value. "We are moneymakers," she asserted, adding that the President's Travel and Tourism Strategy would provide them with better opportunities to make their economic case. She also said that agencies could not rely on appropriated dollars alone and needed to find ways to leverage funds through partnerships with friends groups, foundations and more. She pointed to opportunities offered by AGO as the vehicle for continuing conversations about successful on-the-ground partnerships.

In discussions following her comments, the Acting Assistant Secretary noted the need for innovation, creativity and risk-taking by agency employees. Parks in particular "have a fair amount of discretion," she said, providing room to try innovative ideas. Mr. Frost commented that his agency is building a network to exchange innovative ideas. "The ability to make effective connections among agency personnel is now missing," he said.

Fees, national park general management plans and partnerships with volunteers and concessioners were also discussed. When asked how best to tackle such challenges Ms. Jacobson concluded, "We need four more years."

[Return to top](#)

SAFETEA-LU Extended, Again

Work on a new, multi-year surface transportation program continues. The most recent step was action by the House of Representatives to extend SAFETEA-LU through September 30, 2012. The extension created the opportunity for a House/Senate conference that puts SAFETEA-LU, the Senate-passed MAP-21 and House committee-passed HR 7 on the table – a complex mix of policy issues, funding strategies and timetables. Experts are divided on whether the process is more likely to produce a new two-year bill based on MAP-21 or an extension of a “tweaked” SAFETEA-LU into 2013. In either case, the recreation community has much at stake – from the Recreational Trails Program to byways, from roads in national parks and refuges to funding for boating and fishing generated by federal taxes on motorboat fuel. Whatever happens, Congressional efforts on a multi-year surface transportation bill are a sure bet to be a major topic of the 113th Congress in 2013-14.

[Return to top](#)

Great Outdoors Week and Great Outdoors Month 2012 Will Showcase Economic, Health Benefits

Excitement is growing across the nation about plans for Great Outdoors Month 2012. Great Outdoors Month celebrates a variety of important events and actions that occur during June, and highlights the benefits of active fun outdoors and our magnificent shared resources of forests, parks, refuges and other public lands and waters.

Great Outdoors Week is a signature part of the month and is coordinated by the American Recreation Coalition (ARC). The week showcases efforts enhancing outdoor recreation for all Americans through awards, briefings and other events in the Nation's Capital. Events will be co-hosted by more than a dozen federal agencies and national organizations. Great Outdoors Week's action-packed schedule will feature: presentation of the Beacon Awards – honoring innovative uses of technology in public lands management – at the Main Department of the Interior Building followed by an ice cream social; presentation of the Legends Awards honoring outstanding public land management employees at the Department of Agriculture; a Recreation Exchange luncheon; and the Recreational Trails Program award ceremony and briefing on Capitol Hill. The Sheldon Coleman Great Outdoors Award will be presented to a leading public figure whose personal efforts have significantly boosted opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.

Other Great Outdoors Month features include National Trails Day® (June 2), National Fishing and Boating Week (June 2-10), the Great American Backyard Campout (June 23), and National Get Outdoors Day (June 9). Welcome to the Water on National Marina Day, hosted by the Association of Marina Industries, will also be celebrated across the nation on June 9. In addition western governors will gather in Washington State on June 9 for a special Western Governors' Association Outdoor Recreation &

Exploration Day.

Key outdoor recreation leaders have once again asked the President, all 50 governors and other key officials to proclaim June as Great Outdoors Month. The proclamations will reflect the nationwide attention being given to the economic importance of recreation and the special role of the Great Outdoors in re-establishing the United States as a major destination for international visitors. The nation's health community is also increasingly vocal regarding the benefits of active time in the Great Outdoors as key to better health, better education and support for conservation. To view the 2012 proclamations that have already been received, click [here](#).

[Return to top](#)

White House Convenes Group on Games to Boost Outdoor Activities

On the afternoon of May 17, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Department of the Interior will host a meeting to discuss how partnerships among Federal, state and local land management agencies, mobile gaming companies and others might become the basis for innovations in outdoor recreation games that promote active lifestyles and tourism. Triggered by discussions under the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, the meeting seeks to energize efforts to inspire young people to get moving outside by creating new technologies that leverage existing resources and available data. Federal agency leaders, mobile gaming experts from industry and academia, innovators in the recreation sector, and potential philanthropic and corporate partners will be participating.

ARC will participate in the meeting and has recommended several other participants. News from the session will be shared. Anyone interested in this effort should contact ARC President Derrick Crandall at dcrandall@funoutdoors.com.

Click [here](#) to learn more about some of the exciting new links between technology and the outdoors designed to appeal to America's youth.

[Return to top](#)

International Pow Wow Features Parks and the Great Outdoors

U.S. Travel Association's 2012 International Pow Wow was held in Los Angeles in late April and featured record numbers of exhibitors from federal agencies and travel industry organizations interested in national parks and the Great Outdoors. National parks had a major exhibit on the show floor – arranged by the National Parks Promotion Council and staffed by National Park Service staff and allies. Nearby, other federal agencies, park concessioners and park partners had smaller exhibits that helped elevate the awareness of America's Great Outdoors among the estimated 5,000 international travel and tourism industry delegates.

Brand USA, the new corporation charged by the Congress with regaining lost market share in the international tourism market, used Pow Wow to introduce its new marketing messages and strategy. The Great Outdoors is prominent. To see the new Brand USA ads and “Land of Dreams” campaign, click [here](#).

[Return to top](#)

Recreation Community Prepares Response to USDA Challenge

At the March 2012 Recreation Exchange, USDA Under Secretary Harris Sherman invited recreation leaders to share proposals with him for pilot projects that would enable the Forest Service to meet the challenge of delivering great recreation experiences in an era of budgetary constraints. More than 20 ARC members are working on four areas where innovation and new partnerships can do that – but are currently constrained by the lack of championship for new approaches and change. ARC Board member Margaret Bailey of CHM-Government Services is providing key support to this project. The group expects to present its proposals to the Under Secretary and his expert panel later this month. Forest Service national recreation program staff are very supportive of the initiative and are providing guidance on specific sites and authorities which could facilitate pilot efforts. The four categories now being discussed are:

1. Modernizing existing campgrounds to contemporary standards (visitor and operational standards) and avoiding forced closures
2. New recreation services by private sector partners, including secure RV and boat storage between weekends in-season (aiding recreationists and supporting policies designed to aid energy savings, clean air and control of invasive species)
3. New "More Kids in the Woods" efforts
4. Partnership improvements (including more use of authorities for longer terms)

Interested? Contact ARC President Derrick Crandall at dcrandall@funoutdoors.com

[Return to top](#)

Change to Volunteer Pass Requirements

The number of hours required to earn an ***America the Beautiful Volunteer Pass*** - good for one year at any Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, or National Park Service site - has been cut from 500 to 250. For more information on the Volunteer Pass, click [here](#).