



American Recreation Coalition

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

NEWS

Contact: Derrick Crandall, 202-682-9530

Toolbox for the Great Outdoors - Second Edition Goes Online

Washington, D.C. (June 12, 2006) – The ***Toolbox for the Great Outdoors Second Edition*** is now available online at www.tools4outdoors.us. The website helps public land managers and partners, including nonprofit organizations, harness dozens of funding sources and other programs which can be used to connect 21st century Americans to public lands and to enhance visitor experiences. First developed in a CD-format in 2003, the ***Toolbox Second Edition*** explains the use of 50 “tools” in 7 “drawers” or categories and showcases dozens of examples of the successful use of these tools at recreation sites.

The ***Toolbox*** is the result of cooperation between six federal agencies, ReserveAmerica and the American Recreation Coalition (ARC). Especially important, according to Derrick Crandall, ARC President, is the second edition’s inclusion of resources available in the health and safety and economic development arenas.

“The need for adding resources to federal lands recreation efforts are more acute today than ever before”, said Mr. Crandall. “National leaders and the public are more aware of the benefits of recreation to our health and to local economies. Yet an estimated 40% of all visitors to national forests use facilities which are rated by the Forest Service as failing to meet its own minimum standards. And backlogs and worn-out facilities are found at recreation sites across the nation.” Neither widespread service cutbacks nor a steady decline in quality of visitor experiences is acceptable, he noted, and federal land agencies and their partners serving the public must find new mechanisms for generating the resources needed to provide quality services as field-level budgets of federal recreation programs continue to drop – threatening the quality of visits by millions each season. The ***Toolbox for the Great Outdoors*** is designed to identify resources available to leverage appropriations -- and to provide strategic advice on successfully tapping into them.

The ***Toolbox for the Great Outdoors*** contains information on sources ranging from retained fees – made possible for most federal agencies by the passage of a 10-year recreation fee authority in December 2004 – to grant programs modified by the August 2005 passage of SAFETEA-LU, major surface transportation legislation. “The Federal Highway Trust Fund alone now provides more than \$1.5 billion annually to recreation-related projects and programs”, he said, “yet opportunities continue to go underutilized on public lands.”

(more)

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Inroads are also being made in the health arena as top public budget officials are sold on the concept that increased physical activity is a viable and cost effective way to attack soaring health care costs. “The recreation community’s challenge is to document persuasively that public recreation facilities are a viable mechanism to boost physical activity. That accomplished, it is entirely possible that an earmarked amount of the \$300+ billion in annual public health-care spending – and billions more in private health-care spending – can be made available for use on readily accessible trails and more,” Mr. Crandall stated. “Ultimately we might be able to quantify, and then profit from understanding, the benefits that good recreation facilities bring to other areas, like education, crime deterrence and international tourism.”

The second edition of the **Toolbox** will be maintained on its own website available at no cost to the public for a period of three years – a Third Edition is expected in 2010. The Toolbox will “grow” as those using the tools in the field add comments and case studies to benefit others. The design allows updates that reflect Congressional and Administration actions – or even new tools resulting from actions by states.

The American Recreation Coalition (ARC) is a Washington-based, nonprofit federation formed in 1979. Since its inception, ARC has sought to catalyze public/private partnerships to enhance and protect outdoor recreation. Its membership consists of more than 100 organizations, including national and regional associations and corporations that represent a major share of the \$400 billion a year recreation/leisure industry and enthusiast groups representing millions of recreationists. ARC provides a unified voice for recreation interests to ensure their full and active participation in the government policy making that is shaping present and future outdoor recreation resources, facilities and opportunities. ARC conducts research on a regular basis, organizes and conducts national conferences and meetings and disseminates information regarding recreational needs and initiatives through a variety of media, including its Web site, www.funoutdoors.com.