



# American Recreation Coalition

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

## JUNE 2012 NEWSLETTER

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### **GREAT OUTDOORS MONTH PROCLAIMED BY WHITE HOUSE, GOVERNORS**

The President and nearly every governor have declared June 2012 as Great Outdoors Month. We anticipate that the remaining governors will issue proclamations before the month ends. The proclamations are each unique, but certain themes are dominant. At least 40 proclamations emphasize the role outdoor recreation plays in mental and physical health. Support for conservation efforts is referenced in 37 of the documents, and the importance of the outdoors for kids and families is mentioned in 22. Volunteerism is praised in 19 – and virtually all urge people to go out and enjoy the Great Outdoors!

You can view President Obama's proclamation [here](#), and all Great Outdoors Month Proclamations [here](#). Additional proclamations will be posted as they are received.

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### **2012 GREAT OUTDOORS WEEK PUTS RECREATION IN THE SPOTLIGHT IN D.C.**

*To see pictures of key Great Outdoors Week events, click [here](#).*

### **Beacon Awards**

Great Outdoors Week 2012 kicked off with the presentation of the **Beacon Awards** in the Rachel Carson room of the Department of the Interior. The **Beacons** were first presented by the American Recreation Coalition in 2005, and recognize use of new technologies to improve visitor experiences and recreation program management. Federal agencies nominate candidates for the award each year, but an ARC panel selects recipients based on the award criteria: 1) innovation in the use of technology; 2)

use of partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit organizations; 3) efforts to share news of creative solutions; and 4) community support.

The 2012 **Beacons** went to the Federal Interagency Fee Working Group, Carmen Leong-Minch of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service's Grand Teton National Park, and the Bureau of Land Management's nominee, the Colorado Responsible Recreation Foundation's "Stay The Trail" Campaign. For more information on each of the 2012 **Beacon Award** winners, click [here](#).

### **Ice Cream Social**

Friends from federal agencies and the recreation community gathered in the Bison Bistro – the Department of the Interior's cafeteria – for the now-traditional ice cream social marking the start of Great Outdoors Week. Unilever, one of the week's sponsors, provided an array of delicious frozen treats that were enjoyed by senior Interior officials as well as visitors from at least two other departments and a wide array of recreation organizations. A video produced by the National Parks Promotion Council and used at the International Pow Wow played on overhead screens and Presidential and gubernatorial [proclamations](#) designating June as Great Outdoors Month and describing the important role of recreation in the U.S. economy, to our health and to conservation efforts were displayed.

### **Recreation Exchange and Legends Awards**

Top federal agency representatives and recreation enthusiasts gathered on the USDA Whitten Building Patio for the June Recreation Exchange and the presentation of 2012 **Legends Awards**. Seven federal managers received 2012 **Legends Awards** in recognition of outstanding work to improve outdoor recreation experiences and opportunities for the American people. The awards were presented by the American Recreation Coalition (ARC) during Great Outdoors Week – the ARC-coordinated annual celebration in the Nation's Capital of the value and importance of outdoor recreation. **Legends Awards** have been presented annually since 1991.

Federal land management agencies each nominate an individual to receive a **Legends Award** for extraordinary personal efforts which have made a real difference in enhancing outdoor recreation programs and resources. The 2012 **Legends Award** recipients represent the Bureau of Land Management, Federal Highway Administration, National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service, agencies together hosting more than a billion recreation visits annually.

Winners of the 2012 **Legends Awards** are: Scott Jackson and Kathleen Perales, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Don Bruns, Bureau of Land Management; Don Briggs, National Park Service; Cindi Ptak, Federal Highway Administration; Michael Heilman, U.S. Forest Service; and Sandy Perchetti, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For more information on the 2012 **Legends Award** winners, click [here](#).

### **Coalition for Recreational Trails Awards for Members of Congress, RTP Projects**

The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) held its annual awards ceremony in the Rayburn House Office Building, and it was a tremendous success. The awards, which have been presented for the last 14 years, recognize outstanding use of Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds in a number of different categories, including: construction and design; environmental compatibility; education and communication; and maintenance and rehabilitation. In addition to staff members from numerous Congressional offices, seven Members of Congress came in person to salute the excellent work of this year's award recipients. Reps. Steve Southerland (R-FL), Mike Simpson (R-ID), Mike Michaud (D-ME), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Tom Petri (R-WI), and Nick Rahall (D-WV) all spoke about the importance of the RTP and of trails in general, underscoring the bipartisan support that this important program enjoys in the Congress. The CRT also recognized Congressmen Petri and Michaud as Champions of the RTP for their active and effective support for the program and presented only the second CRT Lifetime Leadership Award to Congressman Rahall – the first was awarded to Mr. Petri in 2011 – for providing strong support for the RTP since its inception more than 20 years ago. For information on this year's award-winning projects and programs, click [here](#).

### **Recreation's Key Role in Boosting International Visitation**

ARC hosted a special Great Outdoors Week session entitled “The National Travel and Tourism Strategy: The Role of Public and Tribal Lands and Waters.” The meeting covered efforts now underway and highlighted partnership opportunities for recreation organizations. The session was held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Senior Brand USA staff, including Vice President for Strategic Outreach Joel Secundy and Director of Partner Programs Michael Carroll, were joined by Gail Adams, Director of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, in presentations on key efforts underway. An audience of some 50 persons included federal natural resource agency representatives and key recreation community leaders.

Gail Adams explained that in January, President Barack Obama had announced a major initiative to regain traditional USA market share in international tourism. Success will mean large gains in U.S. employment and a substantial benefit in the U.S. balance of trade account. Timing of this effort is good, for the new public/private entity created in 2011 to lead U.S. tourism promotion, now called Brand USA, is just launching its efforts. The Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior led development of a new National Travel and Tourism Strategy released in May, and a significant portion of the plan focuses on better utilization of national parks and America's Great Outdoors, especially in areas of the country where the benefits of international tourism are largely untapped. Download the new strategy [here](#).

Brand USA's business plan and marketing strategy were shared, including its sources of public and private funding and the exciting TV spots featuring "The Land of Dreams," an

original song now anchoring initial promotional efforts. The song and video feature America's Great Outdoors, and can be viewed at [www.YouTube.com/DiscoverAmerica](http://www.YouTube.com/DiscoverAmerica). Download the presentation [here](#).

Special focus was put on how agencies and recreation/tourism businesses can participate in Brand USA marketing efforts, including unlocking the \$100 million per annum in available matching federal funds, and how all interests need to coordinate efforts to develop attractive itineraries for visitors and to prepare for the needs of more visitors unfamiliar with travel in the USA.

### **U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar: 2012 Sheldon Coleman Great Outdoors Awardee**

U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar received the 2012 Sheldon Coleman Great Outdoors Award, the recreation community's most prestigious award. The award is presented to individuals whose personal efforts have contributed substantially to enhancing outdoor experiences across America.

A panel of 100 national recreation community leaders chose Senator Klobuchar as this year's winner. The award was created in 1989 to honor the life-long efforts of Sheldon Coleman, whose engineering, marketing and advocacy talents made coolers, lanterns and tents bearing his name ubiquitous on America's public lands.

Senator Klobuchar's selection reflects widespread enthusiasm for her efforts supporting recreation. She has been especially active in supporting recreation programs aided by provisions of the nation's surface transportation program. She led efforts to protect the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) after the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee took action to end the user pay-user benefit provision for RTP established in 1991. State park officials joined trail interests in warning Congress that this path would effectively end the RTP program.

The Senator worked closely with recreation interests on a floor amendment reinstating the RTP unchanged, challenging senior Senators of both parties, assembling a remarkable bipartisan coalition of Senators committed to her amendment. While preparing for a floor fight, she pursued acceptance of her language by the legislation's floor manager – acceptance she eventually secured. The result was Senate passage in early 2012 of new surface transportation legislation which continues the RTP program at a guaranteed funding level of \$85 million annually and no significant changes.

The Minnesota Senator also was a key champion of the Travel Promotion Act, passed in 2010, which created the exciting Brand USA campaign. With \$100 million per annum in dedicated, matching federal funding, Brand USA efforts should exceed \$200 million annually and are expected to generate hundreds of thousands of new jobs and new sustainability for many communities near parks and other public and Tribal lands.

The award was presented at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, on the National Mall and was an original work entitled "Mountain Spirit" by Darrell Norman, a Blackfeet artist in Montana. Past award recipients include Interior Secretary

Ken Salazar and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, former President George H. W. Bush, National Geographic Society Chairman Gil Grosvenor, then-U.S. Senators John Breaux, Frank Murkowski and John Chafee, then-U.S. Representative Jim Oberstar, former Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater, Snowbird Chairman and CEO Dick Bass, and former Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne.

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## **NEW STUDY TELLS AMERICANS: *LOTS TO LOSE***

An extraordinary effort by respected, bipartisan national leaders, talented staff and creative volunteers completed a year of discussions and sharing of ideas on June 5 as the Bipartisan Policy Center issued its report entitled ***Lots to Lose: How America's Health and Obesity Crisis Threatens Our Economic Future***. The report is a frank and disturbing assessment of the impact America's poor eating habits and lowered physical activity are having on our economy and quality of life.

The effort was led by four talented former Presidential Cabinet members – two Democrats and two Republicans – former Secretaries of Agriculture Dan Glickman and Ann Veneman and former Secretaries of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt and Donna Shalala. The report was delivered to a packed room of national media, health community experts, recreation community leaders and youth program organizations. And although the report was filled with information and recommendations, the quartet of national leaders announced that its work will continue – an announcement warmly received by the audience.

Dan Glickman called the situation associated with obesity and related health problems a "priority national challenge" that needs to transcend today's partisan environment. He labeled the problem a crisis, one which is largely responsible for today's federal deficit and threatens huge future costs. His co-leaders echoed these sentiments and outlined a series of actions which they believe could alter this path. The recommendations are organized in four clusters: Healthy Families; Healthy Schools; Healthy Workplaces; and Healthy Communities. The effort made clear that it was not seeking to promote a nanny-society role for government, yet made a good case that government policies on assistance to economically disadvantaged families and other programs needed to reflect new knowledge about the consequences of current trends which have seen a tripling of obesity among youth. Currently 35.7% of all American adults are obese, the highest rate in the world's 33 wealthiest countries, and obese individuals spend on average 36% more on healthcare annually than Americans with normal weights. Obesity, according to the report, is a major reason why nearly half of all Americans suffer from chronic illnesses – illnesses that are the cause of more than 70% of the nation's surging healthcare costs.

The American Recreation Coalition provided support for the study and praised the report for articulating the seriousness of the problem. Yet according to ARC President Derrick Crandall, Lots to Lose did not provide many suggestions for utilizing the fun of

active outdoor activity as an intervention strategy. "The lure of urging government and major corporate actions to address the crisis we face in chronic illness costs is high, but we cannot afford to overlook the power of fun in the outdoors as a major tool to change the trajectory of this crisis. Fitness centers at work and nutritional guidance to those on federal assistance are useful steps. But early and frequent exposure of American kids to outdoor active fun is also a useful step – and perhaps the most powerful step of all because it can make appropriate levels of physical activity for families and friends the norm," according to Crandall.

To download a full copy of the report, click [here](#).

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## **WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS *GET OUT WEST***

A year of meetings, discussions, and brainstorming concluded when a diverse group of recreation and tourism experts reported to Western Governors their findings and recommendations for creating more jobs and income through outdoor recreation and tourism and for encouraging more young people to explore the West's great outdoors.

Last year, the Western Governors' Association (WGA) formed its Get Out West! Advisory Group, which delivered three reports to the governors on June 11:

- The West's Competitive Advantage: Landscapes, Open Lands and Unique History
- Connecting Kids and Families to the West's Great Outdoors
- Managing the Region's Recreation Assets

The Get Out West! initiative was launched when Governor Chris Gregoire (D-WA) became Chair of the Western Governors' Association in 2011. She directed the association's staff and a panel of two dozen national leaders to both examine and celebrate outdoor recreation and tourism across the West.

The Advisory Group concluded that for the West to remain the best place for outdoor recreation and tourism, Western Governors should embrace policies that facilitate the growth of these industries and maintain and improve the lands and waters, trails and other infrastructure that make the West a great place to visit and play. The rationale for this recommendation is underscored by a report ***A Snapshot of the Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation***, released at the WGA meeting, which found the economic contribution of outdoor recreation in the nation in 2011 was \$645.6 billion, of which \$255.6 billion was in Western states.

That report and the other three reports released by WGA are available at <http://www.westgov.org/reports>. Derrick Crandall represented both the American Recreation Coalition and the National Park Hospitality Association on the Advisory Group.

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## **RECREATION TEAM OUTLINES INITIATIVE TO TOP USDA OFFICIALS**

Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment Harris Sherman issued a challenge to recreation leaders at ARC's March Recreation Exchange: offer ideas for innovative ways the Forest Service could continue its role as a key national provider of outdoor recreation in an era of fiscal restraint. During Great Outdoors Week, a dozen recreation leaders responded at a session labeled "Next Steps for Improving Recreation Opportunities in National Forests." Among the interests represented were the RV and recreational boating industries, major consumer organizations and businesses operating campgrounds and marinas on federal lands.

Participants in the two-hour session also included the Under Secretary, his Senior Advisor Meryl Harrell, Forest Service Deputy Chief Leslie Weldon and Forest Service Associate Deputy Chief Jim Pena, Forest Service Director of Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources Jim Bedwell, Forest Service Director of Communications Leo Kay and others. Derrick Crandall and Margaret Bailey, Senior Vice President, Government Services Group, Capital Hotel Management LLC, organized the group's presentation.

The recreation leaders addressed the major changes underway in American lifestyles, demography and technology, and expressed a commitment to working in partnership with the agency in delivering seamless, high-quality and healthy recreation experiences on national forests. The presentation had two key topics: Modernization and Expansion of National Forest Recreation Sites and Using Recreation to Achieve the Multiplier Effect.

The group began by focusing on national forest campgrounds and marinas, which can play key roles in connecting an increasingly diverse, urban American population to the Great Outdoors – but only if they are modernized and marketed. Many are in wonderful locations, but unfortunately, most campgrounds and marinas are dated, poorly maintained and threatened by delayed investment and maintenance, and are virtually invisible to many Americans. RV Industry leaders explained that the current state of facilities on Forest Service lands deters potential campers, who have come to expect facilities – such as pull-through site design and amenities including water, electricity, sewer and Wi-Fi – very rare in national forests. Industry officials also described additional visitor services, such as in-season and on-site RV storage, cabins/RV/tent rentals, camp stores and new recreation offerings (like disc golf), which would help draw new visitors to enjoy the Forest Service locations and nearby opportunities for recreation. Appropriations are not even adequate to maintain existing facilities, making necessary capital investment to modernize and upgrade visitor services the responsibility of non-FS funds.

National forests host 67 marinas serving some 35 million visits annually, and they, too, share challenges like outdated facilities and missing services. Specific areas for

improvement include expanded in-season boat storage, boat-readying services, boat rentals, and managed launch ramps, parking, piers, and other support facilities.

National forests have an outstanding model for private-sector investment in on-forest recreation infrastructure: ski areas.

There are those in the private sector willing to invest in campground and marina projects, but current Forest Service policies are a major deterrent to investment. Length of campground concessioner contracts is typically too short to justify significant investments and even where the agency is willing to consider sufficient lengths of term, the inability to transfer permits or guarantee their reissuance greatly impedes securing funding. In addition, use of Grainger-Thye authority creates a confusing commingling of public and private assets. Fortunately, these issues are the result of agency policy, not legislation, and there are sufficient authorities to allow the agency to create a workable partnership with businesses investing on public lands.

Recreation leaders went on to explain that revised Forest Service policies would achieve a “multiplier effect of benefits to local communities.” Higher levels of recreation activity would support more jobs, both in construction and operation, and would likely increase revenues to the agency. Co-use of existing visitor centers to showcase offerings of outfitters and guides and other mobile base recreation providers could reduce agency manpower needs at those sites. More consistent and expanded use of conservation corps could produce lasting benefits, much as the CCC program did several generations ago. Such programs might be particularly effective if implemented in areas with high-unemployment populations, with veterans, or in partnership with law enforcement agencies.

Especially exciting, the recreation leaders told the USDA group, are programs which would reduce repetitive in-season towing of RVs, boats and other recreation equipment between home and forest recreation sites. In addition to substantial savings in fuel costs to recreationists, these opportunities could significantly assist clean-air and traffic-congestion mitigation efforts, and could also be valuable in controlling the spread of invasive aquatic species and weeds by establishing quarantine zones for “between weekend” storage and cleanup areas.

The recreation leaders also noted that some recreation services offered on national forests are subject to lodging and other tourism taxes – taxes which now pay for such public purposes as stadiums and promotion efforts. The group urged USDA to partner with its recreation businesses in approaches to gateway-destination marketing organizations to propose use of funds to support forest recreation infrastructure, visitor apps and more.

The presentation ended with requests from the recreation leaders for specific pilot efforts to modernize and expand recreation services at campgrounds and marinas, to immediately act to make permits and concessioner contracts transferrable, providing



certain conditions are met, and to begin a series of meetings to design and implement new public/private partnerships.

The reaction to the presentation by the Under Secretary was enthusiastic and positive. He explained that innovative agreements were happening within other Forest Service programs, but that the progress had been slow in recreation – until the meeting. He praised the thoughts presented and proposed immediate work by a team led by Leslie Weldon and Derrick Crandall aimed at planning a “three-hour-plus meeting within a month to make decisions and proceed.”

Planning for this follow-up session is already underway and a search is on for suitable pilot-effort locations for investments, in-season storage and more. ARC intends to bring several additional organizations unable to be part of the June 6 meeting into the discussions. To review the PowerPoint presentation used at the meeting, click [here](#).

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## **GO DAY 2012: BIGGER, BETTER**

National Get Outdoors Day (GO Day) celebrates America’s Great Outdoors and encourages kids and their families to spend time outdoors, exploring the natural world and enjoying various outdoor recreation activities. GO Day unifies public and private-sector interests in efforts to introduce families and youth, particularly from urban environments, to the great outdoors. This year GO Day was more successful than ever, with 138 events in 37 States. Initial reports from these events indicate they had record attendance as well.

National Get Outdoors Day was launched on June 14, 2008, in response to a growing number of disturbing reports about today’s youth, particularly in relationship to their health and daily activities. Today’s American youth average 7.5 hours per day in front of a screen and are six times more likely to play a computer game than to ride a bike. The USDA Forest Service and ARC agreed to lead an inclusive, nationwide effort focusing on a single day when people would be inspired and motivated to get outdoors.

GO Day 2012 – June 9 – was highlighted by eight signature sites across the country. These sites were selected for proven ability to build partnerships with local organizations and introduce thousands of people to a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. This year’s signature sites were located in Denver, CO; Harrington, DE; Huron, SD; Mesa, AZ; Minneapolis, MN; Pisgah National Forest, NC; Salt Lake City, UT; and Vancouver, WA.

The Denver GO Day event was again a tremendous success, with 114 exhibitors introducing approximately 9,000 people to the Great Outdoors. Denver offered varied activities including rock climbing, expressive arts, fishing and biking. Twenty five vendors were available for people with disabilities. Perhaps the most moving stories from this event involved kids who rode a bike for the first time, or caught their first fish.

Vancouver also gave kids the opportunity to catch their first fish, and organizers of this signature site capitalized on the site's history to make their event unique. Park rangers from five nearby national park units manned booths and shared accounts of incredible recreation opportunities and environmental wonders nearby, encouraging families to come visit.

The other 130 GO Day sites have provided initial encouraging reports. Fishing competitions in Nashville, TN and Harrisburg, IL were big successes, as were encounters with live animals in Eagan, MN and Schnecksville, PA and a behind-the-scenes look at a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers site in Brookville, IN. Activities at other GO Day events included rock climbing, sailing, nature walks, mountain biking, kayaking, environmental education booths, yoga, and much, much more.

More stories from these great events will be available in the full report, which will be posted [here](#).

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## **KEY 2012 ELECTION EFFORTS UNDERWAY**

The elections of 2012 are important to recreation interests, and especially to national park partners. In November, voters will elect the President who will be in office on August 25, 2016 – the Centennial of the National Park Service – as well as 33 U.S. Senators, 435 Member of Congress, 12 governors and thousands of state and local officials with significant influence over recreational activities on public lands and waters, the budgets of public agencies managing those areas and hosting recreation visits, a variety of tax and credit policies which are important to recreation, energy policies and more.

To help recreation and tourism interests participate effectively in the debates leading up to the elections, two important efforts are underway. First, the National Park Hospitality Association is joining the National Parks Conservation Association in sponsoring a national survey of likely voters on park and Great Outdoors issues. The results will be reviewed by two leading political consulting firms, Peter Hart D. Research Associates and North Star Opinion Research, and strategies will be offered separately to Republican and Democratic candidates and organizations, linking voters targeted by those two interests to specific messages and themes. The survey is likely to show deep and broad support for national parks, but identify different reasons for this support among key constituencies. The survey findings are also likely to be helpful to concessioners, gateway communities and even the National Park Service as efforts gear up to keep America's parks relevant to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Americans.

A second effort is the development of a simple guide and online resource which can help companies, associations and others understand opportunities for and limitations on allowed political activities involving federal campaigns – from contributions to phone banks to hosted events and use of mailing and email lists. The guide will also share

creative efforts used by top recreation interests to raise issues in political campaigns, especially those which strategically connect candidates with passionate voters. The guide notes that there is no better time to get the attention of elected officials and those running for office than when they are seeking voter approval. And in a year where the number of competitive contests is likely to exceed normal levels, 2012 is a great time to explain ideas and concerns and to ask for commitments. The guide, being developed by the American Recreation Coalition, will discuss use of awards and white papers, participation in town hall meetings and volunteering for campaign work – as well as use of key meetings and shows and events to connect candidates with such positive issues as economic stability, health, family activities and protection of special places. More information on both efforts will be available by late July.

To be kept informed on these efforts, contact Derrick Crandall at [dcrandall@funoutdoors.com](mailto:dcrandall@funoutdoors.com). Also requested: personal examples of creative and successful political involvement.

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