



News from NARRP

This content is generated by members for members. Please send us your news, reports, job announcements, manuals and personal updates that may be of interest to recreation planning professionals.

The National Association of Recreation Resource Planners

Update from the Board

The NARRP Board recently held our fall retreat, a 2-day work session to discuss the state of the association and profession, review accomplishments and actions for the coming year, and of course, plan for our future. To better plan for our upcoming 2012 conference (<http://narrp.org/clubportal/ClubStatic.cfm?clubID=1431&pubmenuOptID=37119>), we held this year's retreat in Baton Rouge, LA. Board members stayed at the conference hotel, the Belle of Baton Rouge (<http://www.belleofbatonrouge.com/>) and met with some of our incredibly welcoming and gracious local partners, Louisiana Office of State Parks (<http://www.crt.state.la.us/parks/>) and the Baton Rouge Convention and Visitors Bureau (<http://www.visitbatonrouge.com/>). Given the beautiful setting along the Mississippi River with access to trails, wonderful restaurants, several museums, and the state capitol, as well as our local partners and engaging selection of presentations, we are truly excited about our 2012 conference in Baton Rouge and hope to see you all there.

Other highlights from our retreat include the following:

1. Discussed and began the process of transitioning to a 5-year strategic plan with an associated 5-year budget plan (beginning with FY 2012)
2. Worked through a non-profit self-assessment tool to discuss Strategic Planning, Resource Development, Board Development, Marketing and Financial Empowerment, and other key aspects of the association to help identify our strengths and weaknesses.
3. Reviewed the final membership survey results and suggested board actions (final report will be included in upcoming newsletter).
4. Reviewed, discussed updates, and revised the association's Bylaws (pending membership approval), and Policy and Procedures Manual (pending final board approval).
5. Discussed a new website and other digital media opportunities (e.g., webinars, social media, etc.)

Be on the lookout for additional topics and initiatives that came out of our retreat in the coming months!

Sergio Capozzi
NARRP President

NRPA introduces America's Backyard website

In addition to the redesign of NRPA.org, we launched a new America's Backyard website (AmericasBackyard.org). The new website's goal is to build a body of grassroots supporters that champion our cause by making a donation and advocating for parks on local, state, and national level.

Update on the America's Great Outdoors Initiative

In just a few days, the Department of the Interior will issue a 50-state report outlining the country's most promising ways to reconnect Americans with the natural world. We are highlighting two projects in Pennsylvania that will be included in the final report – representing what the State of Pennsylvania and local stakeholders believe are among the best investments to support a healthy, active population, conserve wildlife and working lands, and create travel, tourism and outdoor recreation jobs across the country.

Landscape conservation and expansion of recreational facilities on the lower Susquehanna River and urban greening in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are among 100 projects nationwide that will be highlighted in next week's report — two in every state — as part of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative to establish a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda and reconnect Americans to the outdoors.

To view a map of the projects already announced, click here: <http://www.doi.gov/Americas-Great-Outdoors-Highlighted-Projects.cfm>

These projects were identified for their potential to conserve important lands and build recreation opportunities and economic growth for the surrounding communities as part of close engagement with Gov. Tom Corbett and the state of Pennsylvania, as well as private landowners, local- and tribal-elected officials, community organizations and outdoor-recreation and conservation stakeholders.

We are listening to the people of Pennsylvania and communities across America and working with them on locally-based projects that will conserve the beauty and health of our land and water and open up more opportunities for people to enjoy them. Interior staff and I have been asking each governor for the most promising projects to support in their states and we will do all we can to help move them forward.

Thank you,

Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior

Trans. Enhancements under attack ("bikers for bridges" launched?)

Courtesy of the National Center for Bicycling and Walking

by Mark Plotz

On November 1, 2011 the US Senate will finalize the transportation appropriations bill that will set transportation funding levels for FY2012. At that time, Senator Ron Paul (R-KY), who represents a state where 67 percent of adults are either overweight or obese, where 21 percent of children and adolescents are obese, where 30 percent of the population is physically inactive, and which ranked as the 33rd most bike-friendly state, is expected to introduce a bill permitting states to move Transportation Enhancements funds over to bridge repair. A reasonable person, at first blush, might think this a sound idea: put the money where it's needed; avoid unnecessary government mandates to build things people don't want. It sounds good until you realize that the states already seem to have more bridge repair money than they know what to do with: last year, state DOTs returned \$530M of it to the Federal government.

If the states neither need, nor use the money they've got for bridge repair, then why is Senator Paul interested in providing license for state DOTs to zero-out Transportation Enhancements? The answer to that question can be found in the pages of CenterLines #182, published Wednesday, August 22, 2007 in which Secretary of Transportation, Mary Peters, first draws that dubious link between bridges falling down and transportation funding spent on bike paths. Read that classic here (<http://bit.ly/mThyZq>) and be sure to read Bill Wilkinson's subsequent and deserved rebuke of the Secretary's comments. Senator Paul's proposed amendment is an unfortunate distraction of our focus from the real threat to the safety and well being of Kentuckians: physical inactivity, and streets that are unsafe for pedestrians. As of 2007, Kentuckians lived over 2 years less than the national average, and during the last decade, more than 500 pedestrians lost their lives on Kentucky's streets.

New roads post-storm make New Orleans cycling city

Courtesy of businessweek.com

By Cain Burdeau

For decades, blogger Joseph Donnelly saw few improvements for urban cyclists like himself in New Orleans, so he used the title of a website he started five years ago as a call to arms: "How To Start A Revolution In An Unfriendly Bike City."

But a push by the city to use Hurricane Katrina recovery money to make the roads more accommodating has left him with little choice but to scrap the label in favor of something more prosaic. The top of the blog now reads: "Bicycling New Orleans: Practical Survival Tips for Cyclists in NOLA."

"A lot of my gripes have been resolved," said Donnelly, who started cycling in the 1970s and ditched his last car for good in 1989. "When I started the blog in 2006, there was not a single bicycle lane anywhere in New Orleans. Before Katrina, the roads were dangerous for everyone."

Since 2007, the city has used about \$100 million in federal rebuilding dollars to lay 56 miles of new asphalt on 55 heavily used streets, transforming potholed boulevards into smooth blacktops ideal for bike riding. Under the city's Submerged Roads Program, bike lanes have also been painted on 15 streets, giving the city about 40 miles of bike-friendly pathway. There are plans to pave 26 more streets.

The city is also poised to spend \$7 million in federal aid to turn a wide 3-mile stretch of an abandoned railroad easement between the French Quarter and City Park into a greenway that

will be known as the Lafitte Corridor.

Ridership has also grown. In 2010, New Orleans ranked 12th in the number of bicycle commuters among American cities, an 84 percent increase in bike commuters since 2005, according to the latest Census data.

New Orleans-based urban planner Robert Tannen said an increase in cycling has many benefits. "It slows down traffic. People are more cautious. It makes for a far more pedestrian-friendly city; bikers are also walkers. And it increases the health and overall well-being of citizens," Tannen said. "It increases the number of people who patronize local stores and smaller shops rather than the malls."

The progress has bike enthusiasts dreaming: Can New Orleans, with its flat terrain, warm weather and tightly-knit neighborhoods, rival the nation's best cycling cities like Seattle, Portland, Ore., and Boulder, Colo.? This summer New Orleans was named a "bicycle friendly community" by the League of American Bicyclists, but it still has further to go to attain the league's top-tier "platinum" status.

By comparison, Portland has 180 miles of bike lanes. Nearly 6 percent of workers there commute to work, according to the league's database, compared to about 2 percent of commuters in New Orleans.

Still, the city has come a long way. Bicycle shop mechanic and bike activist Tim Eskew said groups plodded along for years in obscurity and tried to drum up interest in cycling mostly through schools. He said it took about seven years to get city buses to include bike racks.

"Our biggest brick wall was that we all worked full-time jobs," Eskew said.

A confluence of forces after Katrina helped change things -- the prominence of New Urbanism (in other words, a return to compact cities) in rebuilding plans, a flood of newcomers and the city's native sense for European aesthetics. Also, former Mayor Ray Nagin and the urban planner he brought in after Katrina to lead the rebuilding, Ed Blakely, get some credit. After arriving in New Orleans from Australia, Blakely liked to ride his bicycle through the city.

Challenges persist, though. Despite the push to pave roads, there remain potholes galore, missing stop signs, broken up sidewalks, streets covered in glass and intersections where cyclists have to take a deep breath and hope to make it across. In other words, New Orleans is just like most other American cities -- hardly the kind of place where the cyclist comes first.

Randy Bibb, a French Quarter walking tour guide, knows the problems in New Orleans all too well. He's been a bicycle commuter ever since a tree fell on his car during Katrina.

He said he contends with bad traffic, bad drivers and bike thieves.

"There need to be more bike racks," he said. "Since Katrina, this is my seventh bike. I've had six bikes stolen. There's no bike lock they can't get through."

Charlie Doerr, the owner of Bayou Bikes along the proposed Lafitte Corridor greenway, still worries that money will dry up as Congress struggles to deal with the recession. He has pushed for the trail for years.

"The faster they get it started, the more likely it will happen," he said, looking out the back of his shop where the trail would go. "What scares me is that that money has a deadline and it won't get used. It's happened before."

The city's enthusiasm for cycling is on display every Thursday night when the dozens of costumed participants in the NOLA Social Ride pick a new neighborhood to roll through.

Their rendezvous are a slow, beery, roll on two wheels; they zig-zag down back streets, wave at folks sitting on front porches, glide past shotgun houses, old mansions and slave quarters, wobbling into the night aglow in the little lights on their bikes.

Ritchie Jordan, who organizes the NOLA Social Ride, is a funky Jackson Square artist who came to New Orleans from Boulder, Colo., in 2007. He said the popularity of the weekly romp by bike is growing quickly.

"Even in Boulder I needed a car," Jordan said. "Not here. We stopped having a car. Coaster brake, it is the most preferred way to travel in this town."

Partnerships try to keep threatened state parks open

Courtesy of usatoday.com

By Martin E. Klimek, for USA TODAY

Jeff Zolotar and his wife, Gena, sit on a memorial bench at Henry W. Coe State Park in Morgan Hill, Calif. The bench is dedicated to their triplets who were born prematurely and died in 2005.

"It's an amazing place to be when the sun comes up over the water," Lynn says of her hike along Southhampton Bay. "It's such a good way to start your day."

By next summer, Lynn may not be starting her days there. Along with the Benicia Capitol State Historic Park, the recreation area is on a list of 70 of California's 278 state parks slated to close by July.

But not without a fight. Across the country, people are taking the initiative to save state parks as budget cuts threaten to close them. Towns, non-profits and private businesses are stepping in to preserve not only the opportunities for outdoor recreation but also the economic benefits to surrounding communities.

By shifting some funds in Benicia's city budget and partnering with the Benicia State Parks Association, the city says it could manage the parks for the next two years. Mario Giuliani, city economic development manager, says he is "optimistic" the State Parks Department will agree.

"We think it's fantastic that people are recognizing the value of their parks and showing the willingness to be personally involved," says California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman.

The California parks system will take a \$22 million cut next year after an \$11 million cut this year, reducing its budget to \$99 million and closing parks for the first time.

The National Park Service will help keep three state parks open for at least the next year:

Tomales Bay State Park, Samuel P. Taylor State Park and Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park are all within National Park boundaries.

Local advocates for state parks are stepping in:

- Grocery chain Raley's will donate a nickel to California State Parks for every reusable bag a customer brings, up to \$75,000.
- Businessman Tony Magee, founder of Lagunitas Brewing, has offered to operate China Camp State Park and Olompoli State Historic Park in California's Marin County. The two parks cost the state more than \$700,000 to run and brought in \$172,000 last year, says Danita Rodriguez, Marin district superintendent for state parks.
- Park lovers in Silicon Valley formed the Coe Park Preservation Fund, raising more than \$1 million to keep Henry W. Coe State Park open for three years.
- Aurora, N.Y., took over a soccer and polo field and equestrian park in Knox Farm State Park. The \$10,000 annual cost is covered by an \$8,000 donation from a soccer club and \$2,000 in fees.
- Arizona has reached agreements with towns and private groups to run or help fund 13 of its 28 state parks after parks department funds were slashed from the state budget in 2009.
- Georgia State Parks found partners to help run five of 64 parks after its \$27 million budget was cut to \$14 million.

Coleman and other officials are wary of such agreements. They say outside entities often don't have the expertise to manage complex ecosystems, habitats and endangered species. "These aren't easy and cheap things to do," Coleman says. "Saving 2,000-year-old trees, for example — that's a challenge."

Still, she says, turning to private investors and local governments is "the only option we have available right now."

The pain of potential closures is compounded by potential loss of tourism dollars. Communities step in because they can't afford not to.

"Small towns that have these parks in their communities ... recognize the fact that these are economic engines," says Jay Zeimann, assistant director of Arizona State Parks.

For Aurora, letting Knox Farm State Park close wasn't an option. "It's 633 acres in the midst of our small town," says Jolene Jeffe, town supervisor. "We're the ones who feel the pain when the state isn't able to maintain it."

The partnerships are only temporary. "We don't pretend to think this is a sustainable model for funding the system," Zeimann says. "What the ultimate solution is, I don't know."

At this point, they are willing to do what it takes to preserve their states' national and cultural treasures and the opportunities they provide.

"The inexpensive opportunities to get outdoors and renew your spirit or exercise are something

that is a very real part of our country's legacy," says Phil McKnelly, executive director of the National Association of State Park Directors.

He says parks are especially valuable as the country experiences record obesity and unemployment.

For Jeff Zolotar, a frequent visitor to Henry W. Coe State Park, the partnership between the state and the preservation fund means he'll be able to continue volunteering there with his wife, taking his 8-year-old daughter on hikes and visiting the memorial bench friends and family donated in honor of triplet boys he and his wife lost when the babies were born prematurely six years ago.

The park feels like home, Zolotar says.

"It's hard to remember what California was like before it was buildings and freeways. It's getting back to nature," he says. "We love it so much."

Federal act could lead to year-round recreation at ski areas

Courtesy of wenatcheeworld.com

By Christine Pratt, World staff writer

WENATCHEE — How about catching a chairlift one warm July evening to the summit of Mission Ridge for stunningly beautiful summer concert and dinner?

That's right. Summer.

A federal bill that has already cleared both House and Senate could lead to more and varied summer recreation, increased tourism and more jobs at the country's ski areas.

A federal act on its way to becoming law could make it possible for summer visitors to Mission Ridge Ski & Board Resort to catch a chairlift and enjoy panoramic views from the summit.

For Mission Ridge, it could, at long last, lead to currently off-limits summer offerings, including a mountain-bike course, zip lines with prior permission from the feds and the ski area's four property owners — the U.S. Forest Service, state departments of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, and private landowners.

"It opens the door for us to have summer operations, but It would mean meeting with all of our landlords to see if we could negotiate an opportunity," said Jerri Barkley, Mission Ridge marketing director, of HR 765, the "Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act."

"This bill provides them the opportunity to think entrepreneurially," she said.

The act, sponsored by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah), cleared the Senate Tuesday by unanimous vote. It only needs President Obama's signature to become law.

Washington's senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray were two of the bill's 12 co-sponsors.

It would amend the 1986 National Forest Ski Area Permit Act to provide clear guidance for the U.S. Forest Service about what summer activities are considered “appropriate” on federal lands that fall within the nation’s ski areas.

Ranger districts can currently make the rules for ski areas that fall within their jurisdictions. This means that regulations that apply to Mission Ridge may not apply to the Summit at Snoqualmie, Forest Service spokeswoman Susan Peterson said this morning.

They’ll still be the rule makers, but the act gives a federal definition of summer activities that would be OK. These include:

- Zip lines
- Mountain bike terrain parks and trails
- Frisbee golf courses
- Rope courses

Other activities deemed “appropriate” could also be authorized.

Activities prohibited by the act include tennis courts, water slides and parks, swimming pools, golf courses and amusement parks.

Barkley said that Ridge staff has long talked about summer recreation at the 2,000-acre ski area, about 20 minutes south of Wenatchee. Its federal property owners have balked over potentially harmful impacts to wildlife, particularly a resident herd of elk, and the environment.

Barkley cautioned, “The Forest Service, the steward of the land is not fiscally motivated. If there’s a risk to land or endangered species they’re going to err on the side of stewardship.”

According to the Forest Services’ Peterson, local officials have yet to study how the act could affect area ski areas. She said any change proposed would be subject to a detailed environmental-impact study.

“Communities have their own thoughts and feelings,” she said. “Some might embrace it. Others might take a more conservative approach. There are master agreements with those ski areas. Those would have to be reviewed and revised.”

That’s something that both Barkley and Chris Rudolph, marketing director at Stevens Pass, agree on.

“The act takes away the business-related hoops, but not the environmental hoops,” Rudolph said Wednesday.

Scott Kaden, spokesman for the Hood River, Oregon-based Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association said in an e-mail that the act would help preserve wilderness areas by concentrating the human impact within the already managed setting of a winter sports site.

“This may translate to fewer burdens being placed on more resource-sensitive tracts of land,” Kaden said.

With their landlords’ consent, Mission Ridge personnel would put together a business plan and get started, Barkley said.

Many of the state's other ski areas already offer summer activities.

Stevens Pass this past summer opened a mountain bike terrain park. Crystal Mountain has a gondola designed for summer use to transport visitors to the summit.

Mission Ridge currently is authorized to use only its lodge and parking lot during the off-ski season, Barkley said.

Their focus, right now is on the upcoming ski season, she said, adding that she'd regard the prospect of any change in summer operations with "optimistic skepticism."

"We may get the vision, but the landlords have the say, and their interests may not be the same," she said.

Back Off, Mom. Parents Who Hover Impede Kids' Activity

Courtesy of healthland.time.com

By Meredith Melnick

Parents, if you want your kids to get more exercise, you'd be wise to get out of their way.

In a new study, published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, researchers sought to observe how kids play in parks. Their overarching goal was to help park designers create public spaces that would better entice kids to run around and exercise. But along the way, the authors discovered something else: the single biggest barrier to children's physical activity had less to do with park design itself and more to do with the hovering presence of a parent.

Children whose parents hung around monitoring them closely were only about half as likely to engage in high levels of physical activity as kids whose parents granted more freedom, the researchers found.

"It's a catch-22 for today's parents, unfortunately. Many parents are worried about the safety of their children, so they tend to hover," said study co-author Dr. Jason Bocarro, associate professor of parks, recreation and tourism management at North Carolina State University, in a statement.

The problem is that the more parents "helicopter" — lingering anxiously under the jungle gym or admonishing their child, Not too high!, on the swings — the less likely their kids are to run around and play actively with their friends.

Previous research has also shown that parental concern about neighborhood safety leads to less activity in young children, perhaps influencing them to stay home watching TV or playing video games instead. For a country in which child obesity has reached epidemic proportions, that's not a good thing.

For the new study, researchers spent eight weeks in the summer of 2007 collecting data on 2,712 children by observing them play in 20 randomly selected parks around Durham, N.C. In general, the researchers found, the youngest kids (5 or younger) were more active than older

ones, and boys on the whole were more active than girls.

Researchers saw higher levels of activity in parks with playing courts like basketball and tennis courts, though it was boys who were more likely to be using them; girls, on the other hand, were typically found in playgrounds.

The most powerful positive influence when it came to vigorous activity was the presence of other energetic kids. "Other active children in the park zone increased the odds of higher physical activity levels 3.67 times," the authors wrote.

And nothing appeared to put the brakes on a kid's frolicking like an omnipresent parent (and, to a lesser extent, nonparental adult guardians like a teacher or coach). No one's suggesting that parents let their children run off to the park alone, of course. But the authors recommend that park designers keep worried parents in mind.

"If children's play environments are designed for the whole family with comfortable, shady places to sit and observe kids playing from a distance, parents may be less inclined to 'helicopter' and impede spontaneous play," said co-author Robin Moore, professor of landscape architecture and director of the Natural Learning Initiative at N.C. State.

So, the next time you take your kid to the park, try taking a seat on the bench and letting your child figure things out on his own. It's O.K. if he struggles or even falls down. His missteps may help keep you from making your own.