

# **New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition**

## **Organizational Documents**



**NHCINC Structural Outline  
NHCINC Organizational Structure  
Mission, Goals, and Objectives  
Communications Plan**



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## **NH Children in Nature Coalition (NHCINC) Structural Outline**

**New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition (NHCINC)** is comprised of members who believe in the NHCINC mission and goals and receive information about the work of the Coalition. Members may take a more or less active role in Coalition activities but can represent the Coalition and its work to the public. The Coalition will use collaborative leadership as the process for making decisions and setting direction. This group of leaders will be pulled from the general Coalition membership. NHCINC will register with the State of NH as a private, not for profit organization with no 501(c)3 status. Fiscal agents will perform financial responsibilities for the Coalition and may rotate depending on need.

**New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition** has been NH trademark registered and has secured two domain names: [www.NHChildrenInNature.org](http://www.NHChildrenInNature.org) and [www.NHChildrenInNature.com](http://www.NHChildrenInNature.com).

NHCINC has a list serve to communicate out from the leadership team or any committees to the general membership. Anyone subscribing to the list serve can reach the general membership. An email address will also be made available to all members to ensure information and ideas can get from the general membership and public back to NHCINC leadership.

### **COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM (CLT)**

Representation in this group will:

1. Tie to the Coalition's working committees as a mechanism to foster communication, consistency and feedback.
2. Come from diverse groups, including education, health, the built environment, recreation, environmental, business, media, communication and the arts/culture.
3. Come from different levels of organizational strata and regions of the State of NH. Meetings will move around NH to facilitate attendance.
4. Allow for temporary participation as needed for projects, expertise, etc.
5. Require active participation for a term of a least one year (eventually two as to have rotating membership). Responsibilities include preparing for and attending meetings and occasional assignments. Require attendance at scheduled meetings and additional subgroup meetings.
6. Disclose any conflict of interest concerning Coalition decisions and sign a non-disclosure/confidentiality statement once a year.
7. Assumes a duty to inform their sponsoring organization of Coalition work.
8. Periodically be solicited from the overall Coalition members to ensure comprehensive perspectives.
9. Be solicited from interest sectors if no one volunteers.

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### **EXPECTED COMPOSITION OF THE COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

In total, we expect the CLT will number 25.

1. Executive Committee – comprised of 3 officers (to be voted upon) and 4 additional members who self-select.
2. At-Large members – will represent the diversity described above.
3. The Convener – A non-voting position responsible for communications to the leadership group and organizing meetings. Serves as a stable point of contact. Manages membership lists. Pulls together agendas and solicits topics for inclusion. Approved for expenditures of up to \$2,500 without CLT approval; above that amount a second authorization is needed from the executive committee officers.

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – regular meeting attendance required for the EC.**

1. Chair – rotates annually – signs official documents.
2. Secretary – rotates annually - officially holds and certifies meeting minutes and will sign certificates of vote.
3. Treasurer – rotates annually – communicates with fiscal agent and manages finances.
4. 4 additional EC members from the at-large membership of the entire CLT.

### **ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MEETINGS ONLY**

1. Facilitator – rotates quarterly – facilitates meetings, but can participate.
2. Timekeeper – rotates each meeting.
3. Recorder – rotates each meeting – takes minutes and sends to convener.

### **OPERATING GUIDELINES OF THE COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP GROUP**

The collaborative leadership group will use a consensus model for decisions as much as possible. The group will use a postponement technique (the “bin”) for items when consensus cannot be reached. These decisions will be shelved until further work can be done, which brings about agreement. Votes may be used for time sensitive business. Agenda items will be determined by how directly they relate to goals and objectives.

Process:

1. Any decision item must be noted on agenda with at least one month’s notification. Any substantial decision or discussion item will be on the agenda. No vote can be held without the appropriate one month notification and discussion.
2. Comments get directed to one person, such as Convener, to bring to discussion at meetings. Do not use “reply all” as this leads to misunderstandings before items can be discussed.
3. Each agenda item will have a timeframe for discussion.
4. The facilitator has a responsibility to make sure all committee members have the opportunity to speak on a topic and will decide if a decision will be placed in the “bin”.
5. Consensus building tool: agree/can live with it/disagree.
6. Consensus process: One final check – “It appears we are at consensus, is there anything else?” Then the decision is made.

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7. Move through discussion and compromise. If can't get agreement, put in "bin."
8. Suggested guidelines for determining if the discussion will reach consensus would be ½ - 1 hr of discussion with no new information on the topic being generated signals time for a vote or to shelve the topic and wait for new information or something to sway opinion. A straw poll can be used to see if consensus is being approached or if tabling would be better.
9. Focus initially on what we *do* agree on.
10. Reserve vote for certain items. Votes will be used in at least two instances, regardless of consensus 1) when an item demands a board resolution (some grants), which needs to be certified through signing by the designated committee member (our EC Secretary); 2) for any major decisions affecting the organization or to make any major changes in the organization. We also acknowledge that some time sensitive items may need to go to vote.
11. Quorum- 60% of the total EC membership (target 25), need 75% agreement (e.g., grant application, other time sensitive items; electronic vote acceptable on time sensitive items).

### **GUIDELINES FOR COMMITTEE (OR PROJECT) AFFILIATION WITH NHCINC**

While a request to affiliate with NHCINC can originate in many forms and it is the intent to leave this very organic, the parameters for NHCINC sponsorship and affiliation are:

- The collaborative leadership team needs to make an official decision, not other committees such as the development team.
- Committee objectives must further the goals and objectives of NHCINC.
- More than two participating groups in the project, i.e. diverse organizations involved.
- Official NHCINC committees/projects will need to solicit the membership at the broadest level for additional participation.
- One member will join the collaborative leadership group with at least occasional representation (quarterly).

Standing committees for the Coalition are:

- Development,
- Messaging, Audience and Communications, and
- Finance.

Current NHCINC Committees (in addition to the above)

- Natural Leaders Project Group
- May We Do Science? Working Group

### **GENERAL COALITION MEMBERSHIP – some topics for future consideration**

1. Members should be prepared to act on behalf of the coalition. There needs to be either a job description or list of expectations that the Coalition would like of active members.

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2. Members can pay dues or not. In many cases, membership is voluntary or if individuals or organizations opted to provide donations they were considered partners.
3. If members are going to have voting powers or consensus powers then there needs to be some separation of organizations and individuals. This was also the case when dues were a part of being a member. Input must be equitable for the individual and the organization.
4. There should be some benefit to the member.
5. A member reads the mission statement and goals and agrees at least in principle to them. Buying into and supporting the broad goals and ideas is unifying, agendas divide.
6. There is often an application process.
7. You can have participating members (committee members etc.) and members at large who simply support the idea and get information. The latter would not necessarily be contributing to the Coalition.
8. Membership needs to be broad and inclusive. Diversity is important for recruitment purposes and long term support. Our meeting note state that “there should be no barriers from moving form on kind of membership to another.” From strategy working group minutes, 4/17/08, p.1.

### FISCAL AGENT

#### **I. Duties of a Fiscal Agent for a coalition or network grant:**

The Fiscal Agent agency in order to be able to function in this role should be a private non-profit organization in good standing with the IRS usually as a 501c3 organization, but under some circumstances could also be a foundation, church, a religious organization, a private not-for-profit school or educational institution. It is also possible, but not usually very practical, for a state agency or a municipal government unit to be a Fiscal Agent for a coalition or network grant.

The role of a Fiscal Agent is to receive, hold, disperse and account for the funds from a particular grant, contract or grouping of these to the coalition or network. Typically, the coalition or network has applied for the grant for a project that will benefit the broader community through the joint activities of the coalition partnering agencies and members.

#### **II. How to choose the Fiscal Agent agency:**

The Fiscal Agent agency should meet the following criteria.

- a. Be a private non-profit agency by the definitions of the IRS.
- b. Be in good standing with the IRS and the state in which they are registered as a private not for profit agency.
- c. Have a significant enough internal structure with proper checks and balances to meet the requirements for the audit of the type required by the granting body or group donating funds to the organization for the coalition and network project. For example, if it is a federal grant that

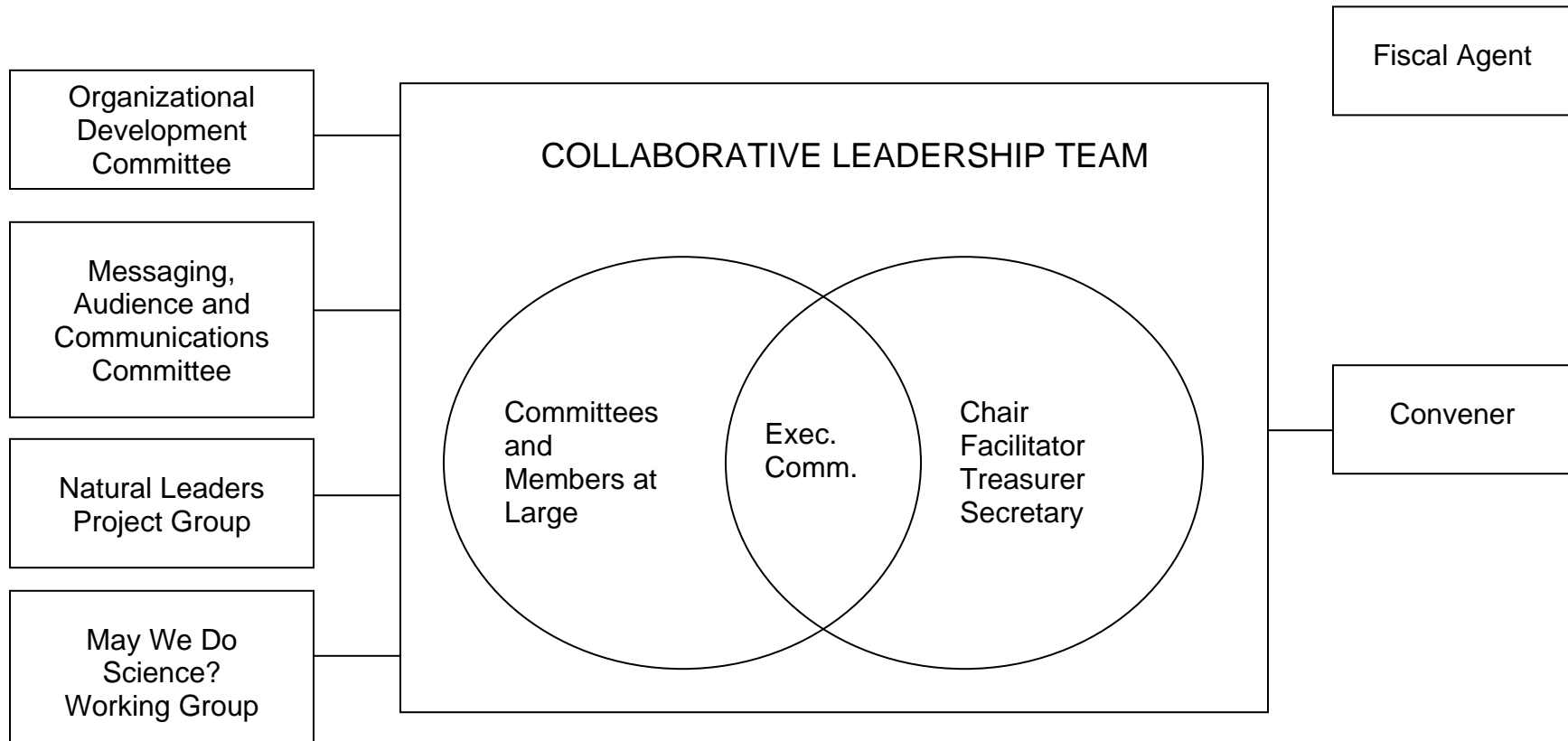
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- requires a specific type of federal audit the Fiscal Agent organization should be one that can meet the requirements of this particular type of audit or already have this type of audit completed.
- d. The private not-for-profit agency acting as Fiscal Agent should have a structure were a committee of the board of directors of the private not-for-profit reviews the finances of the organization, have a board treasurer that interacts regularly with the staff of the organization handling the funds and understands that the board is responsible for the policies and procedure for financial transactions of the private non-profit organization.
  - e. Private non-profit organization staff should include a division of duties where individuals responsible for making the budget, authorizing purchases or payments, writing and signing checks and reconciling banks accounts or contractual fees have appropriate separations of duties under policies approved by the Board of Directors and following normal accounting standards.

### **III. List of Responsibilities for the Fiscal Agent:**

- a. The Fiscal Agent receives the funds from the grantor and holds them in separate identifiable accounts from other funds of the organization.
- b. They will receive and process requests from the governing body of the coalition who is the grantee that is used as authorization for payment under the grant or contract.
- c. They will process requests for payment through appropriate invoices, purchase orders, receipts or other documentation and write the appropriate checks for payment to the parties as directed by the staff and/or board of the coalition who is the grantee. Routine or repetitive payment may be authorized for repeat pay on a schedule such as a lease or subcontractor services account.
- d. The Fiscal Agent will account for the incoming funds and the dispersed funds as revenue and expenses for this particular grant or contract for which they are the Fiscal Agent. By each individual transaction in summary categories within line item budgets as approved by the funder.
- e. Fiscal Agent shall be responsible to report to the board the necessary summary reports and details as desired by the board about the expenditures as authorized by the board and performed on their benefit by the Fiscal Agent organization.
- f. Fiscal Agent shall produce and attest to the correctness of reports to the funder on the receipt and expenditure of all funds.
- g. Fiscal Agent shall include in their audit the review and auditing within appropriate audit requirements of the funds under the grant and report the findings to the coalition.
- h. Fiscal Agent should develop and prepare for review by the coalition governing body a summary of income, expenditures and percentages due year to date by budget line item for each grant on at least a quarterly and preferably a monthly basis.
- i. Fiscal Agent should regularly attend meetings of the governing body of the coalition, report to the board and answer any questions about the Fiscal Agency activity and to give impressions, consultation or financial guidance to the governing body of the coalition on grants management and Fiscal Agent activity.

NHCINC Organizational Structure



## Mission, Goals and Objectives

The mission of the NH Children in Nature Coalition is to foster experiences in nature that:

- \* Improve physical and emotional health and well-being,
- \* Increase understanding of and care for the natural world, and
- \* Promote stronger connections to community and landscape,

and to provide a forum for continued collaboration by Coalition participants and others.

### **Problem Statements**

Children are more sedentary and spending less time in nature.

- Children are overweight.
  - New Hampshire has a high incidence of children with body mass index above the appropriate levels for age and gender for good health.
  - Compared to national average, New Hampshire has a higher average of obesity.
  - New Hampshire's number of children overweight has increased by x percentage.
- There is an increased rate of ADD and ADHD, and learning problems.
  - Increased incidence of ADD and ADHD and sensory perception problems
  - Increases in ADD-ADHD resulting in less pro-social behavior and academic performance
  - Percentage of children in NH diagnosed with ADD and ADHD
  - Reduced outdoor learning opportunities
- There is reduced stewardship of environment.
  - Children have less experience in nature resulting in less connection.
  - Children and their families have a fear of nature.
  - Reduced stewardship
  - Children and families are not having direct, tangible experience with nature.
  - Removal from nature decreases overall wellbeing of people.

**Goal 1.** More children, youth and families participate in outdoor learning experiences in and out of school time.

**Objective A.** By the year 2015, the amount of time children and youth spend in outdoor learning experiences increases 20% from 2009 baseline data.

### **Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. Mandate recess at schools and require it to be a certain amount of time.

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Activity 2. Educate early childhood educators about the importance of children spending time outdoors.

Activity 3. Provide all formal educators with pre-service training about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 4. Provide training for after school providers about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 5. Provide professional development for current educators about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 6. Designate “nature based communities” to enable neighbors to communicate and work together.

Activity 7. Re-institute field trips to outdoor sites during school time, for example, trips to environmental education sites, local natural landmarks, etc.

Activity 8. Assess and build awareness about local sites for school and community field activities and trips.

Activity 9. Create a statewide website for the public to access places to go and things to do outside.

Activity 10. Create and utilize outdoor classrooms.

Activity 11. Provide training for health care providers about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 12. Provide training for youth serving agencies and organizations about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 13. Influence communities to add sidewalks in order for more children and youth to walk to school (using Walking School Bus and Safe Routes to School models).

Activity 14. Increase physical education requirement to include a percentage of physical education occur outdoors.

**Objective B.** By the year 2015, the number of children, youth and families participating in outdoor learning experiences increases by 5% over 2009 baseline data.

### **Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. Designate “nature based communities” to enable neighbors to communicate and work together.

Activity 2. Mandate recess at schools and require it to be a certain amount of time.

Activity 3. Educate early childhood educators about the importance of children spending time outdoors.

Activity 4. Provide all formal educators with pre-service training about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 5. Provide training for afterschool providers about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 6. Provide professional development for current educators about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 7. Re-institute field trips to outdoor sites during school time, for example, trips to environmental education sites, local natural landmarks, etc.

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Activity 8. Assess and build public awareness about local sites for school and community field activities and trips.

Activity 9. Create a statewide website for the public to access places to go and things to do outside.

Activity 10. Create and utilize outdoor classrooms.

Activity 11. Provide training for health care providers about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 12. Provide training for youth serving agencies and organizations about the importance of children and youth spending time outdoors.

Activity 13. Influence communities to add sidewalks in order for more children and youth to walk to school (using Walking School Bus and Safe Routes to School models).

Activity 14. Increase physical education requirement to include a recommended percentage of physical education occur outdoors.

**Objective C.** By the year 2015, the number of opportunities for outdoor learning experiences increases by 10% over 2009 baseline data.

### **Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. Collaborate between agencies and organizations to provide a wide variety of outdoor learning opportunities.

Activity 2. Provide/acquire agencies and organizations adequate funding and support.

Activity 3. Encourage/support more organizations in providing outdoor learning opportunities.

Activity 4. Existing providers refocus programs to include more free time in the outdoors.

Activity 5. Communities increase amount of available local park space.

Activity 6. Support communities in identifying their level of accessibility and safety using a “nature-based community” designation.

Activity 7. Facilitate/support community watch programs for children, for example a neighborhood nature watch

Activity 8. Initiate a town warrant article initiative regarding children and youth spending more time outdoors and the importance of the connection to nature.

Activity 9. Provide every school district with a resident environmental education specialist to serve as liaison to school and community.

Activity 10. Connect state parks to schools and communities as places to go and to school curricula.

**Objective D.** By the year 2015, each outdoor learning experience provider will expand their experiential programming and increase participation by 5% over 2009 baseline data.

### **Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

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Activity 1. The NH Environmental Educators conduct a survey of amount of outdoor learning programming and numbers participating.

Activity 2. Increase the available funding for experiential programming.

Activity 3. Develop school-based habitat/garden and areas around schools for use by schools and communities.

Activity 4. Provide increased camperships for summer camps or subsidize childcare costs for when children attend camps.

Activity 5. Increase available infrastructure of programs such as interpretive programs in state parks.

Activity 6. Connect after school and out-of-school programs to camps.

Activity 7. Increase experiential programming events by generating funds for supporting the activities in process of conducting (community based groups working together).

**Goal 2.** More children, youth, and families get outside on a regular basis.

**Objective E.** By the year 2015, the number of children, youth and families spending time outside biweekly increases by 5% over 2009 baseline data.

### **Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. Encourage participation in events such as the Great Park Pursuit.

Activity 2. Develop media campaign to help raise awareness about the importance of children, youth and families spending time outdoors.

Activity 3. Work with pediatricians and ob-gyn about the value of being together outside.

Activity 4. Create a mechanism to value unpaid work and childcare.

Activity 5. Connect senior citizen mentors with young children.

Activity 6. Establish business based volunteer programs to encourage employers to allow workers to serve as mentors and/or take work time to take children and youth outdoors.

Activity 7. Target under-represented audiences such as prisons, housing authority, and people who are receiving assistance.

Activity 8. Promote "TV Turn-off Week."

Activity 9. Integrate outdoor learning ideas into English as a second language curriculum.

Activity 10. Organize families to adopt a portion of community trails and parks.

Activity 11. Encourage community gardening programs and school and community gardening initiatives.

Activity 12. Develop community service projects focused on the outdoors including in parks, schoolyards, etc.

Activity 13. Support the "5, 2, 1, 0 program."

Activity 14. Utilize infrastructure of UNH Cooperative Extension to help people learn what's in their own backyards.

**Objective F.** By the year 2015, all children, youth and families will spend one hour or more outdoors daily.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. Encourage participation in events such as the Great Park Pursuit.
- Activity 2. Develop media campaign to help raise awareness about the importance of children, youth and families spending time outdoors.
- Activity 3. Work with pediatricians and ob-gyn about the value of being together outside.
- Activity 4. Create a mechanism to value unpaid work and childcare.
- Activity 5. Promote National Wildlife Federation's Green Hour.
- Activity 6. Promote the value of being outside just for the sake of being outside (the pure joy of it).
- Activity 7. Promote a message of "Go outside -- its easy and safe."
- Activity 8. Provide more programs that teach the public how to look, feel, and use the outdoors on their own.

**Goal 3.** Every child has an opportunity to experience nature in a direct and tangible way in their local community.

**Objective G.** By 2015, the number of available outdoor spaces increases by 5% over 2009 baseline data.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. Every town creates a public listing of town-owned lands and makes a map available to townspeople.
- Activity 2. Establish support/legislations for towns to work toward setting aside 25% of land base as open space.
- Activity 3. Link developers and architects with landscape practices that rely on native and diverse vegetation for neighborhood development projects.
- Activity 4. Provide incentive to build cluster housing to maintain larger natural areas.
- Activity 5. Encourage communities to assess how livable and walkable their community is (using the Livable-Walkable Community toolbox).
- Activity 6. Develop a certificate program for realtors, developers and architects for learning how planning can be done differently (Office of Energy and Planning) to include more outdoor spaces.
- Activity 7. Participate in a variety of conferences to get the word out (such as realtors convention, Integrated Design/Integrated Development, etc.).
- Activity 8. Work with local towns to include in Master Plan that they will support multiple use trails and people powered transportation.

**Objective H.** By 2015, access to outdoor spaces increases by 5% over 2009 baseline data.

**Objective I.** By the year 2010, every community will inventory their outdoors spaces and promote their positive use by children, youth and families.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. Encourage right of way / legal rights to open space.
- Activity 2. Encourage development of “kids corridor” in towns.
- Activity 3. Designate an adult to be present on a regular basis in an outdoor space so children can play on their own, but still have help available if needed.
- Activity 4. Encourage communities to create and promote a map of places to go in the community, including information like level of difficulty, universal accessibility, parking, restrooms, with support from regional planning commission.
- Activity 5. Work cooperatively with kinds of trail managers.
- Activity 6. Reclaim “wasted spaces,” for example, small areas between buildings for gardens and superfund sites that have been capped, as “vest pocket parks.”
- Activity 7. By 2010, every community will inventory their outdoor spaces and promote their positive use by children, youth and families.

**Goal 4.** Children have more time for free play in the outdoors.

**Objective J.** By the year 2015, all children in grades K - 8 have a minimum of ½ hour of outdoor recess per day.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. (Check above activities)
- Activity 2. Encourage development of policy in local school boards.

**Objective K.** By the year 2015, all families set aside one weekday free from structured activities during after school hours.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. (Check above activities)

**Objective L.** By the year 2015, after school programs will increase the amount of time allotted for child selected outdoor activities.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. Work with university interns to serve as mentors in afterschool programs.
- Activity 2. Work on a policy change for afterschool programs that they should spend time in active play.

**Goal 5.** More people demonstrate appreciation and caring for nature and the outdoors through their involvement in activities and/or organizations.

**Objective M.** Organizations involved in caring for nature and the outdoors have an increase in volunteerism, membership and donors by 10% over 2009 baseline levels.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. Involve more people in helping to create or maintain outdoor spaces.
- Activity 2. Establish a Kids' Cabinet on the Outdoors.
- Activity 3. Create a Governors Commission on Children and the Outdoors.
- Activity 4. Establish a statewide volunteer action center for people to locate volunteer opportunities in the outdoors or working with children and youth in the outdoors.

**Objective N.** By 2015, youth choose more outdoor-oriented service projects by 25 % over 2009 baseline data levels. (*do schools keep track of senior project? - Newfound School*)

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. Towns will designate money for student/youth-oriented service projects (green initiatives) in towns and on town lands.
- Activity 2. Towns will communicate opportunities for Green service via the town report or local municipal center.
- Activity 3. High schools will develop a list of green service project and create "Green Service Book" to be housed at the high school so students can learn and do such projects.
- Activity 4. NH CINC website will have a page highlighting green service projects around the state.
- Activity 5. Organizations will sponsor green service projects as a collaborative opportunity between students and their agency to attain HS credit.

**Goal 6.** NH children and youth will improve their health, fitness and well being as a result of increased outdoor experiences.

**Objective O.** By 2018, the number of children who are obese or overweight decreases to 20% from the 1/08 statistic of 26.1%. *(this current statistic came from Regina Flynn from student self-report data – source was Youth Risk Behavior Survey CDC survey of the Department of Education).*

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. Sponsor a high visibility week of activities or “Get Out Week”
- Activity 2. Raise funds so to defray or eliminate fees for summer camp.
- Activity 3. Have new building projects incorporate “kids corridors” to increase places for kids to spend time outdoors or travel outdoors.
- Activity 4. Reduce barriers to active, outdoor field trips for schools.
- Activity 5. Develop a video game with an outdoor experience.
- Activity 6. Reduce liability risks for public and private land owners who allow public access of their property using media and legislation.
- Activity 7. Add a section to the NH CINC website with a monthly geocache challenge, which will encourage repeat active outings.
- Activity 8. Organize an expo on the theme of getting kids outdoors.
- Activity 9. Encourage existing children/youth programs to incorporate active, outdoor free time.
- Activity 10. Connect families with information about the location of public lands and parks and provide information about access.
- Activity 11. Work for legislation or advocate for DOT and town and regional planners to incorporate alternative travel routes into infrastructure projects.
- Activity 12. Work with schools to incorporate Leave No Child Inside philosophy and mandates into their federally mandated wellness programs.
- Activity 13. Create and publicize Junior Ranger type programs on a local or regional basis through out the state.
- Activity 14. Encourage youth leaders, such as the Girl Scouts, to reconnect with the outdoor roots of their programming.
- Activity 15. Educate parents and child guardians how to dress properly to enjoy outdoor experiences year around.

**Objective P.** By the year 2027, the number of youth diagnosed for depression and ADHD/ADD decreases by 30% from 2009 baseline data levels.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

- Activity 1. Increase the number of the state’s pediatricians who understand the brain development research about ADHD and ADD and who distribute this information to parents.
- Activity 2. Educate child caretakers about the role of multi-sensory activities in brain development and the link with ADD and ADHD.

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Activity 3. Bring back mandated outdoor recess for schools.

Activity 4. Engage agencies and schools who work on this behavioral issue to educate parents and teachers about the link to outdoor, multi-sensory activities and encourage use of such activities on a regular basis.

Activity 5. Develop a hand out for parents/guardians that would automatically be give out when children are diagnosed with ADD/ ADHD. Incorporate into physician's medical record.

**Objective Q.** Pro-social behaviors will be tied to increased positive outdoor experiences. Decrease of reports of vandalism to parks and outdoor spaces will be observed by XX% from 2009 base line data. (*police log reports*)

### **Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. (Check above activities)

**Goal 7.** Children and youth increase their understanding of the natural world.

**Objective R.** By 2015, students increase their assessment scores on life science standardized tests by 15% above 2009 baseline data levels.

### **Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. Pre-service teachers are required to learn natural history and life science.

Activity 2. Certified teachers receive mandatory professional development in life science.

Activity 3. Youth serving agencies (including after school, day care, faith-based, etc.) have more professional development opportunities in life science, and have mandatory certification in life science (NAEYC, NIAC)

Activity 4. Professional development funding is increased so teachers and others can attend trainings.

Activity 5. Connect providers of natural history programs with day care and pre-service professionals.

Activity 6. Provide more place-based education opportunities such as Project HOME for schoolyard habitat development.

Activity 7. 50% of schools and communities have resident naturalists/nature centers.

Activity 8. Increase professional training for naturalists (such as currently offered through state, regional and national professional organizations).

**Objective S.** By the year 2015, 10% of 18 years olds will have the skills (map reading, preparedness, safety skills) to craft their own direct outdoor experiences.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. (Check above activities)

**Objective S1.** By the time a student is 18 years of age they will be able to identify a minimum of 10 native plants and animals.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. Link activities to community mapping resources like GRANIT.

Activity 2. Increase participation in the Envirothon.

Activity 3. Include a family component in every natural history and life science program, for example, a newsletter, take home activity, etc.

**Objective T.** By 2015, 30% of children and youth have direct personal experience with natural features especially those in their local area. Measured through the school program experiences, maybe using field trip info as a quantifier.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. Expand funding opportunities for agencies and organizations that provide natural history programs.

Activity 2. Create a training program and certification for granting status to naturalists/environmental educators via NH Environmental Educators (NHEE), New England Environmental Education Alliance (NEEEA), and/or the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE).

Activity 3. Establish a Natural Leaders program to train high school youth for careers in life sciences and/or as informed leaders in New Hampshire.

Activity 4. Provide funding, awards and/or grants for model programs (sustainable initiatives) to replicate them statewide.

Activity 5. Strengthen and expand existing volunteer programs so volunteers can work more specifically and directly with kids in nature. tap and cultivate current volunteers (such as Tree Stewards, Wonders of Wildlife, Coverts, etc.).

Activity 6. Conduct a scavenger hunt (similar to Governor's Easter Egg Hunt), through radio stations, as an Earth Day Hunt.

**Objective U.** By 2012, 50% of schools have a plan that includes outdoor learning experiences in their curriculum.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. (Check above activities)

**Objective V.** By 2015, New Hampshire Legislature dedicates increased funding by 10% to natural resources and environmental agencies and land conservation agencies (agencies and LCHIP) funds to environmental and land projects.

**Range of Suggested Activities to Meet Objective**

Activity 1. Educate citizens and legislators about the importance of this issue and the long term benefits to environmental conservation and education.

DRAFT

**NH Children in Nature Coalition  
Communications Plan**

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## NH Children in Nature Coalition

### **Lay of the land**

In 2006, a national conversation was ignited by Richard Louv’s groundbreaking book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. In it, Louv traces the causes and impacts of children’s disconnect from nature through interviews with educators, parents and health professionals, as well as with children themselves.

Louv describes a growing body of research that reveals the necessity of contact with nature for healthy child development – and for adults, neighborhoods, whole communities and the very future of our society.

The social, physical, cognitive, and psychological benefits of spending time in nature are being recognized by more people every day. Research shows that outdoor play can help develop full use of the senses, protect psychological wellbeing, soothe the symptoms of attention-deficit disorders, reduce obesity, diminish stress and anxiety. In New Hampshire, where more than 32 percent of children aged 6-12 are overweight or obese (source: Foundation for Healthy Communities) and more than 9 percent of those aged 4-17 have at some point been diagnosed with ADHD (source: CDC.gov), the need for a nature-based culture shift are clear. *For more information about the benefits to children and youth from experiences in nature, see [Appendix 1: Evidence](#), which contains relevant research abstracts compiled by the national Children & Nature Network.*

Yet as of 1990, the radius around the home where children were allowed to roam on their own had shrunk to one-ninth of what it had been in 1970, and their “free” time is now largely structured. The reasons are many: lack of knowledge, busy schedules, limited access to nature, fear of strangers, popularity of video games, TV, and computers, perceived safety risks, fear of lawsuits, loss of recess periods, and so forth. Well-meaning but frightened or uninformed parents, school systems and media are keeping kids out of the fields and the woods. **By moving childhood indoors, we are depriving children of a full connection to the world.** The implications – for children’s physical and mental health, for the future of our natural resources, and even for our communities’ economies – are far-reaching.

The NH Children in Nature Coalition was formed in response to these challenges, with the ambition to get today’s children and families to explore and embrace their wild roots, and simply spend more time outdoors – for the mental and physical wellbeing it brings to people, and the long-term benefits it can have for our society and the earth.

## New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition

Coalition members have identified dozens of challenges that could be addressed by the coalition while it works to encourage children and families to get into nature. Here are a few:

- People have lost awareness of the values of being outdoors and have become disconnected
- Americans today have a largely sedentary lifestyle, which has led to child and adult obesity and other health issues
- There are many fears and misconceptions about what's healthy, safe, and right for kids
- Negative messages about the outdoors are propagated by the news media
- Most people may not even aware that there is a problem and an easy, no-cost solution



### **Our mission**

The mission of the New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition is to foster experiences in nature that:

- Improve physical and emotional health and wellbeing;
- Increase understanding of and care for the natural world;
- Promote stronger connections to community and landscape;

And to provide a forum for continued collaboration by Coalition participants and others.



### **History**

In January of 2007, staff from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's Public Affairs division gathered partners to discuss the possibility of creating a statewide initiative on the topic of children in nature, and to propose a summit on the topic of "Leave No Child Inside."

Soon, a steering committee was created, comprised of staff from various organizations and groups, including NH Parks and Recreation Association, NH DRED/Division of Parks, NH Fish and Game, NH Department of Environmental Services, University of New Hampshire, Plymouth State University, the Student Conservation Association, UNH Cooperative Extension, and the Appalachian Mountain Club.

During spring, the steering committee worked to plan the first New Hampshire "Leave No Child Inside" Summit, which took place at the PSNH Five Rivers Auditorium in Manchester, NH, on May 30, 2007, and served as a kickoff to the issue and the organization that would become the Children and Nature Coalition. The Summit gathered more than 100 people, with participants representing health, education, environment, recreation, media, culture and the built

## New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition

environment. Dr. Susan Lynch served as Honorary Chairperson, delivering a video message to the gathering; and Dr. Cheryl Charles, President of the national Children and Nature Network, delivered the keynote address. *For a list of participating groups, see Appendix 2: Summit Participants.*

A follow-up meeting was held in June to review the Summit Summary and Strategies, and organize working groups.

In summer and fall of 2007, the working groups started meeting regularly, to name the initiative; develop a mission statement and goals for the group; determine messages, audiences and communication methods; and to plan the “Leave No Child Inside” Forum.

The partnership of groups, organizations and individuals supporting the effort was named the “New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition” in fall of 2007. The coalition’s “Leave No Child Inside” Forum was held at the Capital Center for the Arts in Concord in November 2007, involving 240 people in working sessions and more than 600 in a public forum featuring “Last Child in the Woods” author Richard Louv. The event was co-hosted by the NH Children in Nature Coalition, the Sierra Club, and the Children & Nature Network.

A listserv was established following the forum. As of June 2008, more than 130 people have joined the listserv to learn more about the coalition and information and programs related to children and nature in New Hampshire.

As the need for organizing coalition efforts and structures emerged, the Organizational Development Committee was formed. The group is currently working on setting up coalition structures and operating procedures, including designing the procedures for writing and receiving potential grant monies, using designated fiscal agents for each project. As of spring 2008, the coalition is preparing to register with the State of New Hampshire.

At this writing, dozens of volunteers remain actively involved with the NH Children in Nature Coalition at many levels. The original Steering Committee evolved into the Mission and Goals Committee, which is now working on the coalition’s strategic plan; and the Messages, Audiences and Communications Committee has met regularly to develop ideas for communications and outreach. In addition, the ad hoc We Do Science Committee is working to connect nature experiences with New Hampshire science curricula; and the new ad hoc Natural Leaders Committee is devising a program for high school students to promote youth environmental leadership.

Awareness continues to grow while the various working groups and “member” organizations do their part to carry out the coalition’s mission.



# New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition

## Goals

Many New Hampshire organizations, individuals, and agencies are already working on issues related to children in nature; one important goal of the Coalition is to connect them with each other and help them bring their work into communities where children and families will directly benefit.

We have a large and active coalition representing several areas of interest in New Hampshire, including education, health, natural resources, the built environment, and recreation. The coalition is politically neutral, and its ideals can be embraced by anyone who'd like to see positive changes in our society. Coalition partners have committed time and resources to the effort, and have expressed a desire to work together, build the network, and make use of any tools and opportunities the coalition can offer.

This plan outlines the first steps in creating those tools and facilitating needed connections.



## Defining Audiences

The coalition will need to communicate with a wide range of audiences throughout New Hampshire – and there will certainly be crossover among audiences. Many of these people will also be coalition members and thus a part of internal communications as well.

Audiences we intend to eventually reach include:

- Families
- Natural experience “facilitators”
- Health care profession: administrators, insurers, physicians, nurses, school cafeterias, health food/grocery stores, physical therapy and rehabilitation centers, mental health agencies
- Built environment: architects, designers (landscape designers and landscape architects) contractors, developers, engineers, transportation officials, civic organizations, planners, government agencies (local, state, regional)
- Policymakers/legislators, school boards, zoning boards, conservation commissions
- Outdoor retailers
- Natural resource artists and cultural professionals
- School-age children, including those with special needs
- Colleges and universities
- Coalition members

A great deal more planning and prioritizing of audiences and activities will be needed, so that limited resources can be put to best and most efficient use.



## Communications – Families

### **Audience description**

The “family” audience is primarily parents and caregivers – those who reach children and youths in their homes and make the majority of decisions about how and where they spend their time.

### **Goals**

New Hampshire families will:

- Understand and appreciate the many benefits of spending time outdoors.
- Are inspired to get out and play and enjoy the natural world, in an unstructured way, with their children.
- Make use of local resources, such as open spaces and the organizations that can enhance the outdoor experience

### **Key messages**

*Spending time in nature...*

- Is fun
- Is safe
- Reduces stress
- Makes children more focused
- Enhances children’s emotional and social development
- Improves school performance
- Enhances creativity, problem solving ability, self-esteem and self control
- Improves cognitive ability
- Improves health and wellbeing
- Reduces obesity
- Gives kids a reason to care about and conserve their environment
- Can lead to careers in the environment
- Can inspire a lifelong lifestyle
- Can happen near where you are, whenever you’re ready

### **Tools and tactics**

#### *Branding*

The NH Children in Nature Coalition has a name and has generated significant buzz since its inception. Moving forward, we must develop a coalition “brand” – including a logo; a “look” to include colors, typefaces, and a distinctive graphic style that reflects the coalition’s vision; and a

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tagline. These branding items will be carried across all coalition materials, whether print or electronic, and will be offered for use by coalition members in their own outbound communications.

### *Awareness campaign*

The awareness campaign will be developed for a family audience, with the understanding that coalition partners and members – both individuals and organizations – will play a substantial part in delivering it to audiences, through their own existing communications mechanisms and through forums that they seek out.

Some of the elements of the campaign:

#### Materials

- Website – A one-stop site where families can go to find things to do, places to go, organizations to get involved with (see “facilitators” section).
- PSA/advertising – Professionally developed public service announcements and advertisements that could be used by the media AND used or adapted by coalition members or volunteers as they do their own outreach. This may include print, web, audio, and eventually video, and would be based on coalition messaging.
- Articles for reprint – Invite coalition members to write or submit articles that could be repackaged for the media, or for organizational newsletters.
- Printed materials – A bookmark, brochure, or other printed piece(s) that could be distributed through schools and community facilities, to encourage families to get outside.

#### Speakers’ bureau

- Messengers – A “stable” of coalition partners/members who are willing to go out to other organizations and talk about the coalition.
- Training – A half-day or shorter workshop to train messengers.
- Talking points – Containing the coalition’s main messages and stories that can be delivered to an audience (long form and short form to be developed for use in different contexts).
- Slide show – An electronic slide presentation that could be used or adapted by coalition partners/members when they speak with other audiences.
- Display – A portable standup display that could be used when the coalition is asked to present at or “table” an event.

#### Media relations

- Coalition members – especially speakers’ bureau members – will be invited to be spokespeople for the coalition and encouraged to interact with the news media.
- News releases – could be prepared by coalition members (or, one day, staff), and sent out via the e-mail system (see “facilitators” section).

## **Evaluation**

Because we are looking for changes in attitude and behavior that can be quite difficult or expensive to measure, we will need to rely on the baseline and post-project research being planned by the Mission and Goals group to show any movement.



## **Communications – Facilitators**

### **Audience description**

The Coalition defines “facilitators” as people who in some way influence the way that children and families spend their time, who have the potential to engage children in nature pursuits, including: educators and school administrators; presenters of educational programs such as Project WET, Project Wild, and Project Learning Tree; day-care providers; recreation specialists such as coaches and camp counselors; staff and volunteers of outdoors organizations; leaders of faith-based organizations; and many more.

These are the people that this initial communications and outreach plan will address in the near term; many of them are already involved with the coalition. This startup portion of the plan could be phased in over 6-12 months.

Our expectation is that once more “facilitators” are actively involved with the coalition, momentum will build for them to bring in other audiences where their lives intersect, at which point the plan could be expanded with a 2-4 year horizon.

### **Goals**

Facilitators will:

1. Embrace the vision of children in nature in an active way
2. Join the coalition and get involved in the movement at some level
3. Provide time and resources to get kids into nature
4. Spread the word – talk about children in nature and what *they’re* doing to help make change in their community
5. Share their stories so that others can learn from their experience

### **Key messages**

- The NH Children in Nature Coalition can connect you with a bigger sense of mission and bring greater meaning to your work.
- There are many existing resources that you can tap to learn about the issue of children in nature and to help you develop knowledge and skills that you can share with others.
- You can be a change agent, helping to bring about a new cultural movement that values engagement in nature.

### Tools and tactics

#### *Website*

At meeting after meeting, coalition members have agreed that an interactive, Web 2.0-based website will be critical to the coalition's success. The domains *www.nhchildreninnature.com* and *www.nhchildreninnature.org* have been secured and currently point to a bare-bones page about the coalition. The website would ultimately include:

- Information about the coalition – including mission, goals, how to get involved
- A clearinghouse where coalition member organizations can enter their own information, including:
  - Name
  - Mission
  - Contact info, including website
  - Description of activities and/or program offerings
  - Event and program dates

These data would be uploaded into a web-enabled resource database and activity calendar that would be searchable by any web user

- Breaking news related to the topic of children in nature and/or the activities of the coalition and its member organizations; plus a blog option to invite conversation among partners and the public
- A resource library, to include such things as New Hampshire-specific research and classroom curricula
- Advocacy tools such as talking points and reprintable materials that support the coalition's work; eventually, separate sections for audiences such as health workers
- Links to the national Children & Nature Network and other relevant national or regional efforts
- An e-mail signup mechanism

#### Implementation needs:

- The website and blog would need to be built by professionals.
- The website would need to be maintained and the blog written and monitored by someone, possibly a paid coalition staff member, with the time and ability to do a good job, vet the information entered by member organizations, and keep everything up-to-date.
- Financial support for above activities.

#### *e-mail list*

A one-way e-mail list is needed so that people who are members of or interested in the coalition can remain engaged and stay apprised of goings-on. This email list is a separate list from the internal coalition listserv. This list would:

- Have a welcome message including information about the topic; a link to the website; and an invitation to become a part of the website's organization clearinghouse
- Be used to send information about the coalition – new activities or research; member program highlights; partnership, training, or funding opportunities; and the like

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- Help keep momentum going among coalition members by sending information or materials that they can use in their programs or for further advocacy

The email list would need to be administered, possibly by the same person who maintains the website, so that the two information sources would stay in sync.

### **Evaluation**

One year after implementation of this plan begins, we expect that the website will be up and running; the number of unique visitors is reaching the thousands each month; the e-mail list will have been established, and at least 2 e-mails are going out to members each month.

A survey of the facilitators should be conducted after the first year to determine whether they are getting the information they need and to ask what else the coalition can do to help them be more successful connecting children with nature.



### **Communications – Coalition members**

As an inclusive coalition, creating and preserving a consistent flow of information within the coalition member group is imperative. Since no one organizational member is leading the coalition, ideas, information, and activities can come from any member. The perception and existence of this democratic base is extremely important.

**This section is under development.**



## **Appendix 1: Evidence**

The national Children & Nature Network, with support from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, has developed an annotated bibliography of studies that highlight the benefits to children and youth from experiences in nature – abstracts may be found on the following pages, with links to full results from the research where available. An additional volume of research related to changes in children’s experience of nature may be found at [www.childrenandnature.org/research/volumes](http://www.childrenandnature.org/research/volumes).

### **Childhood Development**

#### **Direct Experience in Nature Is Critical and Diminishing**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

Nature is important to children's development in every major way—intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and physically. In his newest book, *Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the Human-Nature Connection* (Island Press, 2005), Dr. Stephen R. Kellert of Yale University devotes a chapter to the subject of "Nature and Childhood Development." Combining his original research with well-documented references to the research of others, this chapter is a powerful synthesis of what we know, and what we do not know, about the importance of nature to children's healthy development. Kellert states, "Play in nature, particularly during the critical period of middle childhood, appears to be an especially important time for developing the capacities for creativity, problem-solving, and emotional and intellectual development." He includes research to indicate optimal learning opportunities at age-appropriate times and differentiates between indirect, vicarious, and direct experiences with nature — with the latter less and less available to children. He urges designers, developers, educators, political leaders and citizens throughout society to make changes in our modern built environments to provide children with positive contact with nature—where children live, play, and learn. (Original Research and Synthesis)

Kellert, Stephen R. "Nature and Childhood Development." In *Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the Human-Nature Connection*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2005.

#### **Unstructured Free Play Brings Cognitive, Social and Health Benefits**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

Unstructured free play in the out-of-doors brings a host of benefits to children—from being smarter to more cooperative to healthier overall. This well-documented article by two physicians builds a strong case for the importance of unstructured free play in the out-of-doors for all age groups, and especially young children. While concerned about the “obesity epidemic” in young children, the authors say that the health benefits from outdoor play are only one aspect of the overall benefits. They suggest that the concept of “play” is more compelling and inviting to most adult caregivers, parents and guardians than “exercise.” The authors cite cognitive benefits from play in nature, including creativity, problem-solving, focus and self-discipline. Social benefits include cooperation, flexibility, and self-awareness. Emotional benefits include stress reduction, reduced aggression and increased happiness. Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, healthier and happier when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the out-of-doors. (Synthesis)

Burdette, Hillary L., M.D., M.S.; and Robert C. Whitaker, M.D, M.P.H. "Resurrecting Free Play in Young Children: Looking Beyond Fitness and Fatness to Attention, Affiliation and Affect." © 2005 American Medical Association.

### **Direct Experience and Mentoring Are Key Elements**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

The focus of this recent research from Dr. Louise Chawla is on those factors that contribute to individuals choosing to take action to benefit the environment when they are adults. This is a reprise of earlier research by Dr. Chawla in the 1990s (*Journal of Environmental Education*, 1998, 1999). Positive, direct experience in the out-of-doors and being taken outdoors by someone close to the child—a parent, grand parent, or other trusted guardian—are the two most significant contributing factors. While lifelong activism is the primary focus of Dr. Chawla's inquiry, as reported in this article, her well-documented study includes citations and explanations of many additional benefits to children from early experiences in the out-of-doors. Creativity, physical competence, social skills, environmental knowledge, confidence, and problem-solving ability are among those benefits to children's development.

Given the important role of adults in taking children into the out-of-doors, Dr. Chawla is specific about the attributes of the experiences those adult mentors provide. She states, the "adults gave attention to their surroundings in four ways—care for the land as a limited resource essential for family identity and well-being; a disapproval of destructive practices; simple pleasure at being out in nature; and a fascination with the details of other living things and elements of the earth and sky." Modeling those attributes while in the presence of the child does even more. As Dr. Chawla states, "The very fact that a parent or grandparent chose to take the child with them to a place where they themselves found fascination and pleasure, to share what engaged them there, suggests not only care for the natural world, but, equally, care for the child." (Original Research and Synthesis)

Chawla, Louise. "Learning to Love the Natural World Enough to Protect It," in *Barn* nr. 2 2006:57-58. © 2006 Norsk senter for barneforskning. *Barn* is a quarterly published by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway. This article was written for a special issue in honor of the Norwegian child psychologist, Per Olav Tiller.

### **Contact with Nature Is Important for Children**

Andrea Faber Taylor and Frances E. Kuo have contributed important research to the understanding of the impact of nature on people's lives, and specifically to the well-being of children. This particular article is a recent review of the literature and establishes what is known, and what is still missing, about the effects of contact with nature on children's lives. While the evidence is growing, this article is an important call to action for further research.

Taylor, Andrea Faber; and Frances E. Kuo. "Is Contact with Nature Important for Healthy Child Development? State of the Evidence." In Spencer, C. & Blades, M. (Eds.), *Children and Their Environments: Learning, Using and Designing Spaces*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Outdoor Learning Enhances School Achievement, Self-Esteem and Self-Discipline

**Nature-Smart Kids Get Higher Test Scores**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

The American Institutes for Research® conducted a study, submitted to the California Department of Education, of the impact of weeklong residential outdoor education programs. The focus was on at-risk youth, 56% of whom reported never having spent time in a natural setting. Comparing the impact on students who experienced the outdoor education program versus those in a control group who had not had the outdoor learning experience, results were statistically significant. Major findings were: 27% increase in measured mastery of science concepts; enhanced cooperation and conflict resolution skills; gains in self-esteem; gains in positive environmental behavior; and gains in problem-solving, motivation to learn, and classroom behavior. (Original research)

"Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California." American Institutes for Research: Palo Alto, CA: 2005. Available on the Sierra Club web site.

Environment-Based Learning Enhances School Achievement and Civic Responsibility

**School Achievement Is Enhanced When Curricula Are Environment Based**

Sponsored by many state departments of education, this 1998 study has an important place in documenting the enhanced school achievement of youth who experience school curricula in which the environment is the principal organizer. This study, completed in 1998, was followed by two related studies, conducted by the State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER), both of which produced results consistent with this original study. (Original Research) Lieberman, Gerald A.; and Linda L. Hoody. "Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning." SEER: Poway, CA, 1998. "California Student Assessment Project." SEER: Poway, CA, 2000. Both of these studies are available at [www.seer.org](http://www.seer.org). The third and most recent of the SEER studies we are featuring is described below.

[\[>\] read online](#)

**More Evidence Corroborates Environment-Based School Achievement**

This study provides further evidence to support the positive benefits on school achievement from environment-based study in schools. This 2005 study is consistent with the results of two precursor studies, cited above, "Closing the Achievement Gap" (1998) and the "California Student Assessment Project" (2000). Students in environment-based instructional programs score as well or better on standardized measures in four basic subject areas—reading, math, language and spelling. The environment-based programs also foster cooperative learning and civic responsibility, using the natural characteristics of the school grounds and local community as the foundational framework for the curricula. While the benefits are significant, this study also provides evidence for the challenges inherent in maintaining environment-based curricula in schools on a longitudinal basis, despite substantial evidence of benefits. (Original Research)

"California Student Assessment Project Phase Two: The Effects of Environment-Based Education on Student Achievement." SEER: Poway, CA, 2005. Available on the Web site of the State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER) at [www.seer.org](http://www.seer.org).

[\[>\] read online](#)

### **Outdoor Experience for Teens Has Self-Reported Life-Changing Results**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

A classic 1998 study by Dr. Stephen R. Kellert of Yale University, with assistance from Victoria Derr, remains the most comprehensive research to date to examine the effects on teenage youth of participation in outdoor education, specifically wilderness-based programs. Subjects were participants in programs offered through three old and well-respected organizations: the Student Conservation Association (SCA), the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), and Outward Bound. The researchers used quantitative and qualitative research techniques, and parallel use of both retrospective and longitudinal study techniques. Results indicate that the majority of respondents found this outdoor experience to be "one of the best in their life." Participants report positive effects on their personal, intellectual, and, in some cases, spiritual development. Pronounced results were found in enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, autonomy and initiative. These impacts occurred among both the retrospective and longitudinal respondents in this study, which means, in part, that these results persisted through many years.

Kellert, Stephen R.; with the assistance of Victoria Derr. "A National Study of Outdoor Wilderness Experience." New Haven: Yale University, 1998. Available at the National Outdoor Leadership School web site.

### Naturalized School Grounds Enhance Creativity, Self Discipline, Health and Academic Achievement

#### **Green School Grounds Foster Achievement and Responsibility**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

There are numerous studies that document the benefits to students from school grounds that are ecologically diverse and include free-play areas, habitat for wildlife, walking trails, and gardens. One major study is "Grounds for Action: Promoting Physical Activity through School Ground Greening in Canada" by Anne C. Bell and Janet E. Dymont. While this study has roots in concern about obesity in children, it documents results and benefits beyond weight loss. Children who experience school grounds with diverse natural settings are more physically active, more aware of nutrition, more civil to one another, and more creative. One of the major benefits of green school grounds is increased involvement by adults and members of the nearby community, from helping with gardens to enriching the lifescape of the school grounds. Concerned about policy implications, this report offers specific recommendations for actions communities can take, from local neighborhoods to cities, states, and provinces. (Original Research)

Bell, Anne C.; and Janet E. Dymont. "Grounds for Action: Promoting Physical Activity through School Ground Greening in Canada." © 2006 Evergreen.

### **Naturalized School Grounds Benefit Children and Communities**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

A precursor to the study above, this report, "Nature Nurtures: Investigating the Potential of School Grounds," is an important compendium of documented benefits from "greening" school grounds. It includes citations of benefits to students, from improved academic performance to lower exposure to toxins; benefits to teachers, from increased enthusiasm for teaching to fewer classroom discipline problems; benefits to schools, from reduced absenteeism to fewer discipline problems; and benefits to communities, from better community health to "banked social capital." The report provides recommendations and tangible examples of ways to transform traditional school grounds into "green" school grounds for enriched learning and other benefits. (Synthesis) "Nature Nurtures: Investigating the Potential of School Grounds." © 2000 Evergreen. Available online at [www.evergreen.ca](http://www.evergreen.ca)

### **There Are More Benefits from Naturalized Playgrounds and School Grounds**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

Randy White offers a variety of resources, articles, and recommendations for designing school grounds and playgrounds to optimize the benefits to children's development. One of his many excellent articles is "Young Children's Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children's Development & the Earth's Future." In addition to citing references and providing a succinct summary of the many benefits of informal and unstructured natural play environments for children, he distills the findings into a list of beneficial elements of naturalized play environments that any of us can use, from back yards to school grounds to neighborhood parks. Visit Randy White's Web site for additional resources and information at [www.whitehutchinson.com](http://www.whitehutchinson.com). (Synthesis)

White, Randy. "Young Children's Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children's Development & the Earth's Future."

### **Schoolyard Habitat Projects Bring Natural Benefits to School and Students**

This brief article by Mary Rivkin is an important reminder of the importance of bringing natural habitats to school grounds as places for natural learning. When the article was written in 1997, there was a burgeoning movement in the U.S. to have schoolyard habitat projects—places of natural and rich learning, integral to the curriculum, and a respite for teachers, students and the community overall. We've literally lost ground in this respect. The concept remains accessible, important, and healthy. This article is a short, succinct summary of the natural benefits afforded from schoolyard habitat projects. (Synthesis)

Rivkin, Mary. "The Schoolyard Habitat Movement: What It Is and Why Children Need It." *Early Childhood Education Journal*. Volume 25, No. 1, 1997. Available on the National Wildlife Federation web site (Synthesis)

[\[>\] read online](#)

### **Natural Settings Provide Psychological Benefits**

"Coping with ADD: The Surprising Connection to Green Play Settings," by Andrea Faber Taylor; Frances E. Kuo; and William C. Sullivan (2001) is one of the earliest studies to explore the potential for contact with nature to have a positive effect in reducing the impact of attention deficit disorder in children. The study was designed to test two hypotheses: 1) Attention deficit

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symptoms will be more manageable after activities in green settings than after activities in other settings; and 2) The greener a child's everyday environment, the more manageable their attention deficit symptoms will be in general. The results were positive. (Original Research)

Taylor, Andrea Faber; Frances E. Kuo; and William C. Sullivan. In *Environment and Behavior*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January 2001. © 2001 Sage Publications, Inc. Available on the web site of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, at [www.lhhl.uiuc.edu](http://www.lhhl.uiuc.edu)

[\[>\] read online](#)

### **Access to Nature Nurtures Self-Discipline**

This study focuses on the positive benefits to inner city youth, particularly girls, from access to green spaces for play. Even a view of green settings enhances peace, self-control, and self-discipline. While the results are most notable for girls, the evidence is not limited to the positive impact on girls. (Original Research)

Taylor, Andrea Faber; Frances E. Kuo; and William C. Sullivan. "Views of Nature and Self-Discipline: Evidence from Inner City Children." In the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21, 2001. © 2001 Academic Press. Available on the Web site of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, at [www.lhhl.uiuc.edu](http://www.lhhl.uiuc.edu).

[\[>\] read online](#)

### **Nearby Nature Reduces Stress in Children**

This study, reported in 2003, by Cornell assistant professor Nancy Wells, focuses on rural children and finds that even a view of nature—green plants and vistas—helps reduce stress among highly stressed children. Further, the more plants, green views and access to natural play areas, the more positive the results. (Original Research)

Wells, N.M., and Evans, G.W. "Nearby Nature: A Buffer of Life Stress Among Rural Children." *Environment and Behavior*. Vol. 35:3, 311-330. This study is not available online without purchase; it can be obtained by contacting Sage Publications.

[\[>\] purchase this study](#)

### **Nearby Nature Boosts Children's Cognitive Functioning**

A precursor to Nancy Wells' study reported above, this research, reported in 2000, shows that proximity to, views of, and daily exposure to natural settings increases children's ability to focus and therefore enhances cognitive abilities. (Original Research)

Wells, N.M. "At Home with Nature: Effects of 'Greenness' on Children's Cognitive Functioning." *Environment and Behavior*. Vol. 32, No. 6, 775-795. This study is not available online without purchase; it can be obtained by contacting Sage Publications.

[\[>\] purchase this study](#)

## Design Places for Learning and Living with Children in Mind

### **Design Cities Where Children Can Play and Learn Independently**

City planners and city leaders need to create safe and accessible places for children to play. As more and more children live in urban settings, cities need to be redesigned with children in mind. This study offers explicit evidence for the importance of natural play areas in cities, and suggestions for actions to take to achieve this outcome. The study includes a summary of the

## New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition

characteristics of cities and neighborhoods that need to be considered in order to create safe places for children to play independently, with all of the associated and documented benefits that will result. (Original Research)

Churchman, Arza. "Is There a Place for Children in the City." In the Journal of Urban Design, Volume 8, No 2, 99-111, June 2003. Available on the Web site of the University of North Carolina, College of Design, Natural Learning Initiative.

[\[>\] read online](#)

### **City Parks Bring Social, Community Health and Economic Benefits**

[\[+\] view print version \(PDF\)](#)

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a premier conservation organization, responsible for protection of special public lands throughout several generations. Today TPL is concerned not just about setting lands aside for future generations, but making sure that young people and families enjoy them today. TPL recognizes that to connect with nature is to appreciate nature, now and for the long term. This comprehensive report, "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space," offers a clear look at socioeconomic factors affecting the availability of parks, the history of city parks, and the hopes for a revival of commitment to city parks. The report outlines benefits in a number of areas: physical, including remedies for inactivity and obesity; economic, with increased property values; environmental, with pollution abatement; and social, from crime reduction to strengthening communities. Add this report to your collection of those that serve to document how safe places for children to play contribute to everyone's health and well being. Available on the Trust for Public Land web site. (Synthesis)

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space."

### **City Parks Offer a Sense of Place**

This brief article draws on solid research, some of which is independently referenced elsewhere in this list. Among the points made are that city parks offer a sense of place, opportunity for daily experience with nature, experiences that enhance school achievement, and antidotes to alienation. This American Planning Association City Parks Forum Briefing Paper is largely inspired by the work of Robin Moore, noted and pioneering landscape designer with a commitment to creating learning landscapes that optimize children's learning. "Natural spaces and materials stimulate children's limitless imaginations and serve as the medium of inventiveness and creativity," says Moore. Readers will find tangible reasons for the benefits associated with using city parks as places for learning as well as community-based examples and resources. (Synthesis)

"How Cities Use Parks to . . . Help Children Learn," Chicago, IL: American Planning Association, 2003 is available on line at [www.naturalearning.org](http://www.naturalearning.org) and [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org).

## New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition

### **Appendix 2: Summit Participants**

*New Hampshire Leave No Child Inside Summit, May 30, 2007*

Karen Acerno	Massabesic Audubon
Tim Albers	SCA New Hampshire Conservation Corps
Andrea Alley	NH Hospital Association
Dave Anderson	Society for the Protection of NH Forests
Jenn Barton	White Mountain Regional School
Amy Bassett	NHDRED, Division of Parks and Recreation
Karen Bennett	UNH Cooperative Extension
Greg Bisson	NH Recreation and Parks Association
Debbie Black	Keene State College
Jennifer Bourgeault	GLOBE Program UNH
Wendy Brock	UNH Cooperative Ext, 4-H Youth Development
Philip Bryce	NHDRED, Division of Forests and Lands
Thomas Burack	NH Dept of Environmental Services
Doris Burke	Public Service Company of New Hampshire
Jim Campbell	NH Planners Association
Alice Chamberlin	Executive Dept Office of the Governor
Cathy Chesley	Hopkinton Independent School
Chelsea Conaboy	Concord Monitor Publishing Company
John Corrigan	NH Department of Transportation
Esther Cowles	NH Project Learning Tree
Helen Dalbeck	Amoskeag Fishways
Jenny DeVost	Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Plan Commis
Kerrie Diers	Nashua Regional Planning Commission
Joe Drake	PLUS Time NH
Robert Dupont	Open Head Media
Regina Flynn	NH Department of Health & Human Services
Katy Fralick	Plymouth State University
Charlie French	UNHCE/Facilitator
Jef Fries	Horton Center on Pine Mountain
Michelle Gagne	University of New Hampshire
Denis Gleeson	The Nature of Things
Debbie Gleeson	The Nature of Things
Mary Goodyear	NH Project WILD / NH Fish and Game Department
Carrie Green	Girl Scouts of Swiftwater Council
Lillie Green	Office of Governor Lynch
Sharon Guaraldi	NH Fish and Game Department
Bonnie Guevin	NH Association of Realtors
Carol Hall	Russell Piscataquog River Watershed Foundation
Pam Hess	Appalachian Mountain Club
Ethan Hipple	SCA New Hampshire Conservation Corps
Beth Hogan	UNH Family Studies
Karina Jolles	Let's Go Fishing / NH Fish and Game Department
Donna Kuethe	NH Recreation and Parks Association

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Shawn LaFrance	NH Hospital Assoc/Foundation for Healthy Com
Thom Linehan	UNHCE Family Development/Facilitator
Clare Long	US White Mountain National Forest
Iain MacLeod	Squam Lakes Natural Science Center
Linda Mattlage	Concord Pediatrics
Julia Steed Mawson	UNH Cooperative Extension
Jan McLaughlin	NH Dept of Education
Allison McLean	NHDRED, Division of Parks and Recreation
Leila Mellen	National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program
Judy Mitchell	Concord Pediatrics
Terri Mitchell	Hillsboro Deering Elementary School
Jess Morton	NH Project WET/NH Dept of Env Svs/Recorder
Heather Tall Noyes	UNH/Facilitator
Elizabeth Obelenus	Northeastern Organic Farming Association
Catherine O'Brian	NH State Council on the Arts
Marianne O'Connor	Bicentennial Elementary School
Richard Pendleton	Nubanusit Neighborhood and Farm
Dale Penny	Student Conservation Association
Lee Perry	NH Fish and Game Department
Kevin Peterson	NH Charitable Foundation
Liza Poinier	NH Fish and Game Department/Recorder
Emilea Raymond	4-H
Dan Reidy	UNHCE/Facilitator
Laura Remick	North Country Health Care Consortium
Angela Roberge	NH Parent Teacher Association
Cathy Robjant	Kearsarge Regional Elementary School
Matthew Routhier	Granite State Landscape Architects
Gordon Russell	Russell Piscataquog River Watershed Foundation
Laura Ryder	NH Fish and Game Department
Olivia Saunders	UNH/Facilitator
Steve Schuch	Night Heron Music
Don Shumway	Crotched Mountain Rehab
Judy Silverberg	NH Fish and Game Department/Recorder
Ruth Smith	Kearsarge Indian Museum
David Sobel	Antioch New England
Judy Stokes	NH Fish and Game Department/Recorder
Wally Strauch	Caring Community Network of the Twin Rivers
John Taylor	Upper Valley Trail Alliance
Lionel Tracey	NH Department of Education
Paula Tracy	Manchester Union Leader
Judy Tumosa	Bath Conservation Commission
Sandi Van Scoyoc	Healthy NH Foundation
Philip Vaughan	NH Public Television
Karen Voci	Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation
Erin Walsh	NH Project Learning Tree
Marilyn Wyzga	NH Fish and Game Department/Recorder