

**America's Great Outdoors**  
**Notes from Youth Listening Session**  
 Location: Albuquerque, New Mexico  
 Date: July 17, 2010

*President Obama launched a national conversation about conservation in America at the White House Conference on the Great Outdoors on April 16, 2010. The President understands that protecting and restoring the lands and waters that we love and reconnecting people to the outdoors must happen at the local level. Therefore, President Obama directed the principal leaders of the Initiative to travel across the country to listen and learn from people directly involved in finding grassroots solutions to conserve our lands, waterways, historical and cultural resources and to reconnect Americans with the Outdoors. The President indicated that the sessions should engage the full range of interested groups, including tribal leaders, farmers and ranchers, sportsmen, community park groups, foresters, youth groups, businesspeople, educators, State and local government, recreation and conservation groups and others. The President placed a special priority on engaging with America's youth. Below are notes from the breakout groups at the Listening Session sorted by Discussion Question. Please feel free to use the ideation tool at <http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf/> if you would like to share your thoughts.*

Discussion Questions

- Y1. Where do you go when you are not indoors?
- Y2. What do you do personally to protect the environment?
- Y3. What are some obstacles and challenges that prevent young people from spending time outdoors?
- Y4. What recommendations would you make to President Obama to get more young people engaged in, and connected to, the outdoors?

Comments	Question (1-4)
Biking and Swimming. Likes to go down by the River. Alameda has a nice river.	Y1
Likes to play soccer.	Y1
He has a five acre field that he goes to work on.	Y1
Works in a community garden. He lives by the Sandias so just being near mountains and water is what he likes to do.	Y1
She and her friends go off-roading in Tijeras, hiking in the Sandias and swimming.	Y1
After football practice he likes to ride his bike to the pool. He lives next to an arroyo so he likes to walk up and down the arroyo.	Y1
Likes to go backpacking and camping in New Mexico, Colorado and Utah with family and friends.	Y1

Birdwatching, hiking and mushroom hunting.	Y1
Fishing and camping in Eagle Nest and whitewater rafting.	Y1
Skiing and snowshoeing in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. A lot of biking and camping and backpacking close to Santa Fe.	Y1
Farms on five acres, goes running in the foothills in the near his pueblo. Likes to go outdoors and watch the sunrise.	Y1
Likes to rollerskate around the community and the Rio Grande. She likes to hang out with friends at the skate parks in the city.	Y1
Works with the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program. They monitor the Bosque which is a riparian ecosystem along the Rio Grande. They monitor water depths and litter fall for that forest. They get the youth involved and now have 700 youth that come into the Bosque to do water samples. By getting the youth involved it forms a lasting relationship with the environment and gets the kids interested in something that they normally wouldn't do.	Y2
He also works with the youth and right now they are working at Santa Fe High building an outside classroom. Kids need hands-on-experience and ask how they can get involved. It is not only an outdoor classroom. It contains a perma-culture garden and solar panels. They will be monitoring the solar panels throughout the school year. He feels that more monies for outdoor education programs in public schools are needed so the students connect with the land instead of a textbook. It would be nice if the National Parks should have outdoor classrooms so that when the students do visit the Parks serve as an example	Y2
He is currently working in the Carson National Forest building a fire break between the Pueblo and the forest to help reduce the spread of a fire. They are also building trails in public lands. When people see them out on the trails they know that they are taking care of the land and they have greater appreciation for the land. They are trying to make it more accessible for the public. They have two different crews of about 20 doing forestry work. They also have two more crews working with the youth in the community trying to get the youth to do things outside. Over the course of the year they have over 100 people working for the Youth Corp	Y2
One of the things that she has done locally is start a climate action group in her school. One of the things that you have to take into account is to set the example first and make your voice heard. Being a community leader shows other people what they are capable of by taking the initiative.	Y2
Art connects with nature. Picking up recycled materials and trash and making art with it.	Y2
Work out of the Ancestral Lands Office in Acoma Pueblo. Being Native American they have a certain connection to the land and they teach that to their groups. They uproot tamarisk removal, introduce native plants along the riverside. Their main focus this summer is erosion control and water conservation	Y2
They employ a lot of the Acoma youth. Kids find that it is fun being employed with them. They take it back to the Native American culture. Being stewards of the earth and that it goes back to the mother earth. They find pride and joy doing that kind of work.	Y2

One of the biggest issues in the Gila Wilderness where he works is the fact that the trails, the corridor and the access to trails is deplorable. The budget for fires is huge and trail budgets are small. The signage on trails does not exist. He spends countless hours flagging out trails to find some sign of a trail. He sometimes literally searches on the ground looking for any sign of tread.	Y3
Access speaking from the urban setting like the Alb. metro area, urban youth have challenges and barriers even getting into nature. He thinks more organizations can be supported. He thinks connecting it with education through curriculum is important. Supporting conservation efforts through student employment. Working on Organic Community gardens. Catchment and conservation. Getting youth to tend a garden is good. Pollution is huge and that can be combined with education too and how can you protect the land for future generations	Y3
Biggest issue is gangs and graffiti on the west side where he lives. Kids are afraid to go out.	Y3
Access to recycling bins is a another big issue because a lot of people would like to recycle but don't know how to take it.	Y3
South valley has no access to outdoors because of the litter and gangs. She is involved in sports and some of the sports groups have started to clean up to make it a better community. More community centers are needed, the youth want to be out but have no place to go play. No sidewalks. School is helping out by making a green house on campus and a compost pile to make a garden in school	Y3
Is a member of several clubs and they try to get other students involved and try to do different events but hard to get students involved because it requires money.	Y3
Rio Grande Schools gets the most rap in the state and because of this the school gets small profits.	Y3
Trash. It is dumped on the roads. It is not only cans. It is old cars, sofa's etc. If there was a way to get rid of trash they would get outdoors more often.	Y3
Trash makes you fall behind. You need to try to get rid of it.	Y3
Biggest problem is money because they employ 30 students and pay them minimum wage. Money comes out of their school budget.	Y3
She feels what we are dealing with in the big picture is a lack of perceived value of being outside. It is no longer considered a priority to get kids outside. Media can help curb that and we need role models. Perceived risk is huge problem. Making outdoors safe for everyone is really important.	Y3
Not so much physical access as much as mental access. As long as you are not part of the environment you cannot connect with it. Just working with Earthworks has educated her and has been her chain of thought on a daily basis.	Y3
Accessibility is big problem. Some kind of transportation would encourage people to get outdoors more.	Y3
Indoor distraction is an influence.	Y3

Not doing a good job of marketing the outdoors. Many wonderful programs available but do not put monies aside this year for next year. There are non-profits that they can go to.	Y3
NM is now his home. Has been working with the youth of NM and one of. Meaning of nature and holding it true and invest in the regions. Live in different worlds but how do you get them together. Whole week and bring youth together.	Y4
Lack of older mentos, supporting role models, education, more service learning based curriculum. It is all connected with taking care of the earth. It should be done through after school programs. Funding stream and supporting the budgets that are crippled. Sustainability of funding for programs that are educational in nature.	Y4
One of the biggest problems is that the motivation and encouragement for youth to be outdoors is not there especially with a society where there is more emphasis on image. Need to start encouraging in schools cause they are students and spend 90% of their time in shcool and the community should get the image out there. They should ger more emphasis from the community and schools. She would recommend to the Secretary of Education that there should be more community gardens and outdoor classrooms in schools. Making sure how important it is and making it part of the curriculum. Kids do not see the importance. Having student mentors is another aspect.	Y4
Support the outdoor environment and support farmers and ranchers who also support the environment. It preserves the open space. Support and maintain the multiple use of land.	Y4
Possibility to do an outreach to parents. If you start kids out young it becomes part of their culture. He would suggest side activities that you can do that would not take money and have community conversations.	Y4
Unplug from the indoors, Ipods, computers etc. and do something outdoors.	Y4
He would like to see all federal buildings at zero carbon. Set the example in the National Parks so youth could see solar panels, green buildings etc. Another recommendation would be to have a Green Conservation Corp so that the youth could have hands on experience constructing green buildings and at the same time get paid for it.	Y4
She thinks youth scholarships in the consideration and outdoor environment would encourage more students.	Y4
Recommendation would be going to the community and getting young kids involved. He is currently working with water harvesting and reconstructing sites.	Y4
Scholarships and Money. Try to focus on the youth. The younger kids look up to someone who works outside. Use that as an incentive. If they see someone outdoors wthey will want to work alongside of them.	Y4
Recommendation would be to set up a city town hall meeting and get the community involved to plant trees. Another recommendation is to have a march for conservation.	Y4
Working in Carson NF to reduce fire danger between Taos Pueblo and forest. Building trails on public lands across NM. Public sees them working and appreciates that there are groups working to maintain and build trails. Working to remove invasive species and reduce fire threat. Have 2 crews of 20 people doing forestry and trail work. Several other crews in communities and summer program crews that involve and educate local youth. Some bosque and wetlands environment work. Involve about 100 people throughout the year. Serve as leaders/role models to teach other people how they can help.	Y2

Started high school climate action group. We need young people to set an example and take the lead. Wants to be a leader and have her voice heard. Doesn't buy bottled water, car pools, only shops at thrift stores. Reducing/reusing is as important as recycling. Wants others to realize what they can do to help.	Y2
Really likes art and thinks it's a great way to connect to nature. Used trash to create art sculptures and recycled art. Helps people realize we are trashing the environment and we need to recycle.	Y2
Work in ancestral lands office. Work on Acoma pueblo lands. As Native Americans have connection to the land. Introduce native plants along river, build check dams to prevent erosion, working mostly on water conservation and preventing erosion.	Y2
SWCC Program Coordinator: Try to make it fun for kids to work. Encourage stewardship through cultural and religious beliefs. Teaches kids about their connection to the land.	Y2
Has been doing trail work since he was 12 and loves it. Trail work and connections in Gila National Forest are deplorable. Access to trails is horrendous. Fire budgets are huge and trail budgets are small. Gila is one of the larger national forests and only 10-15 people are doing trail work, usually seasonal hires. Signage is a problem. Crew leaders can't even figure out where trail is or what trail they are on. How can the public figure it out?	Y3
Access from an urban setting is challenging. Hard to get to outdoor areas, even the ones in the city, because of inadequate public transportation. Need more opportunities for youth/students to get out and apply what they learn. Need more youth conservation jobs, student employment. Community gardens are a great education tool and beautify the environment. Organic techniques are very important, we need to reduce chemicals. Need more agricultural areas, we are not practicing sustainable food operations in this country. Tending a garden teaches you where food comes from and gets you outdoors. Need to reduce pollution to maintain lands for future generations.	Y3
Level of danger. This young man lives on the west side of Albuquerque where there is a lot of gang activity. The local basket ball hoop has been shot out twice. There is graffiti everywhere. He's afraid to go out because he could get stabbed/shot. His friend was jumped at the park and now he is afraid to go there.	Y3
Access to recycling bins is an issue. Wants to recycle but doesn't know where to go. There are a lot of water bottles associated with sports activities/programs. Tries to recycle bottles and take them to bins. She is a member of other clubs and tries to get people involved in public service and campus cleanup. Her school doesn't have money to do a lot of the projects.	Y3
Lives in Albuquerque's south valley, gangs and graffiti everywhere. There also aren't very many sidewalks to use and litter everywhere. They need better community centers. They want to play soccer but don't have safe parks/areas where they are. They can't ride bikes since there are no sidewalks. They have to drive to another part of town to do these activities. School is making a green house and she wants to do composting for garden/greenhouse. School is important but kids also need chances to get out and learn about the environment. They're from the "bad school" so they don't get very much funding.	Y3
Trash is a big problem. On the road people are dumping bags of trash, furniture, cars. We need better facilities and processes for dumping trash.	Y3

Trash does make it difficult. Spend a lot of time picking up trash instead of gardening or recreation.	Y3
Money is a problem. The YCC program pays students minimum wage. Just to afford salary they must partner with other organizations. Need more money for transportation and equipment.	Y3
Big picture – there is a lack of value. People don't value outdoors and don't care for them. Something happened in the last couple generations that people don't want to go outside. Media and role models can play a role in getting youth outdoors. Pro athletes and celebrities aren't always the best role models for encouraging kids to get outdoors. We also need to make city outdoor areas safe.	Y3
Physical access isn't the problem, it's the mental access. If you don't connect with outdoors you don't want to go there. Need to give people jobs and outdoor education that makes them appreciate this resource.	Y3
City transportation and general transportation is lacking. Need better public transportation to get around to different areas in the city. Need shuttles that take people to outdoor areas farther away from the city.	Y3
Distractions are an issue. Wants to go outside but indoor distractions (cell phone, TV) stop her.	Y3
US Army Corps of Engineers Employee – We need to do a better job of marketing and showing the public what we have to offer. There are a lot of resources that address the mentioned problems but people aren't aware of them. We also don't try to align our mission/goals with what the public is saying they need. Federal budgeting process is an issue. Sometimes the timing for a project doesn't align with budget. For example, can't use this year's excess funding for next year 's projects.	Y3
We need to teach each other how to appreciate the outdoors and educate each other on our cultural values and ties to the outdoors. We live in different worlds and we need to communicate those differences. (Sec. Salazar: How do we do that?) Take a whole week to bring youth from across New Mexico together.	Y4
We need service learning based curriculum. Academics need to connect and tie to hands-on, on-the-ground learning. There isn't funding for these kinds of efforts. Need funding stream that supports all the ongoing efforts. People are doing the work but don't know if they'll get funding. Need sustainable funding.	Y4
One of the biggest problems is motivation and encouragement for youth to get outdoors. There's more emphasis on sports, college applications, materialism/consumerism. Need to encourage outdoors in school since this is where kids spend 90% of their time. Need media to make outdoors part of our culture, just like they encourage shopping. Kids are too busy right now. (Sec Salazar – What would you suggest we do in schools?) Community gardens and outdoor classrooms. Emphasize that what you do in your everyday life affects the environment. Need student mentors. Youth need to be part of sharing the message. Kids don't always listen to teachers.	Y4
We need to support outdoor environmental areas, including farms and ranches. These areas are open space, wildlife habitat. We need to maintain private lands because they serve multiple purposes. There needs to be more support for farmers and ranchers.	Y4

Need to outreach to parents to teach them to encourage their kids to get outdoors. (Sec. Salazar – How do you outreach to parents in this day and age?) Need to educate parents on outdoor activities that are cheap – camping, hiking etc. Meet up groups in communities and conversations on how to get outdoors would be a good start.	Y4
Have a week where people are encouraged to unplug from media and technology and encourage them to go outside.	Y4
Make federal buildings zero carbon. Need green-collar conservation cordps to do this work. Use solar panels, water harvesting etc. Get people involved hands-on and educate them how to do it in their own lives.	Y4
Offer environmental scholarships to get youth employment that’s related to the outdoors.	Y4
Get young kids involved in the community. Educate people on green habits. Have community days where you take people to sites that are using green techniques – water harvesting etc. Educate people on work being done. Community based projects that bring people together.	Y4
From Acoma Pueblo. Need to have incentives for getting outdoors - like jobs, scholarships. Need to focus on who you are trying to reach. Need to have youth leaders/role-models who encourage younger kids to do conservation work. (Many kids agreed wages and peer support/examples would encourage them to do conservation work.)	Y4
Do something like a breast cancer walk but for conservation, recreation and parks.	Y4
Have city/community projects that do conservation work.	Y4