



American Recreation Coalition

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

NEWS

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OUTDOOR CHAMPIONS OF COLOR CALL FOR CLEARER INVITATION AND BETTER FRONT-COUNTRY VISITOR SERVICES

Washington, D.C. (June 19, 2014) - "Hosting All Americans in Their Great Outdoors" was the theme that sparked the most passionate and inspired discussions at Partners Outdoors 2014, held this year at the U.S. Department of the Interior during Great Outdoors Month. The discussions were designed to move well beyond recognition that federal recreation sites receive low levels of visits from Americans of color and focus how barriers could be eliminated and greater visitation encouraged.

The day included presentations from panelists Culture ONE World Founder Carlos Alcazar, author Audrey Peterman and Greening Youth Foundation Founder Angelou Ezeilo.

The day's General Sessions, titled *Understanding Barriers to Outdoors Fun for Some Americans* and *Bringing a Diverse Population to the Great Outdoors*, served as eye-openers for many Partners Outdoors attendees and helped encourage the redefinition of strategies for bringing a more diverse audience to America's Great Outdoors.

Carlos Alcazar outlined available steps to encourage Hispanic participation in the outdoors; Angelou Ezeilo identified some real barriers that prevent African-Americans from getting outdoors; and Audrey Peterman dismissed the notion that people of color don't want to participate in the Great Outdoors but was frank about the lack of diversity in federal agency workforces and a failure to tender real invitations to missing markets.

Mr. Alcazar told Partners Outdoor panelists that research is clear: Hispanics love public lands and camping but want to enjoy time outdoors in different ways, requiring different approaches. According to Alcazar, outdoor activities enjoyed by Hispanics typically revolve around large settings like church groups or families, and typically involve food, rather than the stereotypical small group or solo camping experience. "The way to lead them to the outdoors is through gateway opportunities. A perfect example is...they're already there at the picnic grounds. So if they're comfortable at the picnic grounds, you take a look at what brought them there. It's a family experience, it's an experience where it's very much revolved around food. So you start to combine

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Outdoor Champions of Color Add One

those elements and make it so it's not as difficult and cost-prohibitive to get set up," he said.

Angelou Ezeilo stepped to the fore to help private and public partners understand the challenges young African-Americans face in getting outdoors. She cited issues like portrayals of outdoor spaces in the media as dangerous places, dislike of bugs and the differences in African-American women's hair care preferences as barriers to outdoor activities, but most of all she focused on the lack of employment as a major factor in keeping African-American youth from enjoying the outdoors.

"If we really want to connect and engage these young adults, one of the things that means the most at this point is having a job. We would like to say, 'But the focus should just be wanting to be outdoors in these beautiful national treasures.' Yes, but after I have a job and I don't have to think about the basic necessities, I can then start thinking about the beauty that surrounds me and what I can do to protect it," she said.

Again dispelling conventionally held beliefs that a particular minority group has no interest in the outdoors, Audrey Peterman took the stage to deliver an impassioned speech on the importance of connecting African-Americans to the outdoors through invitation and active engagement with their history.

"It is a fallacy that people of color are not interested in the outdoors and the environment. It is a complete and absolute fallacy, and moreover, it is a fallacy that will destroy the very things we love." Peterman said. She went on to speak of the necessity of connecting people with the history contained in our national parks saying, "If you want to engage people of color with their natural treasures that their tax dollars pay for, then they ought to know the stories that connect them to those places."

She also spoke about the necessity of diversifying the workforce in the federal land management agencies – pointing out that 84% of the National Park Service's workforce is white – and inviting people to public lands, describing a diverse group in race and age she led to the Grand Canyon, saying, "...all we did was give those people an invitation, and that is what is lacking in the entire federal lands system."

Flat and declining visitation levels for federal lands and limited visits by Americans of color have prompted discussions about federal lands having major relevancy problems. But Partners Outdoors 2014 speakers and participants largely agreed that relevancy is not a major barrier. As the participants noted, evidence suggests strongly that Americans of color love the outdoors, but have different needs and desires than traditional users. In response, they explained that understanding these differences, delivering different kinds of outdoor experience and extending invitations to diverse populations better are the solutions to getting all Americans outdoors.

View these presentations here: <http://www.funoutdoors.com/node/view/3152>. See the index to speakers and times and links to presentations for Partners Outdoors video #3.

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**Outdoor Champions of Color
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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.