



News from SORP

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 Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals

The NARRP website is transitioning to the SORP name

During the next week, the NARRP website will be updated with the SORP name, interim logo and new domain name – **RecPro.org**. If you experience any difficulties with the website, try back later as we are likely making some updates. We will be setting up the narrp.org domain name to forward to RecPro.org, and the same goes for any emails addressed to narrp.org.

Participation in Outdoor Recreation at a Five-Year High

Courtesy of the Outdoor Industry Association

The Outdoor Foundation has released the 2012 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, which shows that participation in outdoor recreation reached a five-year high in 2011. Nearly 50 percent of all Americans — or 141.1 million people — ages six and older engaged in outdoor activities last year.

This is the sixth annual Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, which is the leading report tracking American participation trends in outdoor recreation, with a focus on youth, diversity and the future of the outdoors. It is designed to help the outdoor industry, public agencies and community organizations better understand the trends in outdoor recreation participation, and address America's inactivity crisis and the disconnect between children and the outdoors. The report is based on an online survey of more than 40,000 Americans ages six and older and covers 114 different outdoor activities, making it the largest survey of its kind.

The study, which provides an in-depth look at youth, identifies an upward trend in outdoor participation among America's youngest generations. Youth participation overall grew by one percentage point in each age group, from six to 24.

Among young boys, outdoor participation grew by two percentage points — reversing a downward trend that began in 2007. Although participation rates for girls the same age remained stagnant, participation among female teenagers grew by two percentage points to reach the highest participation rate for female teenagers recorded in this report.

"The Outdoor Recreation Participation Report shows that, thanks to national efforts to connect Americans with the outdoors, people are increasingly more inspired to get up and get outside," said Chris Fanning, executive director of The Outdoor Foundation. "We are especially encouraged by the report's findings that more youth are enjoying outdoor activities, as this will ensure healthier children, healthier communities and healthier businesses."

The insights detailed in the 2012 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report are critical to national efforts seeking to understand outdoor participation and continuing to reverse America's inactivity crisis. Some of the additional findings include:

- In 2011, outdoor participants made 11.5 billion outings — 1.4 billion more outings than 2010.
- Of all age groups, teenagers ages 13 to 17 have the most core outdoor participants (or regular participants) at 39 percent.

- Almost half of all outdoor enthusiasts participate in outdoor activities at least once a week.
- Participants in gateway activities are more likely to enjoy multiple outdoor activities, rather than just one. In fact, 87 percent of hikers participate in one or more other outdoor activities.
- Although participation rates among youth ages six to 17 are up, average annual outings are down from 98 outings per participant in 2010 to 81 outings in 2011.
- Youth who do not participate in outdoor activities say they are not interested in the outdoors. For young adults, lack of time is a bigger barrier than lack of interest.
- Introducing outdoor recreation and physical activities early in life has a lasting effect. Among adults who are current outdoor participants, 82 percent report having a physical education class between the ages of six and 12. Forty-five percent of adult outdoor participants took part in outdoor activities from ages six to 12.
- As seen in previous reports, participation in outdoor activities was significantly higher among Caucasians than any other ethnicity and lowest among African Americans.
- Although Hispanics have among the lowest overall outdoor participation rate, those who do participate go outside the most often.

Download the report: <http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/Outdoor-Recreation-Economy-OIA2012.pdf>

Rough economy a boon for local campsites

Courtesy of uticaod.com

By AMANDA FRIES

For the Bortle family, taking a vacation at Delta Lake State Park in the town of Western is tradition.

But Rome resident Amanda Bortle said they can't help but reap the financial benefits, as well.

"We do local camping to save on gas," she said.

Officials and campground owners point to the warm, dry summer and the ever-struggling economy for reasons why camping thrives in the area, and this year, state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Spokesman Dan Keefe said camping reservations are up 5 percent from last year.

Click here to read the rest of the story: <http://www.uticaod.com/latestnews/x218315635/Rough-economy-a-boon-for-local-campsites>

State parks turn to fees to survive

Courtesy of greenvilleonline.com

By Eric Connor

The waters of Paris Mountain State Park's Lake Placid are pristine, despite the muddied swirls just off the shoreline stirred by the flurry of summer camp children enjoying their last swim before school resumes.

The park, just a half-dozen miles from downtown Greenville, is a legacy of the Great Depression, when the federal government employed civilians desperate for jobs to use their sweat and ingenuity to make a living improving local natural resources.

In the shadow of today's Great Recession, South Carolina's parks are turning elsewhere to stay above water —

away from the government and instead to the purses and wallets of the people who use them.

Click here to read the rest of the story:

http://www.greenvilleonline.com/article/20120819/NEWS/308190003/State-parks-turn-fees-survive?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE&qcheck=1&nclick_check=1

Washington State Parks are Struggling

Courtesy of RVBusiness.com

In the face of dwindling tax funds and fee revenue far below expectations, Washington's state parks have eliminated or reduced about a third of their full-time positions during the past four years, Portland's The Oregonian reported.

Park visitors can see the impact of these cuts in decreased maintenance and staff presence, said Sandy Mealing, public information officer for Washington State Parks and Recreation. State parks receive an average of 40 million visitors annually.

Since 2008, they have decreased full-time staff positions from 595 to 395. The positions cut include construction and maintenance workers, managers and park rangers.

Parks need to keep rangers on duty during the peak season, from May to September, Mealing said. Of 189 ranger positions at more than 100 parks, 66 have been cut from full-time to five- or eight-month stints focused on these busy months.

"The problem with that is, when the parks are not as busy with visitors, that's when our staff do maintenance," Mealing said. "So now that we've had to reduce 66 of those positions, those positions won't be available to help with maintenance during the off-season, which means things don't get taken care of."

At Battle Ground Lake State Park in Clark County, the decrease in maintenance level is noticeable for visitors, Park Manager Jim Presser said.

"We're not able, especially here, to maintain the trails and trim back the branches on the 10 miles of trails," he said.

Mealing said deferred maintenance on park land and structures can turn into more costly capital projects later.

Along with decreasing ranger hours, state parks also cut management positions. They eliminated the deputy director position and the entire regional level of management, which included three regional managers. Other money-saving measures ended programs such as No Child Left Inside, which funded outdoor education and recreation activities for youth.

"The system is not sustainable at the level we're at," Mealing said.

National parks face severe funding crunch

Courtesy of the WashingtonPost.com

By Juliet Eilperin

Fredericksburg, Va. — Chatham Manor, the elegant 241-year-old Georgian house that served as a Union headquarters during the Civil War, remains a must-see stop on tours of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. But the grounds are not as they once were. The gardens are overgrown, and the greenhouse has broken windows and rotting wood frames.

The park's superintendent, Russell Smith, noted that the family that occupied the home in the 1920s "had nine or 10 gardeners. I have, like, half a gardener."

After more than a decade of scrimping and deferring maintenance and construction projects — and absorbing a 6 percent budget cut in the past two years — the signs of strain are beginning to surface at national parks across the country. The 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway, which curves along the spine of the easternmost range of the Appalachian Mountains in Virginia and North Carolina, has a \$385 million backlog of projects, mainly in road maintenance, and has been unable to fill 75 vacant positions since 2003. For the past three years, New Mexico's Bandelier National Monument has lacked the money to hire a specialist to protect its archaeological ruins and resources.

Jonathan B. Jarvis, the National Park Service director, said in an interview that his employees have been "entrepreneurial" in devising ways to cope with rising costs on a fixed budget.

"But we're kind of running out of ideas at some point here," Jarvis said. For years, the Park Service has supported day-to-day operations by taking money from its maintenance and land acquisition budget, he said. "The challenge is, we're robbing Peter to pay Paul."

Click here to read the rest of the story: http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/national-parks-face-severe-funding-crunch/2012/08/19/959da5b0-e7ab-11e1-a3d2-2a05679928ef_story.html

Funds From Scandal May Help California Parks

Courtesy of RVBusiness.com

There may be a "silver lining" to the California state parks fund scandal, an advocate and fundraiser for the Palomar Mountain State Park said on Thursday (Aug. 23).

The North County Times reported that state lawmakers are considering using some of the \$54 million in hidden state park funds uncovered last month to match private donations that flowed in for parks slated for closure last year, according to the advocate and a letter from the California State Parks Foundation.

The disclosure of the hidden park funds followed warnings from the state that 70 parks would be shuttered July 1 because of lack of money — a move that never took place.

The fund scandal led to the resignation of top parks officials last month.

"There could be a silver lining from all this," said the advocate, Rick Barclay, chairman of the nonprofit Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park, referring to the possible use of some of the previously undisclosed money. "It's good for Palomar."

Barclay said lawmakers could approve Assembly Bill 1478 within the next week. If approved as written, that bill would designate \$10 million for dollar-to-dollar matches for all contributions to parks that signed deals with the state for the 2012-13 fiscal year, according to the foundation's letter.

Another \$10 million would be directed to parks "that remain at risk of closure," the letter said.

Gov. Candidate Considering Park Privatization

Courtesy of RVBusiness.com

Candidates for the governor's seat in Indiana are taking different approaches to state resource management as they seek to succeed two-term Gov. Mitch Daniels.

Mike Pence, the GOP candidate for governor, talked of privatizing some activities within state parks, such as additional inns or lodges and other recreational opportunities.

He made his remarks during and after an appearance at an annual energy management conference in Indianapolis, the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette reported.

Pence said he would investigate more lodges, inns and other recreational amenities at state parks. To do this, he likely would rely on public-private partnerships with outside developers.

"I want to examine ways without unnecessarily burdening taxpayers," he said, seeming to leave open the possibility of privatizing parks in general.

Campaign staffers later said he does not want to go that far – only focusing on lodges and possible new activities within the parks.

Daniels has privatized the reservation system for inns and campgrounds, for instance, but state employees continue to run the properties.

His opponent, Democrat John Gregg, said Hoosiers have told him on the campaign trail they are concerned with the state parks being privatized.

"John would very carefully review any potential plan that would change additional portions of them and evaluate any changes on a case-by-case basis," a campaign spokesman said, speaking for Gregg.

Smartphone research aims to help visually impaired pedestrians

Courtesy of the Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota

Crossing a street isn't risk-free for any pedestrian, but it's especially challenging for the blind or visually impaired.

Chen-Fu Liao, senior systems engineer in the U's Minnesota Traffic Observatory, led a research team that developed a prototype Mobile Accessible Pedestrian Signal (MAPS) system using a smartphone, GPS, and other technologies to help people with limited or no eyesight cross signalized intersections safely.

For their work, funded by the Intelligent Transportation Systems Institute (a part of CTS), the researchers interviewed 10 blind and low-vision people to better understand what types of information they use at intersection crossings and to identify what could help them. "I think the whole system and the whole concept is so beautiful," says Ken Rodgers, president of the American Council for the Blind of Minnesota. "It just works well."

Blind or visually impaired pedestrians face a number of challenges, such as difficulty locating the edge of the street or crosswalk and interpreting signal and traffic patterns. Current crossing systems, which use audio warnings, have shortcomings for municipalities, including the cost of equipment and maintenance. And because there is no standard location for push-button signals, visually impaired pedestrians must deviate from their preferred travel paths to request a crossing signal, which can make navigating the intersection more difficult.

The U's system goes above and beyond existing crosswalk aids. While standing at an intersection, the user can point a smartphone in the direction he or she wants to cross and call up information about the intersection and the signal phase by tapping the unit's touchscreen once. Tapping twice confirms the desired crossing direction and sends a request for a crossing signal to the traffic signal controller. The user gets feedback from the text-to-speech interface.

Because it's an app, it's easy and inexpensive for users. And MAPS puts the assistive technology directly in the hand of the user, avoiding many of the drawbacks associated with conventional infrastructure-based systems while offering greater flexibility and ease of use. A video explaining MAPS is online.

The prototype has been field-tested at intersections in Minneapolis and Golden Valley, Minnesota. Work continues to refine the accuracy, resolution, and usability of the system.

In addition, the researchers will soon begin a new project funded by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. This project aims to enhance the system to help the visually impaired travel safely around work zones.

Best Practices: Water Trail Planning - Raquette River Corridor

Courtesy of American Trails

A new report lays out a prioritized list of steps necessary to implement and promote a "Blueway Trail." It includes an analysis of existing conditions as well as a range of projects such as signs, enhancements of existing local parks, boat launches, scenic overlooks, Visitor Centers and kiosks, gateway features, trails, and river access points. The plan also provides a program of initiatives necessary to create and promote the Blueway including a river stewardship program, website promotions, a traveling exhibit, birding promotions, trip packages, and maps. An inter-municipal cooperative implementation strategy describes relative priority, which is responsible, potential partners, and potential funding sources.

Download the report: <http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/Racquette-River-Blueway-Plan.pdf>

Best Practices for Bicycle Trail Pavement Construction and Maintenance in Illinois

The Illinois Center for Transportation at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign has released a report that provides guidelines for the structural design of bicycle trail pavement and recommendations for bicycle trail pavement maintenance.

Download the report: <http://ict.illinois.edu/publications/report%20files/FHWA-ICT-12-009.pdf>

Florida's Natural Areas Training Academy teaches land management

Courtesy of American Trails

Managed by the University of Florida Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, NATA brings together land management experts from numerous agencies and organizations to share experiences with newer land managers. Courses lead to the Certificate in Natural Areas Management, and since June, 2000 over 125 natural areas managers have graduated from the program. Courses include Conservation Site Assessment and Planning, Managing for Diversity, Working Across Boundaries to Protect Ecosystems, and Managing Visitors and Volunteers in Natural Areas.

For more information: <http://www.americantrails.org/http/Natural-Areas-Training-Academy-nttp.html>

WEBINAR: Connecting Greenways, Trails and Active Mobility

Courtesy of American Trails

September 12 is the date for the next webinar in the American Trails "Advancing Trails" Webinar Series. We will look at planning and designing urban mobility networks and how to integrate transportation with greenway and trail networks. This webinar will also be the national launch for the book, "The Third Mode: Towards a Green Society," by Jeff Olson, a partner with Alta Planning + Design. Jeff will be joined by Andy Clarke, President of the League of American Bicyclists, and Moderator Bob Searns, Chairman of the Board of American Trails. Join us September 12 at 12:00 p.m. noon Pacific / 3:00 p.m. Eastern.

For more information: <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/trans/webinar-book-third-mode.html>

WEBINAR "Liability: Understanding and Managing Risk"

Date: September 19, 2012, 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET

Presenters: TBA

Host: Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP)

Cost: \$50 APBP members/\$75 non-APBP members, or multi-webinar discounts

Contact: Debra Goeks at info@apbp.org

Details & registration: http://www.apbp.org/events/event_details.asp?id=198986

WEBINAR "AASHTO Bike Guide: Off Road Facilities: Shared Use Path Design"

Date: October, 9, 2012, 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. EDT

Presenters: Eric Mongelli & Tom Huber (Toole Design Group)

Host: The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center & Toole Design Group

Cost: Free

Details & registration: <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/788315650>