Chapter Three
Fewer Oregon Youth Learning Outdoor Skills

Prepared by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

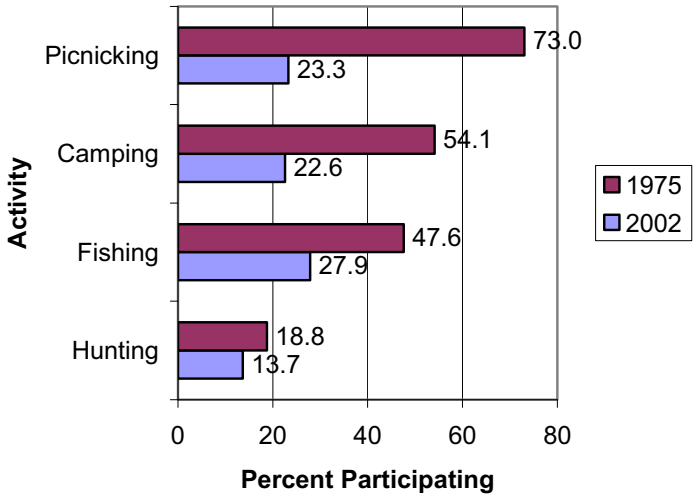
Issue Introduction: Fewer Oregon Youth Learning Outdoor Skills

Oregon is a state rich in physical variety, with citizens molded by a recent frontier history. The relative proximity of seashore, mountains and deserts to most of the state's population has instilled in Oregonians a special connection to these lands. Because of these factors, an active outdoor lifestyle is a central part of our shared tradition and heritage in Oregon and throughout the Pacific Northwest.

However, growing evidence shows that young Oregonians are gravitating away from outdoor experiences and towards a virtual indoor reality. Analysis of past Oregon SCORP results (Figure 16) indicates that participation in traditional outdoor recreation activities is decreasing. Anecdotal information and recent analysis indicate that youth participation in outdoor activities is decreasing because of several factors including increased urbanization, loss of free time, increase in single-parent family households, and greater focus on electronic activities (TV, video games, and internet).

This disconnect from nature has serious long-term implications for the health and well-being of our state and to the future stewardship of our public lands. Research has shown that people who do not participate in outdoor recreation as youth are less likely to participate in those activities as adults (with implications also for the next generation). Exposing children to outdoor recreation activities can provide children a variety of benefits ─ including physical, social, emotional and spiritual benefits. Increasing participation by youth in active outdoor recreation activities can also serve as a primary strategy in combating the

Figure 16: Percent of Oregon population participating in traditional outdoor activities



unprecedented epidemic of childhood obesity that is currently plaguing the state of Oregon. Moreover, an effort to increase outdoor recreation participation is critical for achieving positive conservation attitudes in the future, and ultimately for maintaining support for agencies that manage recreation and natural areas.

The intention of this chapter is to set a course for recreation providers in the state to reconnect Oregonians to their traditional outdoor lifestyle and build a strong future generation of natural resource stewards and leaders.

Outdoor Recreation Participation and Oregon's Youth Population

With the wild enthusiasm over video games, the Internet and the endless supply of TV channels, children and teenagers have little need to walk out their front door to find entertainment. A national longitudinal study of children and their families conducted by the University of Michigan in 2004[30], found a

[30] Juster, F.T, H. Ono and F.P. Stafford. Changing times of American youth: 1981-2003. Nov. 2004. Institute for Social Research , University of Michigan.

substantial decline in the amount of time spent in out-of-door activities among American children between the ages of 6-17. In 1982 youth spent an average of one hour and 40 minutes per week on outdoor activities and only half of that amount of time (50 minutes) in 2003. In 2003 youth spent on average 17 hours and 21 minutes per week watching television and on the computer!

According to Zaradic and Pergams[31], increasing use of electronic media has been implicated in negative psychological and physical effects, including obesity, loneliness, depression, and attentional problems. Internet use at home is shown to have a strong negative impact on time spent with friends and family as well as time spent on social activities. Outdoor play and nature experience have proven beneficial for cognitive functioning, reduction in symptoms of ADD, increase in self-discipline and emotional well being at all development stages. Yet, in contrast to the hours spent per child per week in front of electronic entertainment, children living in the United States reportedly spend on average only 30 minutes of unstructured time outdoors each week.

This trend towards more indoor electronic media time is not likely to go away in the near future. Nearly 70% of children ages 6-14 have a television in their bedrooms and nearly 50% have video game systems in their bedrooms. A recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that a generation of parents raised on TV is largely encouraging the early use of television, video games and computers by their own children. This study found that 8 in 10 of the nation's youngest children ─ babies up to age 6 ─ watch TV, play video games or use the computer for about two hours on a typical day. Even for littlest tots, TV in the bedroom is not rare: Nineteen percent of babies younger than two-years-old have one despite urging from the American Academy of Pediatrics that youngsters not watch any television at that age.

In Oregon, recent data confirm a shift towards a virtual indoor reality. An analysis of results from the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey[32] identified:

- a 35% increase from 2001 to 2005 in the fraction of Oregon 11th graders who watched more than two hours of TV on an average school day (17.0% to 22.9%);
- a 76% increase from 2001-2003 in the fraction of 11th graders who played video games more than two hours a day (4.9% to 8.6%); and
- a 100% increase from 2001-2003 in the fraction of Oregon 11th graders who "surfed" the Internet for more than two hours (6.2% to 12.4%).

In preparation for this planning chapter, OPRD contracted Oregon State University to conduct a statewide survey of Oregon youth and their parents. The goal of this survey project was to better understand current youth outdoor recreation patterns in Oregon, the extent to which recreation participation and development of outdoor skills has changed in the past generation, and current and potential participation in outdoor programs. The evaluation included assessment of constraints and parental priorities for such programs, as well as parental perceptions of safety and access to natural areas. The project involved surveys of both parents and youth.

[31] Zaradic P.A. and Pergams ORW. Videophilia: Implications for childhood development and conservation. The Journal of Developmental Processes Spring 2007; 2(1): 130-147.

[32] Oregon Overweight, Obesity, Physical Activity, and Nutrition Facts. January 2007. Oregon Department of Human Services, Physical Activity and Nutrition Program.

A second research study was designed to explore the opinions and thoughts directly from youth in a series of focus group meetings during the months of February and March 2007. A series of nine focus group meetings occurred, four taking place in the city of Portland, Oregon and five in rural and suburban settings (one in Prineville and four in Bend). Ages of the youth ranged between 7-18 years old and groups ages of 7-9, 9-11, 11-13, 13-16, and 16-18. Activities, time, constraints and benefits experienced were the major focus of this exploration.

A "Lost Generation" of Oregon Outdoor Recreation Participants

Several studies have noted that people who do not participate in outdoor recreation as youth are less likely to participate in those activities as adults. For example, Cordell et al.[33] state that "the type of outdoor recreation children learn as children and young adults will affect outdoor recreation because a surprising number of outdoor interests and skills are acquired only, or mainly, in childhood." Bixler, Floyd, and Hammitt[34] found that childhood play in wild environments led to more positive perceptions of outdoor recreation activities.

Since participation in outdoor recreation as youth is correlated with participation as adults, there is the potential for a continuous cycle of reinforcing participation—but also a downward cycle if participation declines (since interest and skills may not be passed to the next generation). Parents not only introduce children to outdoor recreation, continuing (or breaking) the cycle, but also set examples for physical activity generally.

Additional studies on attitude toward the environment suggests that direct contact with nature, especially as children, is the most critical influence on later attitude toward the environment[35].
In a recent public appearance, Richard Louv spoke about the potential repercussions of today's youth losing a personal connection to the outdoors. According to Louv, "We care for what we know and love." He told the group that if today's children do not have "transformational experiences in the outdoors" during their youth, they are unlikely, as adults, to be engaged in public policy deliberations about our forests and parks and about environmental issues like global warming.

Analysis of past Oregon SCORP results suggests that this downward cycle of outdoor recreation participation has been underway for some time within the overall Oregon population. It could be argued that because of a variety of societal changes, Oregon has "lost a generation" of outdoor recreation participants. Some outdoor recreation activities like walking for pleasure and viewing scenery and wildlife come naturally to people. Other activities, such as hiking, fishing, hunting and wilderness camping require not only acquired skills and knowledge, but also a strong understanding of the recreation resource and resource stewardship. By providing Oregon's youth with opportunities to learn outdoor recreation skills in outdoor settings, we have the opportunity to rebuild the foundation for

[33] Cordell, K., McDonald, B., Teasley, J., Bergstrom, J., Martin, J., Bason, J., Leeworthy, V. (1999). Outdoor recreation participation trends. In K. Cordell, C. Betz, & J. Bowker (Eds)., *Outdoor recreation in American life: A national assessment of demand and supply trends*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing.
[34] Bixler, R.D., M.F. Floyd, and W.E. Hammitt. 2002. Environmental Socialization: Quantitative Tests Of The Childhood Play Hypothesis. *Environment And Behavior*, 34(6):795-818.

[35] Zaradic P.A. and Pergams ORW. Videophilia: Implications for childhood development and conservation. The Journal of Developmental Processes Spring 2007; 2(1): 130-147.

future outdoor recreation participation and reestablish personal connections with nature and their public lands.

Physical Activity and Oregon's Youth

According to a 2000 report to the President on promoting youth health[36], "America loves to think of itself as a youthful nation focused on fitness. But behind the vivid media images of robust runners, Olympic Dream Teams, and rugged mountain bikers is the troubling reality of a generation of young people that is, in large measure, inactive, unfit, and increasingly overweight."

Rates of participation in physical activity have declined in the past 30 years for both children and youth. More than a third of young people in grades 9-12 do not regularly engage in vigorous physical activity. Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped to 28% in 2003[37]. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 61.5% of children ages 9-13 do not participate in any organized physical activity outside of school hours, and 22.6% do not engage in any type of physical activity during their free time. Participation rates are even lower for urban children.

In the long run, physical inactivity threatens to reverse the decades-long progress we have made in reducing death and suffering from cardiovascular diseases. Children and adolescents who are overweight are move likely to be overweight or obese as adults[38].

Physical inactivity increases the risk of dying prematurely, dying of heart disease, and developing diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure. In addition to the toll taken by human suffering, surges in the prevalence of these diseases could lead to crippling increases in our national health care expenditures.

In the short run, physical inactivity has contributed to an unprecedented epidemic of childhood obesity that is currently plaguing the U.S. The prevalence of overweight among children aged six-11 has more than doubled in the past 20 years, increasing from 7% in 1980 to 18.8% in 2004[39].

Similar patterns are occurring in the state of Oregon[40] :

- The proportion of 8th graders who were overweight or at risk of it in 2005 was **1 in 4**.
- The proportion of 11th graders who were overweight or at risk of it in 2005 was **1 in 4**.
- The percentage of 11th graders who were overweight increased **63%** since 2001.

Of children five to 10 who are overweight, 61% have one or more cardiovascular disease risk factors, and 27% have two or more[41]. The negative health consequences linked to the childhood obesity epidemic include the appearance in the past two decades of a new

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[36] Promoting better health for young people through physical activity and sports. A report to the President from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education. Fall 2000.

[37] Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Report. 2003.

[38] Ferraro KF, Thorpe RJ Jr, Wilkinson JA. The life course of severe obesity: Does childhood overweight matter? Journal of Gerentology 2003; 58B(2): S110-S119.

[39] Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Curtin LR, McDowell MA, Tabak CJ, Flegal KM. Prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States, 1999-2004. Journal of the American Medical Association, 2006; 295(13): 1549-1555.

[40] Oregon Overweight, Obesity, Physical Activity, and Nutrition Facts. January 2007. Oregon Department of Human Services, Physical Activity and Nutrition Program.

[41] Freedman DS, Dietz WH, Srinivasan SR, Berenson GS. The relation of overweight to cardiovascular risk factors among children and adolescents: the Bogalusa heart study. Pediatrics 1999; 103: 1175-82.

and frightening public health problem: Type-2 diabetes among adolescents. This condition was previously so rarely seen in children or adolescents that it came to be called "adult-onset diabetes". Now, an increasing number of teenagers and preteens must be treated for diabetes and strive to ward off the life-threatening health complications that it can cause. In recent years, it has been estimated that in the U.S. as many as 30% of boys and 40% of girls are at risk for being diagnosed with Type-2 diabetes.

A recently published article on childhood obesity and adult coronary heart disease (CHD) reports that being overweight as a child significantly increases the risk for CHD in adulthood as early as age 25[42]. The study investigated the association between body-mass index in childhood (7 through 13 years of age) and CHD in adulthood (25 years or older). Study subjects included a cohort of 276,835 Danish schoolchildren over a period of 46 years. This study provides the most powerful evidence yet that the obesity epidemic is spawning a generation prone to serious health problems later in life. These findings are particularly disturbing because they suggest overweight children were not only experiencing more disease and disability in childhood, but many are also destined to be more sickly young adults.

Clearly, Oregon's park and recreation providers have the facilities and programs in place across the state to take a leadership role in promoting and preserving the health of youth through encouraging and facilitating their involvement in active outdoor recreation activities.

[42] Baker, JL, Olsen LW, Sorensen, TIA. Childhood body-mass index and the risk of coronary heart disease in adulthood. The New England Journal of Medicine, 2007, 357(23): 2329-2337.

After-School Activities

Young people spend just 20 percent of their waking hours in school. How they spend the remaining 80 percent of those waking hours can have a significant impact on their overall development. The Afterschool Alliance found that only 10% of Oregon's K-12 youth participate in after-school programs, but 23% of children not in such programs indicated they would be likely to participate if such a program were available in their community.

Nationally, Penn, Shoen & Berland Associates[43] found that more than half of teens say they would not watch so much TV or play video games if they had other things to do after school. Fifty-four percent of teens say that there is not much for them to do after school other than hang out. Jago and Baranowski[44] found that after-school programs do not necessarily increase physical activity, but this likely is due to limitations with the specific activities evaluated; they note the importance of providing attractive activities and transport to/from school.

When asked what they desire from after-school programming[45], 54% of parents feel that children need a break from academics during the after-school hours while 38% of parents feel that children need after-school programs that are focused on academic skills. These findings suggest that parents would be open to

[43] Penn, Shoen & Berland Associates. (2001). Telephone interviews with a national sample of 500 teens, 14-17 years of age. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from: http://www.ymca.net/pdf/executive Summary.PDF.

[44] Jago, R. and T. Baranowski. 2004. Non-curricular approaches for increasing physical activity in youth: a review. *Preventive Medicine* 39:157–163.

[45] Duffett, A. and Johnson J. (2004). All work and no play? Listening to what kids and parents really want from out-of-school time. New York, NY. Public Agenda.

the idea of their children learning more about outdoor recreation activities and opportunities in after-school programs.

Studies show that young people benefit significantly from compelling and consistent outdoor experiences, whether in urban or wilderness settings. The outdoors uniquely transforms individuals through personal, social, and academic growth. Unfortunately, many of Oregon's youth do not have access to these life-enhancing experiences. In Oregon, recreation providers might consider collaborating with school administrators in developing after-school programs designed to:

- Increase the participation of youth in successful outdoor recreation education programs that provide an array of opportunities that enable youth to build their competencies.
- Help youth learn to use their leisure time wisely.
- Make the outdoors a more integral part of youth's lives to improve their general health and well being.
- Enable youth to develop self-esteem and positive peer interaction.
- Develop awareness, appreciation and knowledge of the environment.

Research Project: Encouraging Youth Outdoor Recreation Participation in Oregon

Project introduction

This research project, included a statewide mail survey of Oregon youth and their parents (conducted by Dr. Kreg Lindberg of Oregon State University) and a separate study designed to explore the opinions and thoughts directly from youth in a series of focus group meetings (conducted by Dr. Robert Burns of West Virginia University, Dr. Cari Autry of Arizona State University, and Dr. Alan Graefe of The Pennsylvania State University).

Statewide Survey of Oregon Youth and Their Parents

The survey was conducted using a random sample of Oregon households with children during the fall 2006/winter 2007 period. Survey recipients were obtained from commercially provided lists of "child intense" households in Oregon. Each person in the sample received a parent survey and two youth surveys. Parents reported on their own outdoor recreation behavior and that of a randomly selected child between the ages of three and 17 (if there were any in the household). The youth surveys were intended for household youth, up to a maximum of two, in the 12 to 17 age range. Several youth surveys were completed by youth younger than 12, and these responses were included in the report despite being outside the target range.

A total of 3,712 surveys were mailed; adjusting for un-deliverables, there was an 18% response rate. Of the 637 returned parent surveys, 365 included data on child recreation behavior; the remaining respondents are assumed not to have children in the target age range. Census data on location (by county), gender, and household income were used to weight responses and reduce the potential for non-response bias. In addition, a brief phone survey of non-respondents was used to assess potential non-response bias.

A full survey report is included on the OPRD SCORP planning web site at: http://egov.oregon.gov/OPRD/PLANS/docs/scorp/Youth_Survey_Report.pdf.

The following is a summary of key findings from the statewide survey of Oregon youth and their parents.

Parent Survey Results

The following are results from the parent survey.

Outdoor Recreation Participation

Parents reported on their own outdoor recreation participation and that of a randomly selected child in their household between the ages of three and 17. Participation was reported as number of days the parent and the child engaged in each of 28 activities in Oregon in the past year. Participation intensity is the average number of days people engaged in the activity; persons who do not engage in the activity are give a value of 0 days. Each respondent was then classified as either participating (1 or more days) or not participating in each activity (0 days). Participation rate is the percentage of respondents that engaged in the activity.

Table 15 shows intensity and rate by activity. The most popular (highest average days in past year) outdoor activities for parents were walking, viewing natural features, and relaxing/hanging out. For children, the most popular was walking, followed by outdoor sports/games, relaxing/hanging out, and general play at neighborhood parks/playgrounds. Though not displayed in Table 15, the correlation between parental participation and child participation was positive and statistically significant for each activity except skateboarding. In other words – the more a parent engages in an activity, the more a child does.

Table 15: Participation rate and intensity

Activity	Parent		Child	
	Rate (percent participat.)	Intensity (mean days)	Rate (percent participat.)	Intensity (mean days)
Walking (on streets, sidewalks, etc.)	74	63	80	43
Jogging or running for exercise	24	15	27	12
Day hiking on trails	57	9	65	7
Picnicking and family gatherings	69	8	77	8
Relaxing, hanging out, etc.	56	25	64	25
General play at neighborhood park / playground	52	13	80	25
Bicycling on paved roads / paths	43	12	65	23
Mountain biking (single track / dirt road)	13	2	15	5
Skateboarding	2	1	17	6
Horseback riding	12	2	19	3
Off-highway vehicle travel	22	4	22	3
Camping (tents, cabins, or RVs)	57	6	62	6
Hunting	18	4	11	1
Fishing	41	6	45	3
Motorized boating	27	3	30	2
Floating / paddling	29	2	30	2
Rock climbing / bouldering / mountaineering	5	0	9	1
Ocean or freshwater beach activities	67	7	73	6
Winter skiing / sledding / snowshoeing	29	1	46	3
Viewing natural features (scenery, wildlife, etc.)	60	26	58	22
Visiting a nature center or nature trail	53	3	57	3
Visiting historic sites	53	3	57	2
Outdoor photography, painting, drawing	23	6	15	4
Nature study	12	3	16	1
Gathering mushrooms or other natural products	36	4	37	4
Driving for pleasure on roads	52	16	42	6
Outdoor sports and games	40	12	69	28
Swimming in an outdoor pool	37	7	65	14

Figures 17 and 18 include participation across age groups. Figure 18 shows that participation increased, with respect to both total number of days and total number of activities participated in, up to the 12-14 year old category; it then falls for children in the 15-17 category. With respect to individual activities (Figure 17), general play consistently decreased with age, whereas other activities tended to peak with children 12-14 years old.

Boys tended to have higher participation rates overall and amongst the most popular activities, but most differences generally were not statistically significant.

Figure 17: Participation by child age, days per year

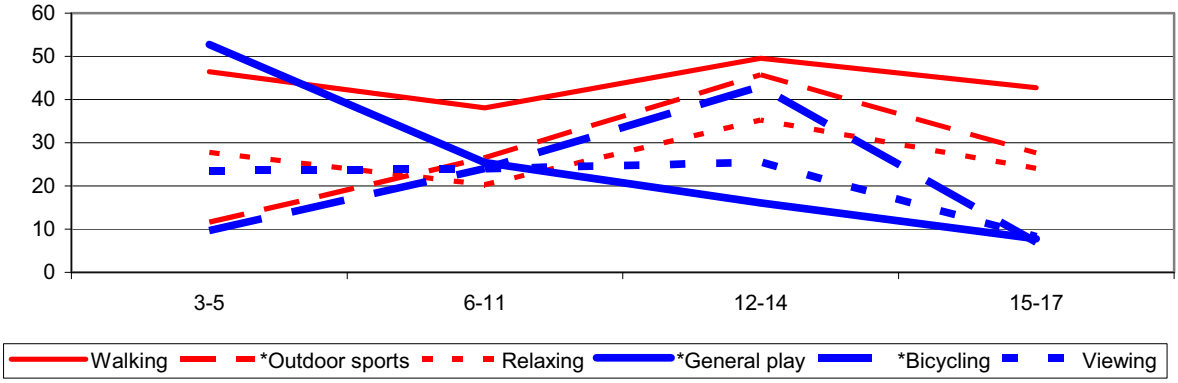
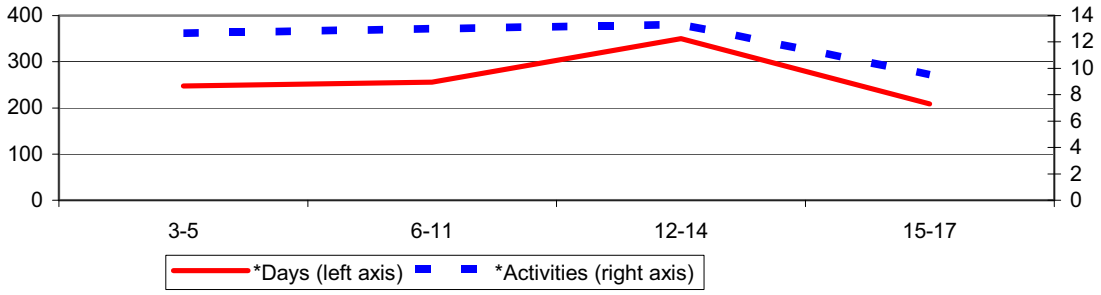


Figure 18: Participation by child age, total days and total activities per year



Figures 19 and 20 include children's participation by location. Overall, differences across location generally were significant, with rural children spending more days, on average, in outdoor activities relative to urban and suburban children. Suburban children spent the least amount of time participating in outdoor activities. The most noticeable difference was in viewing natural features, though there are also differences in outdoor sports and general play (Figure 21).

Figure 19: Participation by location, total days per year

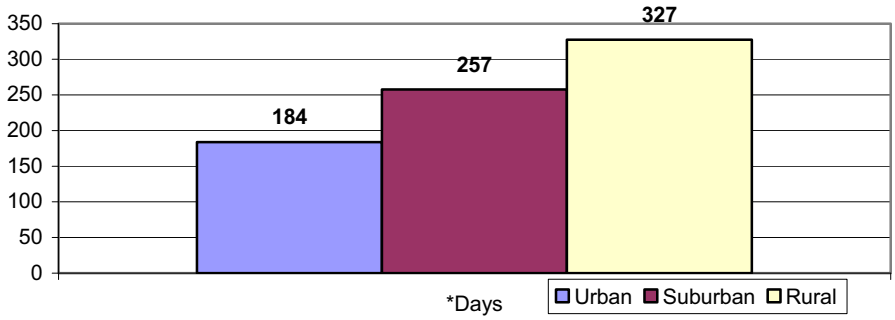


Figure 20: Participation by location, total activities per year

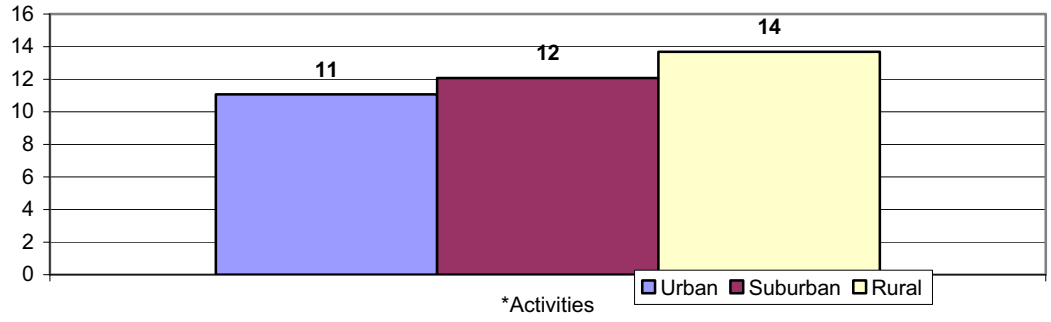
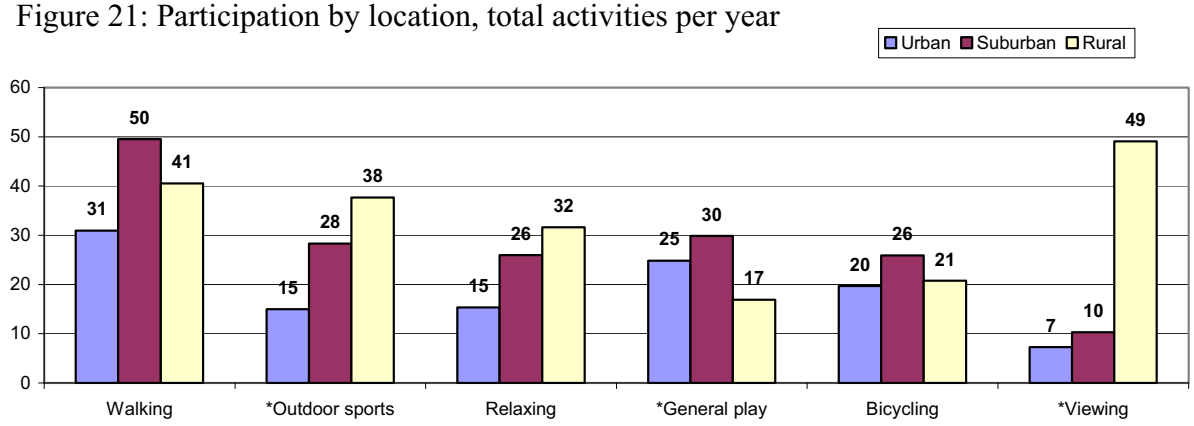


Figure 21: Participation by location, total activities per year



With respect to parental education and household income, participation generally increased from the lowest level to the "middle levels" and then decreased again at higher levels (Figures 20 and 21). For example, number of activity days was highest for children of parents with a high school diploma and in households with annual income of $25,000 to $35,000.

Figure 22: Participation by parental education, total days and total activities per year

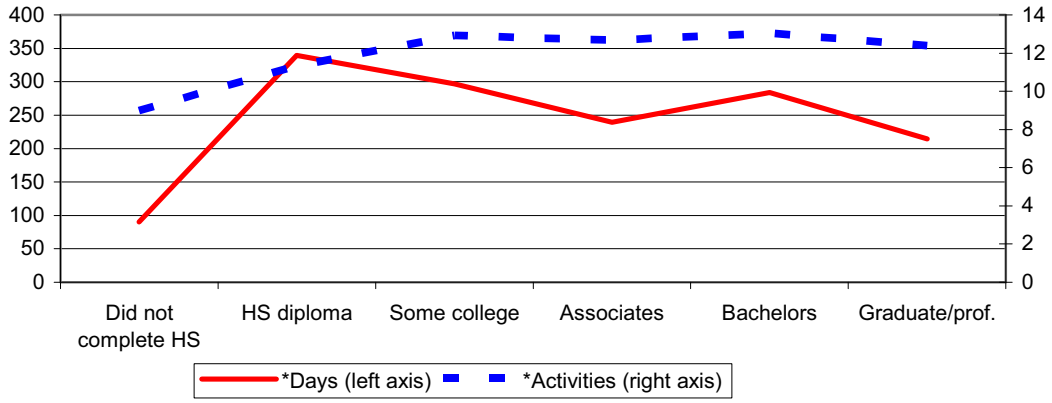


Figure 23: Participation by household income, total days and total activities per year

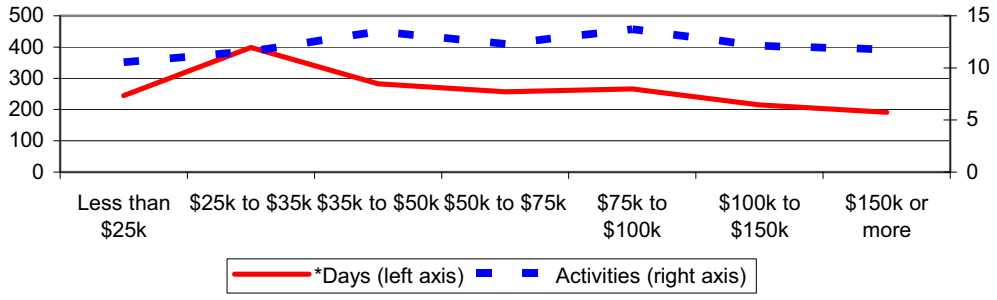


Table 16 shows whether parents first participated in each activity as a child or as an adult. These results clearly show that in Oregon, most outdoor recreation activities participated in by adults, were first learned as children. The only activities for which more than 50% first engaged as an adult were mountain biking (a relatively new sport), off-highway vehicle travel, rock climbing, outdoor photography, and driving for pleasure.

Table 16: Parents first participated in activity as…, percent

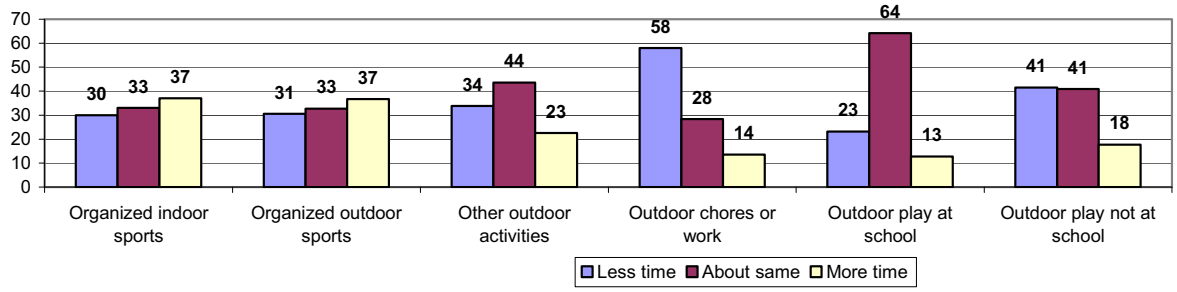
	Child	**Adult**
Walking (on streets, sidewalks, etc.)	61	39
Jogging or running for exercise	57	43
Day hiking on trails	71	29
Picnicking and family gatherings	81	19
Relaxing, hanging out, etc.	82	18
General play at neighborhood park / playground	86	14
Bicycling on paved roads / paths	80	20
Mountain biking (single track / dirt road)	41	59
Skateboarding	81	19
Horseback riding	79	21
Off-highway vehicle travel	32	68
Camping (tents, cabins, or RVs)	68	32
Hunting	67	33
Fishing	79	21
Motorized boating	55	45
Floating / paddling	59	41
Rock climbing / bouldering / mountaineering	40	60
Ocean or freshwater beach activities	71	29
Winter skiing / sledding / snowshoeing	70	30
Viewing natural features (scenery, wildlife, etc.)	70	30
Visiting a nature center or nature trail	61	39
Visiting historic sites	63	37
Outdoor photography, painting, drawing	39	61
Nature study	59	41
Gathering mushrooms or other natural products	65	35
Driving for pleasure on roads	45	55
Outdoor sports and games	83	17
Swimming in an outdoor pool	90	10

Next, parents were asked to report who introduced their child to each activity the child participated in (Table 17). The data show that one or both parents clearly played the major role in almost all activities, though schools play roles in running, climbing, and nature study. Friends played the main role in introducing children to skateboarding.

Table 17: Who introduced child to activity? Percent

	Father	Mother	Parents	Other family	School	Friends	Other
Walking (on streets, sidewalks, etc.)	12	44	37	5	0	0	1
Jogging or running for exercise	18	30	18	10	17	1	7
Day hiking on trails	30	29	33	4	1	1	2
Picnicking and family gatherings	7	40	45	7	0	0	1
Relaxing, hanging out, etc.	16	39	36	4	0	2	2
General play at neighborhood park	6	43	41	5	0	3	1
Bicycling on paved roads / paths	26	25	39	5	0	3	1
Mountain biking	56	13	23	2	0	3	3
Skateboarding	12	27	8	9	0	40	4
Horseback riding	13	43	15	20	0	5	5
Off-highway vehicle travel	42	11	27	7	0	10	4
Camping (tents, cabins, or RVs)	28	22	41	7	0	1	1
Hunting	60	4	17	17	0		2
Fishing	58	7	14	15	0	4	2
Motorized boating	44	8	26	12	0	5	5
Floating / paddling	31	25	30	3	2	6	3
Rock climbing / bouldering / mountaineering	33	2	23	0	14	4	24
Ocean / freshwater beach activities	10	33	50	6	0	0	0
Winter skiing / sledding / snowshoeing	20	23	43	7	2	1	3
Viewing natural features	15	37	36	5	3	0	3
Visiting a nature center, etc.	14	34	38	5	4	0	5
Visiting historic sites	9	39	40	7	4	0	1
Outdoor photography, painting, etc.	15	51	16	6	9	2	1
Nature study	6	32	21	9	26	0	6
Gathering mushrooms / other	20	30	39	10	0	1	1
Driving for pleasure on roads	24	40	31	4	0	1	0
Outdoor sports and games	28	16	28	4	4	6	15
Swimming in an outdoor pool	7	47	35	6	1	2	2

Figure 24: Child's participation relative to parent's, percent



An important issue was how much time the current generation of children spends engaged in outdoor activities relative to the time their parents spent as children. Based on parental reports, children spent more time, on average, than parents did in organized sports, both indoor and outdoor (Figure 24). However, there have been decreases in other activities, with the greatest decreases occurring in Outdoor chores and Outdoor play not at school. This is consistent with other literature indicating an increase in structured/organized activities and a decrease in unstructured activities. These decreases have been greater for girls than boys (though the difference is significant only for Outdoor chores). The effect by location has been mixed, though the greatest decrease has been in Outdoor chores amongst children in urban and suburban areas. Results from the youth survey suggest that a tradeoff exists between homework and time spent in outdoor activities. Comparing across child age groups, older children were more likely to spend less time in activities relative to their parents.

The clear majority (86%) of parents reported that their children engaged in 30 minutes of moderate exercise on average per day. This exercise was most likely to occur outdoors, with 74% of parents reporting that it occurred outdoors, 22% indoors, and 4% both. Boys were more likely to have engaged in exercise relative to girls, with the difference being statistically significant.

Summary of Key Findings: Outdoor Recreation Participation

1. Starting with the parent survey, the most popular (highest average days in past year) outdoor activities for parents were walking, viewing natural features, and relaxing/hanging out. For children, the most popular was walking, followed by outdoor sports/games, relaxing/hanging out, and general play at neighborhood parks/playgrounds.
2. The more a parent engages in an outdoor recreation activity, the more their child does.
3. Participation varies across child age, with both the number of activities and the number of activity days peaking amongst 12-14 year olds and decreasing for 15-17 year olds.
4. Rural children spend more days, on average, in outdoor activities relative to urban and suburban children. Suburban children spend the least amount of days in outdoor activities.
5. For most activities, parents first engaged in the activity as a child, rather than as an adult. This is consistent with research indicating the importance of early life participation setting a pattern for later life participation. When asked who introduced their child to each activity, parents were by far the most common response.
6. Based on parental reports, children spend more time, on average, than parents did in organized sports, both indoor and outdoor. However, there have been decreases in other activities, with the greatest decreases occurring in Outdoor chores and Outdoor play not at school.

Outdoor Recreation Skills

Parents were asked several questions relating to outdoor skills. For each of 16 skills, parents rated:

- The importance of the skill, with 1=Not at all important, 2=Somewhat important, and 3=Very important.

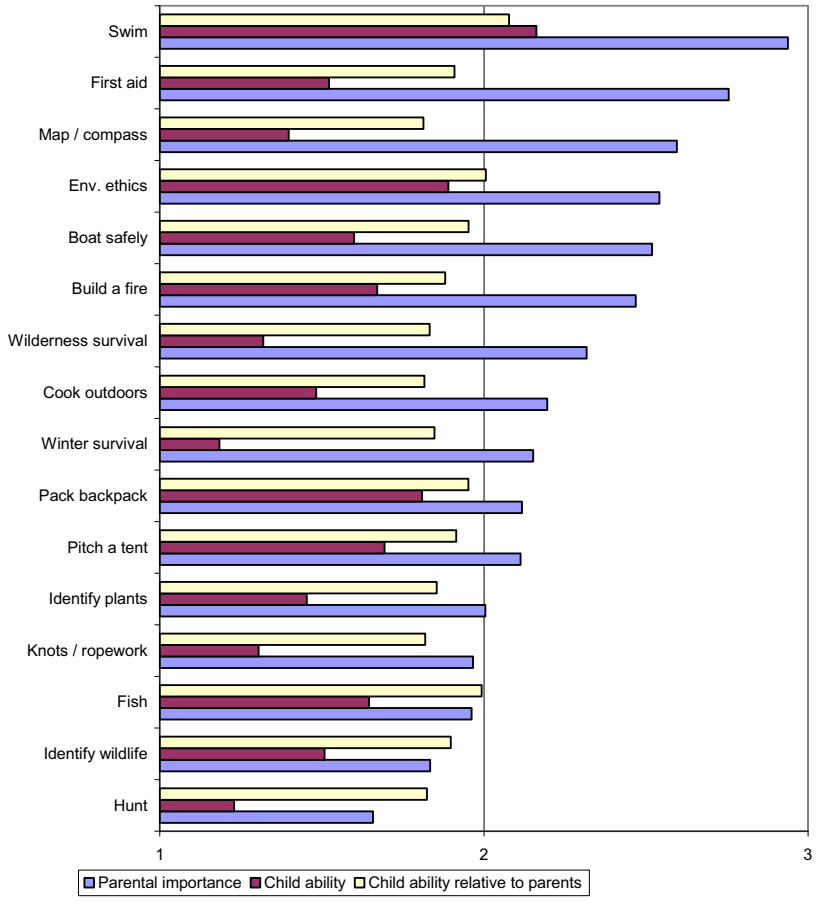
The child's ability in the skill, with 1=Low or no ability, 2=Moderate ability, and 3=High ability.

- The child's ability relative to the parent's ability as a child, with 1=Lower (than my ability as a child), 2=About the same, and 3=Higher.

Figure 25 shows average ratings for each, by item, sorted in decreasing order of importance. Swimming was rated as most important. It was also the skill in which children's ability was rated highest, as well as only one of two skills in which, on average, children had a higher ability than did their parents as children.

Map/ compass, cooking outdoors, and knots/ ropework skills were the skills in which children's abilities were lowest relative to the previous generation's ability. Of these, map/ compass skills were rated the most important. Children received the lowest ability ratings for winter survival and hunting skills, with winter survival skills being rated of moderate importance.

Figure 25: Importance and abilities, average ratings, by skill



Turning to assessment of children's ability relative to the parent's as a child, with the exception of swimming and applying environmental ethics, children were rated, on average, as having a lower ability than their parents when they were children (Figure 26). In Table 18, ratings under 2 indicate that abilities have decreased overall from one generation to the next. Differences across locations for many items are significant (those marked with an asterisk), though generally not large. In general, abilities have decreased more, on average, amongst urban and suburban households than among rural households.

Figure 26: Child's participation relative to parent's by location, average

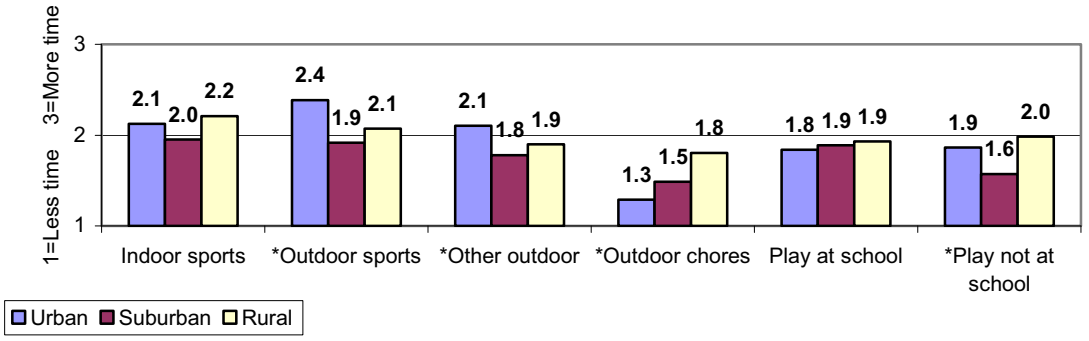


Table 18: Average rating of ability relative to parental ability as child, by location

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Average across all items	**1.9**	**1.9**	**2.0**
*Pitch a tent	1.7	1.9	2.0
*Pack a backpack	2.2	1.9	1.9
*Hunt (including gun or bow safety)	1.9	1.8	1.8
*Fish	2.1	1.8	2.2
Winter survival skills (including avalanche safety)	1.8	1.9	1.9
*Identify birds / wildlife	2.1	1.9	1.9
*Identify plants	1.9	1.9	1.8
*Basic emergency first aid	1.7	1.9	2.1
*Wilderness survival	1.7	1.8	1.9
*Swim (for example, swim to shore if canoe capsizes)	2.2	1.9	2.2
*Boat safely	2.0	1.8	2.1
*Build a fire	1.8	1.8	2.0
*Cook outdoors	1.8	1.8	1.9
Tie knots, ropework	1.8	1.8	1.8
Use a map and compass	1.6	1.8	1.9
Follow environmental ethics, such as Leave No Trace (LNT) principles	2.0	2.0	2.0

With respect to income, households at the low and high end of the income spectrum have children with abilities, on average, at the same level as their parents when children. The largest decrease in ability (average rating of 1.7) was in households earning $35,000 to $50,000.

Parents were asked how they learned outdoor skills as a youth. Table 19 indicates that most respondents learned skills from parents or guardians (the Other category included a variety of sources including friends, coaches, and church). A comparison of Table 19 with Table 17 suggests that parents remain the primary source, but that other sources of skill development may be decreasing in importance.

Table 19: How parents learned skills as youths, percent

Parents / guardians	85
Schools	50
Other family	37
Boy or Girl Scouts	37
Other	18
Community Parks & Rec	16
4-H	14
YMCA / YWCA	4
Boys and Girls Clubs	1

Outdoor Programs

Respondents were asked several questions about programs designed to help children engage in outdoor recreation outside of school class time. As shown in Table 20, two-thirds (67%) of respondents reported that their child has participated in outdoor sports programs, with more than half also participating in day camps.

Turning to likelihood of participating in the future, outdoor sports programs were again the most popular. Between 40% and 50% of respondents indicated Very likely for outdoor adventure trips, day camps, and multi-day camps. Weekends and summer weekdays were the most common "good times" for children to participate in such programs. School holidays and weekdays after school were the least common good times.

For multi-day programs, 66% of parents indicated they would prefer their child stay overnight at home, while 34% preferred their child stay overnight at the program location. When asked how likely they would be to participate in such programs with their child, 59% reported they would be somewhat likely to do so 29% very likely to do so.

Summary of Key Findings: Outdoor Recreation Skills

- 1. With the exception of swimming and applying environmental ethics, children were rated, on average, as having a lower ability than their parents when they were children.
- 2. Map/ compass, cooking outdoors, and knots/ ropework skills were the skills in which children's abilities were lowest relative to the previous generation's ability.
- 3. In general, abilities have decreased more, on average, amongst urban and suburban households than among rural households.
- 4. Most parents learned skills from their parents or guardians.

Table 20: Past and potential participation in outdoor recreation programs

Type of program	Has participated, percent	Likely to participate in future? Percent		
		Not likely	Some-what likely	Very likely
Outdoor sports programs	67	12	26	62
Outdoor adventure trips	37	12	43	45
Outdoor activity skills courses / clinics / workshops	33	24	45	30
Natural history or environmental education programs	36	23	54	23
Day camps, including multi-day camps but not overnight	56	19	36	45
Multi-day camps involving overnight away from home	40	24	28	49
One-on-one mentoring programs	13	62	30	8
Programs to help youth use their free time productively	18	61	28	11
Programs to combat youth obesity through outdoor recreation	8	82	13	4
Programs designed help youth cope with everyday life through outdoor recreation	11	73	19	9

Respondents were then asked about constraints to participating in such programs. Ratings of the importance of each potential constraint are show in Table 21. The primary reported constraints are lack of information and cost.

Table 21: Importance of constraints to program participation, percent

Reason / constraint	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important
We cannot afford the cost of the program and associated equipment	23	45	32
Transportation is a problem – my child can not get to where the programs are offered	57	33	10
We have not heard about these types of programs or do not have enough information about them	17	49	34
My child is not interested in these types of programs	38	45	17
My child's friends are not interested in these types of programs	48	47	5
We do not have enough time for these programs	29	50	21
We have safety concerns about these programs	45	32	23
These programs are not suited for my child's age group	32	41	28
We prefer girls-only or boys-only programs, but they are not available	74	17	9

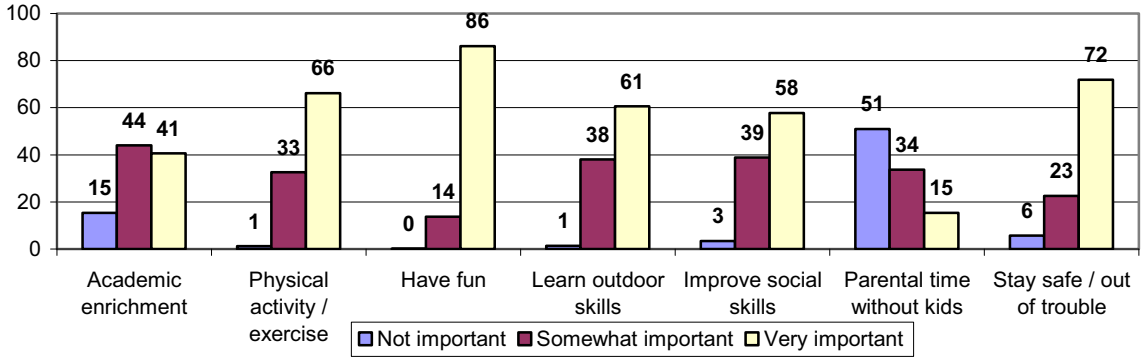
As expected, cost was much more important to households with lower income than to those with higher income (Table 22). Lack of information was also a more important constraint to lower income households. Transportation was less of a constraint for high income households. Interestingly, time was also a stronger constraint for lower income than higher income households; perhaps through its connection to income (parental free time may be less available in lower income households because of work demands).

Table 22: Importance of constraints by household income, average on 3-point scale

	Less than $25k	$25k to $35k	$35k to $50k	$50k to $75k	$75k to $100k	$100k to $150k	$150k or more
*Cost	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.0	1.6	1.1
*Transportation	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.1
*Information	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.2
Child interest	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.8
*Friend interest	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.9	1.7
*Time	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7
*Safety	1.9	1.6	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.1
*Suited to age	2.0	1.8	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.7
*Gender-specific	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.0

Figure 27 shows priorities for parents in considering programs for their children to participate in. Having fun was clearly the highest priority, with staying safe and physically active also being very important. Academic enrichment was most important for parents of girls and for parents with middle levels of education (especially those with a high school diploma or some college).

Figure 27: Priorities when considering programs, percent



Summary of Key Findings: Outdoor Programs

- 1. Outdoor sports programs and day camps were the most popular types of outdoor recreation programs with respect to past participation.
- 2. Many parents indicated that it would be very likely for their children to participate in outdoor sports programs (62%) multi-day camps (49%), outdoor adventure trips (45%), and day camps (45%) in the future.
- 3. When considering constraints that limit program participation, parents reported that lack of information and cost were the two most important constraints ─ especially for low income households.
- 4. Having fun was clearly the most important priority for parents in selecting programs, though staying safe and out of trouble and getting physical activity and exercise were also important priorities.

Outdoor Safety

Because safety concerns have been noted as a cause of decreased time spent by youth outdoors, respondents were asked their level of agreement with several statements (Table 23). Categories with at least 20% of the responses are bolded and shown in red. Safety does appear to be a concern, but in general it appears that respondents feel there are safe opportunities for their children to engage in outdoor activities. Perceptions of safety were most positive amongst suburban respondents and less positive amongst urban and rural respondents. It also appears that parents do not strongly oppose outdoor activities from an injury or learning perspective.

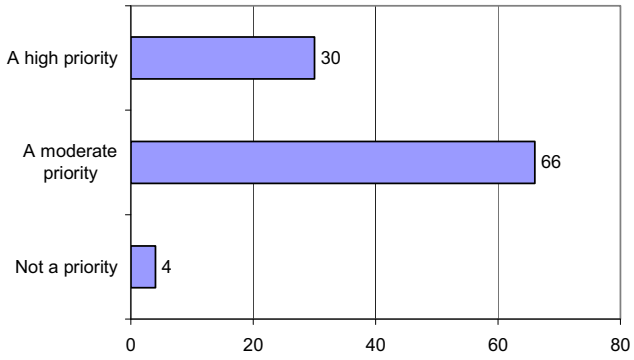
The clear majority (80%) of respondents reported that there is a park or playground near their home. On average, respondents or their children used these parks 4.6 times per month, with the majority of respondents using the parks between one and three times per month (the median is two times).

Parents were also asked whether it was one of their priorities for their child to spend more time in outdoor activities considering other activities such as homework, video games, indoor sports, etc. As shown in Figure 28a, almost all respondents felt it was either a high (30%) or moderate (66%) priority.

Table 23: Agreement with statements relating to safety and other issues, percent

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. You can count on adults in my neighborhood to watch out that children are safe and do not get into trouble	6	15	**27**	**35**	17
2. Children around here have no place to play but the street	**23**	**39**	16	19	4
3. Traffic in this area is a hazard for children who play outside	9	**35**	**22**	**25**	8
4. The park or playground that is closest to where I live is clean and well-maintained	1	7	19	**45**	**29**
5. The park or playground closest to where I live is safe during the day	0	5	16	**51**	**27**
6. The park or playground closest to where I live is safe at night	12	**20**	**46**	14	8
7. I feel comfortable with the other people who use the park or playground closest to where I live	1	6	**31**	**47**	15
8. I avoid the park or playground closest to where I live because of gangs or other trouble-makers	**40**	**39**	15	4	2
9. Because of safety concerns, I do not allow my child to play outside without adult supervision	12	**31**	17	19	**22**
10. Because of safety concerns, I am careful about where I allow my child to play	3	4	9	**41**	**43**
11. There is not enough time in the day for my child to spend as much time outdoors as he/she would like	10	**23**	**20**	**36**	11
12. There are plenty of places nearby where my child can play outdoors	1	**21**	**28**	**36**	14
13. Children can hurt themselves more easily when they play outdoors than when they play indoors	**23**	**37**	**23**	16	2
14. Children learn more in indoor activities than in outdoor activities	**27**	**42**	**26**	3	1

Figure 28a: Priority for outdoor activities, percent



Summary of Key Findings: Outdoor Safety

1. Responses to a set of safety statements did not indicate a major safety concern for respondents overall.
2. Most felt there are safe opportunities for their children to engage in outdoor activities.
3. Almost all parents felt that it was a priority for their child to spend more time in outdoor activities.

Youth Survey Results

The following are results from the youth survey where the children reported from their own perspective.

Youth Outdoor Recreation Participation

Youth were asked what their favorite and second favorite outdoor activities were in an open-ended format. Responses were categorized into 60 potential activity categories. In the results presented below:

- Biking includes mountain biking, biking on roads / paths and unspecified biking.
- Camping includes tent camping and unspecified camping, but not RV or yurt camping (if "RV" or "yurt" or "cabin" was specified in a camping response, it was grouped into the relevant sub-category of camping).
- Fishing includes fly fishing, other fishing, and unspecified fishing.

Results in Figure 28b are sorted by Favorite percents. Outdoor field games were clearly the most popular, followed by biking and outdoor court games. With respect to gender, outdoor field games were the most commonly reported favorite activity for both boys and girls. Biking was second most commonly reported for boys and camping for girls.

Figure 28b: Favorite youth activities, percent

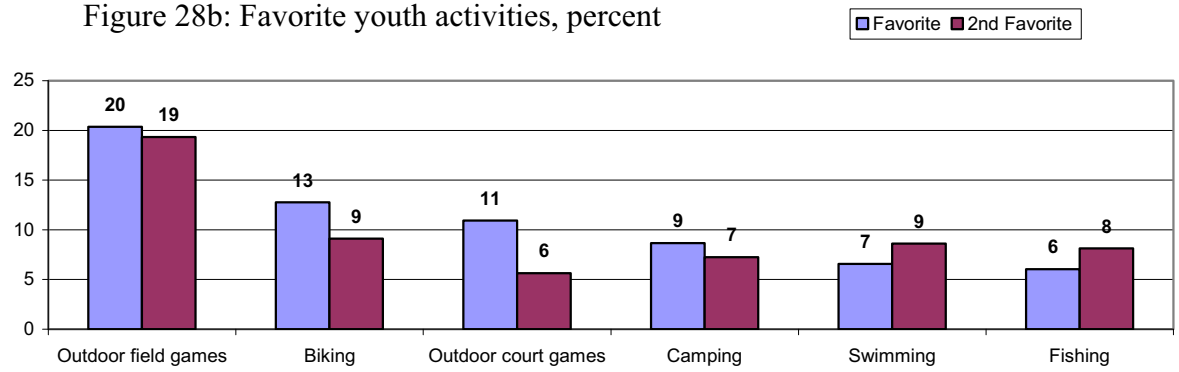


Table 24 shows how favorite activities evolve over childhood, with going to parks / playgrounds being the favorite activity for 3-5 year olds, but declining in importance as youth age. Conversely, outdoor field games, biking, and camping become more important as youth age. Youth interests also diversify with age, as indicated by lower percentages for individual "favorite" activities amongst older youth.

Youth were then asked with whom they do their favorite and second favorite activity. Friends and other family (includes siblings and cousins) were the two most popular categories. These findings indicate that parents play an important role in introducing children to activities, but youth were unlikely to report parents as favorite activity partners.

Next, youth indicated the activities they would like to do more often. Consistent with their favorite activities, youth would like to spend more time engaged in outdoor field games, biking, and camping. Facilities are seen as the primary constraint to doing outdoor activities more often. Additional teams and more free time also would help youth engage in activities more often.

Table 24: Favorite and second favorite activities, by youth age,
Top three favorite (4 if tied), percent reporting

Age	Activity	Favorite	Second
3-5	Parks/playgrounds	42	20
	Outdoor field games	17	13
	Fishing	17	13
	Play w/ friends	17	13
6-11	Biking	30	16
	Outdoor field games	22	28
	Parks/playgrounds	11	4
12-14	Outdoor field games	28	14
	Outdoor court games	23	13
	Camping	9	11
15-17	Outdoor field games	14	20
	Camping	10	5
	Biking	9	2
	Swimming	9	5

When asked whether they spend too little, too much, or about the right amount of time in outdoor activities, the majority reported spending too little time (53%), with most of the rest reporting the right amount of time (44%). Youth that reported spending too little time in outdoor activities were asked what keeps them from spending more time. The instruction was for only one of several potential responses (the most important reason) to be marked, but several respondents marked multiple boxes. As a result, the following percents total more than 100. Figure 29 illustrates that youth reported being too busy with homework and other activities, with cost and transportation being secondary constraints.

Figure 29: Constraints – why too little time outdoors? Percent

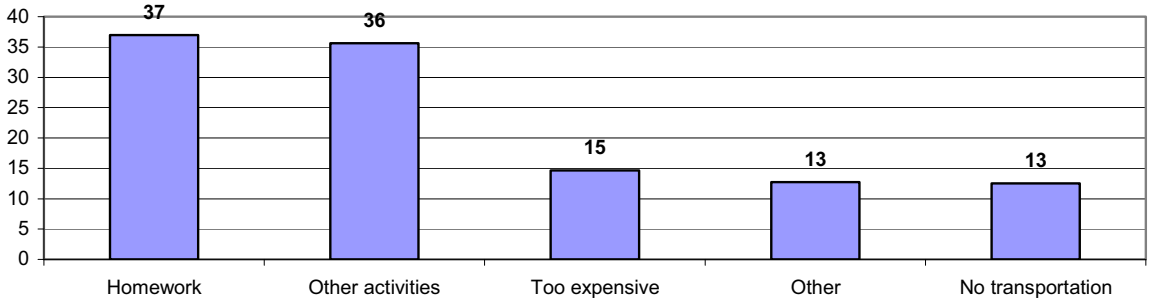
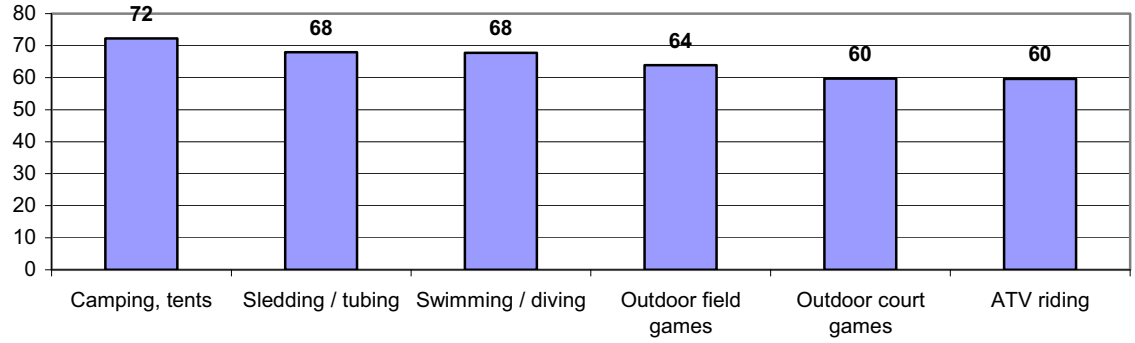


Figure 30: Top 6 activities to include in ideal youth program, percent



Youth Outdoor Recreation Programs

Youth were then asked what activities they would include in an ideal outdoor activity program. This would occur after school, on weekends, or during the summer, and ideal activities were not limited to those that the youth already engage in (they could include new activities learned in the program). Youth could choose as many activities as they liked from a list of 31. Figure 30 shows the Top six selected activities, with tent camping being the most popular, followed by sledding/tubing and swimming/diving.

Summary of Key Findings: Youth Outdoor Recreation Participation

1. Outdoor field games were clearly the favorite activity for youth, followed by biking and outdoor court games.
2. Though parents play critical roles in introducing you to activities, friends and other family (e.g., siblings) were more popular recreation partners for youth.
3. When asked what they would like to do more often, youth commonly noted outdoor field games, followed by biking and camping.
4. More or better facilities and more participants or teams would help youth engage more often.
5. Homework and other (e.g., indoor) activities were noted as the most common constraint to youth spending more time outdoors.

Table 25 includes the top program activities by age category. Camping in tents was the preferred youth program activity across all youth age categories. Sledding / tubing and swimming / diving were also preferred youth program activities across most age categories.

Table 26 shows preferred youth program activities by gender. Girls were more likely than boys to include horseback riding, while boys were more likely than girls to include various types of motorized recreation. Girls were equally enthusiastic about tent and cabin camping, whereas boys preferred tent camping.

When asked with whom they would prefer to do their favorite program activity with (Figure 31), 83% of the youth said with friends, though many would also like to involve family members and other youth that would be met during the program (multiple responses were allowed so percents total more than 100). Most youth preferred to do their favorite program activity in medium-sized groups, either 3-5 people or 6-10 people (Figure 32).

Table 25: Top three activities to include in ideal youth program, by youth age, percent

Age	Activity	Percent
3-5	Camping in tents	71
	Sledding / tubing	71
	Outdoor field games	68
6-11	Swimming / diving	81
	Camping in tents	79
	Outdoor field games	79
12-14	Camping in tents	67
	Sledding / tubing	65
	Swimming / diving	65
15-17	Camping in tents	74
	ATV riding	69
	Sledding / tubing	68

Table 26: Top activities to include in ideal youth program, by gender, percent

Gender	Activity	Percent
Male	Camping in tents	77
	All-terrain vehicle riding	73
	Paintball	71
	Sledding / tubing	69
	Swimming / diving	69
Female	Horseback riding	69
	Camping in cabins	67
	Cross country / Nordic skiing	67
	Swimming / diving	67
	Camping in tents	66

Summary of Key Findings: Youth Outdoor Recreation Programs

1. Youth were asked to create an ideal activity program, selecting one or more from a list of 31 potential activities. Tent camping was the most popular activity to include in such a program, followed by sledding / tubing, swimming / diving, and outdoor field games.
2. Girls were more likely than boys to include horseback riding as an ideal activity program, while boys were more likely than girls to include All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) riding. Girls were equally enthusiastic about tent and cabin camping whereas boys preferred tent camping.
3. Youth preferred to do their favorite program activity with friends and in groups of 3-5 or 6-10 people.

Figure 31: With whom would you like to do favorite activity? Percent

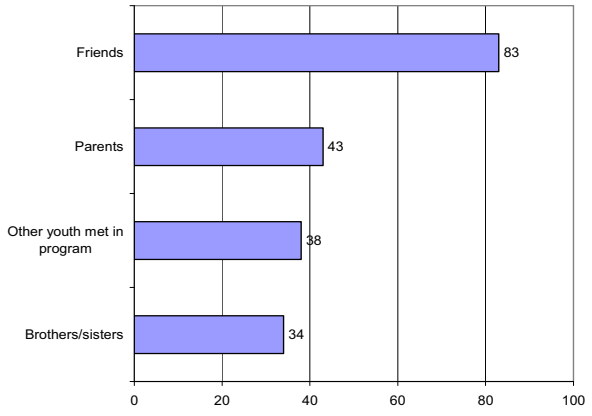
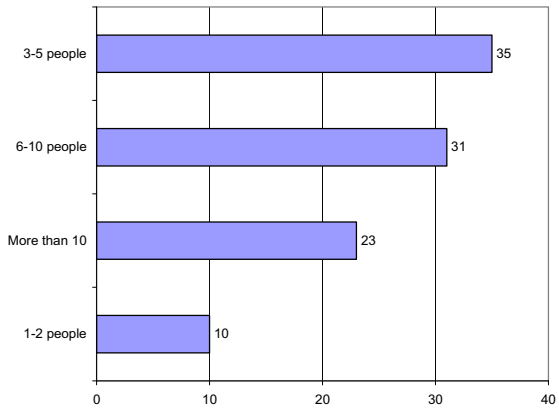


Figure 32: Preferred group size for favorite activity, percent



Oregon Youth Focus Group Meetings

This research study was designed to explore the opinions and thoughts directly from youth of various age groups who lived in rural and urban areas in the state of Oregon. Activities, time, constraints and benefits experienced in the outdoors were the major focus of this exploration. The resulting findings complement the statewide survey of Oregon youth and their parents.

A series of nine focus group meetings occurred in three separate locations in Oregon in February and March 2007. Four focus groups took place in the city of Portland, Oregon and five took place in rural and suburban settings (one in Prineville and four in Bend). Ages of the youth ranged between 7-18 years old and grouped ages of 7-9, 9-11, 11-13, 13-16, and 16-18 were the divisions for the meetings. Racial/ethnic backgrounds of the youth included Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian-American. The majority of youth interviewed in the rural settings were Caucasian and the majority of youth interviewed in the urban areas were African-American and Hispanic. The average focus group size was eight participants and the meetings lasted between 30-90 minutes. (Please see the Appendix on Page 11 of the full report for the Interview Guide.) The full report is available online at: http://www.oregon.gov/OPRD/PLANS/docs/scorp/Youth_Focus_Group_Interviews.pdf.

The transcribed interviews from each focus group were analyzed through categorization analysis. Using this technique, the three researchers searched for categories and sub-categories within the text which were then developed into major themes representative of the data (Silverman, 2000). These themes are then linked with examples and quotes from the interviews. The five major themes constructed from the data are divided into the perceptions of youth who lived in rural settings versus youth who lived in urban settings and include:

1) preferred recreation activities;
2) the benefits of recreation: why the youth like playing outdoors;
3) constraints: what keeps you from playing outdoors more?
4) what happens when kids do not go outside?
5) how can we get more kids into the parks and outside?

Preferred Recreation Activities

One of the first questions the youth were asked is what they like to do in the outdoors. In addition we asked how much they like participating in these activities, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 indicates that they liked to participate very much. Typical answers for preferred activities outside did not indicate a contrast between the youth who lived in the urban versus those who lived in the rural areas of Oregon. Each of these two group types provided activities that varied from passive to active, solitary to social and local to distant.

Urban

One of the teenagers from the Portland area talked about how he enjoyed volunteering to clean-up the environment. He stated, "One of my family members…put together like this little volunteer thing and it is like a big like group. Like we go to parks and or like just walk streets and pick up garbage….It is just that giving back to Mother Nature what they provided to us. It is just my way to give back." Additional responses from urban youth included:

- Outside sports (basketball, football, baseball, soccer, etc.)
- Riding bike
- View nature, wildlife
- Dancing, going to the park
- Play with dogs
- Play with friends
- Work with zoo animals
- Camping
- Walking/hiking
- Volunteering (nature clean-up & with animals)
- Writing and drawing

Rural

One of the 7 year old girls from a rural town explained "I like horseback riding because you get to be with nature. I like skiing because you get to play in the snow. What was the other one, oh yeah camping. I really like camping because you get to go on trips and sleep in a tent." Other activities from the rural youth included:

- Horseback riding
- Camp
- Skateboarding, riding bike/scooter
- Wrestle
- Play in snow, skiing, ice skating
- Play with dogs
- Play with friends
- Soccer, gymnastics
- Walking/hiking
- Outside sports
- Exercise and have fun
- Driving with parents
- Camping with family

In addition to finding out what the youth participants like to do outdoors, we asked how much they liked doing these outdoor activities on a scale of 1-10. The common response by most of the youth ranged between 8 and 9. This meant they liked being outdoors a great deal; however, there were activities they liked to do indoors (e.g. computer, video games, favorite TV shows, playing in rooms) and some of their responses were seasonally/weather and weekday dependent. The lowest response of five came from one of the rural youth who used a wheelchair. He said that he really liked the outdoors, but he also enjoyed watching movies as well.

The Benefits of Recreation: Why Youth Like Playing Outdoors

All youth enjoyed participating in outdoor recreation activities, regardless of their age range or location of where they lived. The youth provided a variety of responses to why they liked to participate in outdoor activities. Again, there was not a contrast between the urban and rural youth in how they responded to the benefits of playing outdoors. The most common answer related to freedom or that the outdoors made them feel free. More specifically, they liked playing outdoors because it provided more options and choices with a greater repertoire of activities and more ways to play with their friends. These responses are significantly tied to a common definition of leisure in how the outdoors facilitates a sense of freedom and choice in activities. Having this freedom and choice then can facilitate a sense of self-determination for the children. In addition to this psychological benefit, they recognized how important it is to their physical and social health as well.

Urban

An answer that portrays such self-determination can be seen through response from a 13 year old boy who lived in Portland. He stated, "I know it stops me from doing something stupid… [and not] be bored". Other youth revealed benefits of playing outdoors that included:

- You can do anything you want outdoors
- Helps me think better
- I feel cooped up inside
- Exercise
- You can jump around
- Fun and relaxing
- I get to be free
- More space to play
- To be with friends

Rural

Again, the rural youth provided similar reasons why they like to play outdoors. A 7-year-old from Prineville explained, "It gives you exercise, I guess. Fresh air. You get a lot more active because you have more room to do stuff. You can get more exercise. More healthy. More healthy and fit and you can exercise and it keeps your body good. It is very helpful." Another 11-year-old from Bend stated, "The good thing about outside is you can go to different places and then play different things and then inside usually it is one thing maybe. Outside it is pretty warm sometimes." Other reasons from the rural youth included:

- I feel free and happy
- Fresh air—it is good for you
- More room to play
- You can do more things outdoors
- Let out energy and play
- Get to be free
- To be with friends

As we can see from these answers, young children as well as teens are aware of and can

verbalize a variety of benefits of playing outdoors that have been discussed frequently in recreation and leisure literature. Research has shown that play-based experiences and early life play in the outdoors can influence the attitudes and behaviors toward the environment into adulthood (Catling[46]; Lubomira[47]; Place[48]). The current argument is that environmental education should start even earlier within the pre-school ages (Lubomira, 2004). It is never too early to learn the benefits of playing and being outdoors whether it is in a family, school, travel, community, field trip context (Catling, 2005). In the current study, proof of understanding of the environment and outdoors even at the 7-year-old level was apparent.

Constraints: What Keeps You from Playing Outdoors More?

One of the major constraints to playing outdoors more frequently was technology. The notion that technology represented a barrier by the participants in this study reiterates and supports what we are reading in recent academic and popular literature. Louv (2005) explains the tremendous impact of how technology will keep children inside and from becoming more aware of and learning how to protect the outdoors.

To provide a direct example of how the youth perceive technology to be a constraint, a 16-year-old living in Portland stated, "I blame everything on (name brand of computer/video games) and (name brand of computer/video games) because everyone's got a (name brand of computer/video games)." The rural youth expressed such barriers as well. A 10-year-old expressed, "I've got a (name brand of four different computer/video games)." Even the youngest participants (7-year-old children) knew what kept them from playing outside: TV, video games, and computers.

In his book, *Last child in the Woods*, Louv[49] also explains how fear and lack of safe neighborhoods have played another role in keeping children and teens from playing outside. The literature has shown that parental fear is a major reason within this constraint. Fisman (2005) concluded from her study on local learning and environmental awareness that children growing up in neighborhoods where they do not feel safe or secure could experience more challenges in applying environmental or ecological knowledge to their home environments.

Within the latter constraint of fear is where the difference in perceptions between the rural and urban youth emerged from the data. The differences came about in more frequency and intensity surrounding the lack of safe neighborhood in relation to human based causes of fear versus natural causes of fear. The urban youth verbalized more fear themselves and as perceived by their parents in relation to violence and crime as associated with living in the inner city (e.g. guns, fighting, gang activity, rape, and drugs) in contrast to fear in relation to living in the rural areas (e.g. getting hurt in the outdoors climbing trees, rocks, skiing, and from living close to animals whose natural habitat is in their backyards).

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[46] Catling, S. (2005). Seeking younger children's 'voices' in geographical education research. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education, 14,* 297-304.

[47] Lubomira, D. (2004). Environmental education at pre-school. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education, 13,* 258-263.

[48] Place, G. (2004). Youth recreation leads to adult conservation. *Parks and Recreation, 39,* 29-38.

[49] Louv, R. (2006). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder.* Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

A constraint as perceived by several of the youth in the study as another barrier caused by parents is explained by a 14-year-old from Portland, "Probably some of the reasons why kids do not go outside is because either their family does not go outside or nobody pushes them to go outside, to eat healthier or to do anything active." This barrier signifies that opportunities for children need to be just as accessible to their parents/caregivers to help provide more ecological solutions surrounding youths' lives in relation to connecting them to the outdoors and to become more successful environmental stewards. That is, we have to reach out to the parents as well. According to the Search Institute[50], an important aspect of youth development incorporates support for youth. This support is exhibited mainly through familial support and communication where youth are willing to seek advice and counsel from parents/caregivers and where parents/caregivers are involved directly in helping their children to transition to successful adults themselves. In addition, this development cannot be expected to only come from the family. Such successful transition to adulthood must also come from community, neighbors and other caring adults to be involved in youths' lives (e.g. outdoor recreation and education professionals).

Overall, constraints to participating in outdoor activities as perceived by all the youth in this study included and will be divided into the urban and rural responses:

Urban

Comments themes included:

- Electronics (TV, video games, internet)
- Not cool to hang out outside
- Peer pressure
- Nobody pushes kids to go outside
- Other family members do not go outside, so I do not either
- Drugs—they are bad, slow you down
- Mom will not let me
- Advertising—it does not suggest that we go outside
- Bus system is poor
- Weather
- Fear- crime, gangs, getting hurt
- Just being a couch potato
- Playing inside with pets
- Homework

Rural

Comments themes included:

- Electronics (TV, video games, internet)
- School and homework
- Weather (e.g. cold, rain)
- Chores
- Too neat and do not like to get dirty
- Organized athletic events (parents take kids to these events)
- Nobody pushes kids to go outside
- Cougars have been seen near my house
- Like to do stuff with family and friends
- Sick parent or grandparent
- Parent's job

What happens when kids do not go outside?

An interesting theme that emerged from the data is what the youth knew no matter their age or where they lived as consequences of kids not spending time outdoors. They provided explanations including:

- Get really, really bored… "they will rot with boredom and go bad"
- Get lazy
- Become unhealthy
- They are missing part of their life
- Do not exercise anymore

[50] Search Institute. (2007). *40 developmental assets*. Retrieved May 22, 2007, from http://www.search-institure.org.

- Become TV addicts
- They will just get into their work
- Do not get any sun
- They will become couch potatoes

How can we get more kids into the parks and outside?

Many solutions that were perceived by the youth to help get more "kids in the woods" were common between the two areas of locations. However, the solutions did subtly vary between what should be the focus within urban settings versus rural settings. The suggestions in the urban setting does have to take into consideration that the "wilderness" or acres of natural surroundings find themselves non-existent or in close proximity to concrete, high rises, and mass transportation. Louv (2005) encourages outdoor recreation and natural resource professionals to find innovative and unique ways to bring nature to the urban youth of today. We cannot always take them out of the city, so how can we bring nature to them into the city. Solutions include ways that are already being implemented with the Portland Zoo teen internship program on the premises and through their environmental outreach and mentor programs to other youth programs (e.g. after school, Boys and Girls Clubs). However, the youth had additional suggestions to make nature and outdoor recreation more appealing to other kids. Such suggestions focused on the arts, music, and social events in the outdoors.

Other suggestions as divided into urban and rural youth perceptions included:

Urban

- Advertise on TV, posters, email, internet
- Just stop using all electronics
- Advertise at and provide more funding to schools
- Make it like a carnival, have food stands
- Have social events in nature
- Make outdoors cool
- Pay money to get kids outdoors
- Something exciting happening
- Better weather
- More and better facilities
- Better transportation
- Get recreation providers out of their offices and into the community
- Have special events focused on art and/or music to attract teens

Rural

Comments themes included:

- Make outdoors cool
- Advertise on TV, posters, email, internet
- Just stop using all electronics
- Outdoor sports, structured activities
- More fun things, food and people
- More playground, more toys
- Inform parents to get kids out
- Outdoor camps
- Have contests, raffles, all related to getting kids outdoors

Summary and Conclusions

The focus groups conducted within this study provide insight from one of the most powerful voices we should listen to when we are exploring youth and the outdoors. Conducting focus groups with the youth themselves is a mechanism to incorporate two of the 20 external developmental assets listed under the category of empowerment which is necessary in positive youth development: 1) Community Values Youth-young person perceives that adults in the community value youth, and 2) Youth as Resources - youth are given useful roles in the community (Search Institute, 1997).

A major question emerges from focusing on what youth like to do in the outdoors, why they

like to play outdoors, what constraints they experience, and what more can we do to get more kids in the woods. This question is how are recreation, natural resource managers, environmental educators and other human service professionals going to meet the challenges we are continuing to face if more kids do not get outdoors. We are already facing major health challenges for today's youth. But in the large context of the world if children who grow into adults who are too unhealthy to take care of and unaware of how to take of the earth… what is going to happen to the environment if we do not get more kids outside? How can we help youth become life long learners and advocates who will in turn become healthier adults, adult ambassadors for the environment and appreciate all types and locales of nature? Jeronen and Kaikkonen[51] developed a model that focused on the education of the young child or learner that would help them become ready and responsible adults over four areas related to the environment: natural, cultural, aesthetic and ethical. They found that before we provide knowledge and awareness that a child needs to become sensitive to nature. What better way through outdoor recreation activities can a child be exposed to nature… to be sensitive to it through enjoyment, pleasure, choices, and freedom.

Feelings and emotions are features of experiences which provide the foundation for environmental sensitivity (2002). We can see from this study that this foundation is present in the youth. The youth expressed honest, passionate, and in-depth feelings about what the outdoors meant to them and how it made them feel. We need to "tap into" this sensitivity through the youth themselves as well as within an ecological approach to include their peers, teachers, programmers, and parents in order to take it to the next step (Autry & Anderson[52]; Jeronen & Kaikkonen, 2002; Witt & Caldwell[53]). This next step of helping the young child or learner want to play in and protect the outdoors includes environmental knowledge and awareness. In turn the young learner will progress to the next step of becoming ready and responsible adolescents and then adults who will act for a better life and where environmental values are taken into account.

One of the major principles of youth development is sustainability. Program sustainability whether focused in one discipline or within a multidisciplinary program is critical to the success of the program itself and is critical to gaining the trust and involvement of the youth (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Efforts in youth programs must begin early (Catling, 2005; Lubomira, 2004; Witt & Caldwell, 2005) and sustain through adolescents and meet a variety of challenges and skill levels. "Finally, we need to develop a system of services that are ongoing and inclusive of the variety of services necessary to meet youth's needs" (Witt & Caldwell, p. 21). Connecting youth to the outdoors and to nature is a critical need within our society and it is critical for positive youth development.

There are major challenges associated with determining how these research findings relate to kids in the state of Oregon. Specifically, how can recreation resource managers provide outdoor recreation opportunities in Oregon that

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[51] Jeronen, E. & Kaikkonen, M. (2002). Thoughts of children and adults about the environment and environmental education. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education, 11,* 341-353.

[52] Autry, C. E., & Anderson, S. C. (2007). Recreation and the Glenview neighborhood: Implications for youth and community development. *Leisure Sciences*, 29, 267-285.

[53] Witt, P. A. & Caldwell, L. L. (Eds.). (2005). *Recreation and youth development.* Sate College, PA: Venture Publishing.

will facilitate youth participation? What impact will increased youth recreation participation have on the youth and on the environment? These are questions that will not be answered quickly, but will require long-term monitoring and in-depth analysis.

Key Recommendations

Specific recommendations resulting from the statewide youth focus group interviews in Oregon are as follows:

- **Recreation Opportunity Inventory.** A complete inventory of the recreation providers should be completed. This inventory would include the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each recreation entity within each of the 11 Oregon SCORP planning regions. The agencies could be classified as *governmental* (e.g., federal, state, local), *not-for-profit* (e.g., Boys/Girls Clubs, Scouting, church groups, community recreation centers, schools, etc.), and *for-profit* (e.g., REI, local outfitters, local recreation shops, etc.).
    - Strengths-what are the success stories, or programs and processes that are currently working in each agency? These might include the agency's staff, facilities, partnerships, etc.
    - Weaknesses-similarly, an objective list of each recreation entity's weakness should be created. This list may include similar items outlined in the strengths, such as poorly trained staff, poor facilities, etc.
    - Opportunities- what untapped resources exist for each agency within the community? Are there opportunities to partner with other agencies to reduce redundancy, to shore up weaknesses? Do opportunities exist in partnering with for-profit and not-for-profit agencies that may have trained staff, facilities, etc.?
    - Threats-what impending threats exist? These threats typically come from outside the recreation agency, and may be in the form of financial (tax cuts, higher rent/liability costs, etc.), facility (an agency may offer a similar program, thus creating the unintended consequence of unfriendly competition in a community).

- **Statewide Facilities.** Oregon recreation resource managers should attempt to understand if their existing and proposed facilities are appropriate for Oregon's youth. Are the facilities and recreation areas developed so they will facilitate the recruitment of new participants (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, non-English speaking youth, etc.)? This could be accomplished by comparing the findings of previous Oregon SCORP findings with current statewide SCORP findings. What trends have been identified, what demographic changes will occur, and will the facilities be appropriate for that future user group? The literature reviews included in the SCORP issue introductions should be examined to understand the changing demographics of Oregon residents (this includes racial/ethnic minority use, aging Oregonians, etc.).

- **Partnerships.** Recreation resource managers should strive to develop partnerships with appropriate recreation entities. These partnerships may include communities partnering with public, private and non-for-profit entities. Each partner should have its niche identified and should understand how the other contributes. Discussion about partnering topics is included in the recommendations listed below.

- **Electronic Toys.** The topic of children staying indoors to play with electronic toys instead of playing outside warrants considerable discussion. Not only has this type of indoor play been identified as a problem in constraints literature, but the children who participated in this study identified this problem themselves. Recreation resource managers will need to understand the role of their agency in this matter. Parents may support the use of television, internet and other electronic games by their kids, thus the potential for conflicting goals may exist between parents and recreation providers. This type of entertainment may keep their kids busy while the parents are engaged in other activities. Oregon recreation resource managers may want to consider a public awareness campaign touting the importance of outdoor recreation and include awareness about sedentary activities. However, we must take into account the notion that playing indoors, while not promoting a healthy lifestyle, in itself is not particularly bad. Kids who are engaged in these indoor activities may have chosen this activity in lieu of other, more harmful activities, including abusive behavior such as drinking alcohol or using harmful drugs.

- **Crime and Safety.** The notion of safety during outdoor recreation pursuits was mentioned by kids in both the urban and rural areas, although the type of threat was different in the different settings. Children in the urban settings mentioned gang-related crime as a threat, while a rural child mentioned the reports of wild animals (cougar) in his neighborhood. This issue overlaps with the earlier suggestion that recreation resource managers focus on partnerships. Many communities have been participating in a "community policing" method, where police are present in neighborhoods to prevent criminal activity, rather than respond to crimes. Partnerships between police and other safety/security agencies in communities with crime threats would be an important component, and may allow kids to feel more comfortable recreating outdoors.

- **Marketing.** Recreation resource managers should consider a pointed marketing campaign touting the benefits and potential outcomes of playing outside. Partnering with statewide recreation entities (public, private and not-for-profit) would be appropriate and perhaps the most cost effective method of communicating the importance of outdoor recreation in children's lives.

Future Research

The findings of this study and that of the larger SCORP study within the state of Oregon indicate that the needs of youth must be identified and efforts must be addressed in a systematic, statewide approach. Accordingly, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has requested that researchers develop an implementation plan that will be tested in 2008. The crux of this implementation plan is to test an outreach method; to develop a methodology that will provide the youth and parents of Oregon with a conduit to the services and facilities that youth seek in participating in outdoor recreation experiences in Oregon. Although this process and methodology is still being researched, many of the concepts expressed in the recommendations section (above) will be tested in the Bend, Oregon area. Federal, state, local, private and not-for-profit entities will be engaged and provided with the opportunity to develop specific tool-kits that will facilitate outdoor recreation participation by youth.

Summary of Key Recommendations: Oregon Youth Focus Group Meetings

1. Recreation Opportunity Inventory. Conduct a region-based inventory of governmental, not-for-profit, and for-profit recreation youth-related facilities, programs and processes. This inventory would include the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each recreation entity within each of the 11 SCORP planning regions.
2. Statewide Facilities. Oregon recreation resource managers should attempt to understand if their existing and proposed facilities are appropriate for Oregon's youth.
3. Partnerships. Recreation resource managers should strive to develop partnerships with appropriate recreation entities. These partnerships may include communities partnering with public, private and not-for-profit entities.
4. Electronic Toys. Oregon recreation resource managers may want to consider a public awareness campaign touting the importance of outdoor recreation and include awareness about sedentary activities.
5. Crime and Safety. Many communities have been participating in a "community policing" method, where police are present in neighborhoods to prevent criminal activity, rather than responding to crimes. Partnerships between police and other safety/security agencies in communities with crime threats would be an important component and may allow kids to feel more comfortable recreating outdoors.
6. Marketing. Recreation resource managers should consider a pointed marketing campaign touting the benefits and potential outcomes of playing outside.

Key Planning Recommendations for Fewer Oregon Youth Learning Outdoor Skills

Following completion of the research studies, the Oregon Youth Advisory Committee met to develop a final set of planning recommendations for assisting recreation providers across the state to encourage and enable Oregon's youth to become more involved in outdoor recreation activities. During the April 27, 2007 Advisory Committee meeting, committee members identified the following set of key recommendations based on a thorough review of existing literature related to the issue, SCORP research findings, and members' practical experience and knowledge regarding the issue. Copies of meeting notes and planning recommendations were sent to each Advisory Committee member for review following the meeting.

Key recommendations are divided into two categories; statewide recommendations and local recommendations. Statewide recommendations are relevant for all recreation providers across the state of Oregon. Because the distribution of youth within the population is not uniform across the state, local recommendations apply to those high-priority counties and communities in the state which are projected to experience higher increases in youth population between 6-17 years of age in the coming years.

Statewide Recommendation #1: Develop a statewide youth outdoor programming framework and funding source to focus youth programming efforts across Oregon towards addressing a specific set of key measurable objectives.

Although Oregon is a state with abundant natural resources, there is growing evidence that Oregon's youth are gravitating away from outdoor experiences and towards a virtual indoor reality. Analysis of past SCORP survey results indicates that participation in traditional outdoor recreation activities such as camping, fishing and hunting has dramatically decreased. The SCORP survey of Oregon's parents and their children indicates that while children are spending more time, on average, than parents did in both indoor and outdoor organized sports, there have been decreases occurring in outdoor play not at school. Research has shown that people who do not participate in outdoor recreation as youth are less likely to participate in those activities as adults. By providing Oregon's youth with opportunities to learn outdoor recreation skills in outdoor settings, we have the opportunity to rebuild the foundation for future outdoor recreation participation, reestablish personal connections with nature and their public lands, and improve not only health and well being of future youth and adults, but also instill a passion for nature that may parlay into nature stewardship.

SCORP Youth Advisory Committee Members stated that currently, public-sector recreation providers and non-profit organizations are taking a shotgun approach towards engaging Oregon's youth in outdoor programming. They felt that outdoor programmers and educators are often duplicating efforts and spending considerable time in competing for corporate sponsorships and foundation and public grant sources. They stated a need to step back and find ways to redirect our efforts towards a redefined set of youth outdoor programming objectives with a set of evaluation tools to evaluate the merits of programming against these objectives.

This project proposes to develop a statewide youth outdoor programming consortium to focus youth programming efforts across Oregon towards addressing a specific set of key measurable objectives. Potential objectives include developing the following skills within the Oregon's youth population:

- natural resource appreciation;
- emotional and physical well-being;
- life-long outdoor skills; and
- workforce and life skills.

The intent of the Oregon Kids Outdoors Consortium project is to develop an alliance of public and private organizations that would join forces to support programs aimed at addressing key consortium objectives. The member organizations would pool their resources and expertise in order to more effectively deliver youth outdoor programming across the state.

A non-profit organization, such as the Oregon State Park Trust, could manage day-to-day consortium operations. Financial support for member organizations could be provided through an established endowment fund, as well as through local, state and federal grants. Member organizations would work together to develop projects that are reviewed by Oregon Kids Outdoors committees. Each project would need to address a critical youth outdoor need in the state, and meet criteria based on key objectives of the consortium.

Project deliverables would include:

- a set of key statewide program objectives;
- an organizational and administrative structure for a Oregon Kids Outdoors Consortium non-profit entity;

- an evaluation method to evaluate the merits of outdoor programs against the programming framework objectives; and
- a strategic plan for creating an endowment fund for the consortium.

The evaluation method will be used to evaluate all youth outdoor programs against the programming framework objectives ─ both existing and new programs. The method should allow us to quantify what we are producing through our programs and to be able to communicate that to our funding sources, stakeholders, and the legislature.

Advisory Committee members suggested that initial Consortium funds be used to adopt Linda Caldwell's new school-based curriculum, TimeWise to teach youth to take charge of their leisure time through outdoor recreation participation. Initially, TimeWise was developed to help prevent substance abuse by middle-school youth and was funded through a grant from the National Institutes of Health National Institute of Drug Abuse (NID). The intention of this effort is to adapt TimeWise for use as a stand alone recreation after-school program for youth.

Finally, there is a need for a statewide outreach and extension position to provide technical assistance for youth outdoor programming in Oregon. The position could be housed either in the Oregon State University Extension Service or within the Oregon Recreation and Parks Association's new Outdoor Recreation Section (see Statewide Recommendation #4).

Statewide Recommendation #2: Develop a menu of after-school programs which are linked to current education standards and that address key objectives of the statewide youth outdoor programming framework.

Young people spend just 20% of their waking hours in school. The AfterSchool Alliance found that only 10% of Oregon's K-12 youth participate in after-school programs, but 23% of children not in such programs indicated they would be likely to participate if such a program were available in their community. Research findings report that more than half of teens say that they would not watch so much TV or play video games if they had other things to do after school. Research also suggests that parents would be open to the idea of their children learning more about outdoor recreation and opportunities in after-school programs. In addition, a recently published study[54] reports that students who attended middle school after-school programs had better attendance in ninth grade, and earned more credits, than similar students who did not.

Advisory Committee members noted that after-school programming in Oregon has grown exponentially over the past five years ─ to where it is now common to see programs almost every school night. They felt that recreation providers should focus their efforts on developing youth outdoor after-school educational programs. However, they noted that schools will not allow any after-school programming that is not tied to current teaching standards.

There are several existing outdoor recreation programs that link to educational standards such as Project Wild, Project West, and Project Learning Tree. Such programs could be used to meet both the need to teach kids outdoor skills and the schools' need to reinforce educational standards.

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[54] Russell CA, Mielke MB, Miller TD, Johnson JC. After-School Programs and High School Success: Analysis of Post-Program Educational Patterns of Former Middle-Grades TASC Participants. Policy Studies Associates, Inc. Prepared with the support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. 2007 Online at: http://www.tascorp.org/content/document/detail/1758.

The committee members recommended an initial effort to develop a menu of off-the-shelf outdoor recreation after-school programs which are linked to current Oregon educational standards. These outdoor recreation after-school programs should also address key objectives of the statewide youth outdoor program framework (described in Statewide Recommendation #1) to qualify for Oregon Youth Outdoors Consortium funding. Once the menu of off-the shelf outdoor recreation after-school programs and consortium funding are available, local park providers can start to work with local school districts to get these programs in place throughout the state. Such a strategy should be appealing to teachers who are already stretched too thin to partner up with other organizations for after-school programming.

A longer-term strategy should focus on changing how the Oregon education system sees the role that recreation plays in the overall education of our children. In order for this to occur, parks and recreation providers must find a "champion" to begin a public dialogue in Oregon to insure that schools are encouraged by law to meet a benchmark in having a certain number of hours dedicated to experiential outdoor education (outdoor school programming) for all Oregon students.

Statewide Recommendation #3: Develop a "Let's go Camping" marketing campaign targeting Oregon adults with children with the objective of getting parents outdoors with their children.

In the SCORP youth survey, Oregon youth were asked to create an ideal activity program, selecting one or more from a list of 31 potential activities. Camping in tents is a preferred youth program activity across all youth age categories (3-5, 6-11, 12-14, and 15-17). Tent camping in a park setting will also expose children to a variety of other preferred youth outdoor activities such as biking, swimming, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, and unstructured general play.

The survey results also point out that for most activities, parents first engaged in the activity as a child, rather than as an adult ─ indicating the importance of early life participation setting a pattern for later life participation. When asked who introduced their child to each activity, parents were by far the most common response. The data show that one or both parents clearly play the major role in introducing Oregon's youth to almost all outdoor activities.

During a SCORP focus group interview a 14-year-old from Portland stated, "Probably some of the reasons why kids do not go outside is because either their family does not go outside or nobody pushes them to go outside, to eat healthier or to do anything active." This barrier signifies that opportunities for children need to be just as accessible to their parents/caregivers to help provide more ecological solutions surrounding youths' lives in relation to connecting them to the outdoors and to become more successful environmental stewards. In other words, to engage kids we have to reach out to the parents as well.

Based on a review of these findings and existing literature, Advisory Committee members recommended the development of a statewide "Lets go Camping" program and marketing campaign to encourage parents to take their kids camping. From a marketing perspective, there is a model successfully being used at the national and state levels to encourage parents to take their kids out fishing called "Take me Fishing." This program uses media messages such as, "Take me fishing, I am growing up too fast" to increase residential fishing license sales. The model has been successfully pilot tested in the state of Idaho by

the Idaho Department of Fish and Game in partnership with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation[55].

For the "Lets go Camping" campaign, marketing messages should tie into key SCORP research findings by including the following key motivational themes:

- It is cool to go camping.
- It is fun to go camping.
- So take me camping!

The marketing campaign should target Oregon adults with children with the objective of getting the parents and their children (ages 6-17) out camping together. The campaign should focus on those parents that have camped at one time and encourage them to take their kids out and introduce them to camping.

According to the parent and youth survey, 43% of Oregon parents had not camped in a tent, cabin, or a Recreational Vehicle in the last year. As such, it is safe to assume that large numbers of Oregon parents would not have the knowledge or outdoor equipment needed to take their children camping. For this "lost generation" of Oregon families, additional program support is needed to reintroduce them to the family camping experience. This could be accomplished through the development of a camping 101 toolbox, designed to teach parents and kids how to go camping. That is the local part of the campaign. So if a kid in Bend says to mom or dad that they want to go camping – that a recreation provider like Bend Metro Park and Recreation District can take advantage of the media campaign and, using the camping 101 toolbox, deliver the necessary local programming to make it happen.

OPRD could work with marketing consultants to develop and implement the statewide "Lets go Camping" marketing campaign using appropriate media. OPRD could also develop the camping 101 toolbox to enable local providers with the necessary curriculum and programming materials to teach parents and kids how to go camping. Local park and recreation providers could apply for grant monies from the Oregon Youth Outdoors Consortium to fund the camping 101 programs throughout the state. Finally, partnerships could be established between local park providers and outdoor goods retailers, non-profit groups, and county, state, and federal land management agencies to access camping areas, facilities, and equipment.

Statewide Recommendation #4: Create a new Outdoor Recreation Section within the Oregon Recreation and Park Association (ORPA) addressing the areas of outdoor recreation and environmental education.

[55] Human Dimensions Consulting. Take me fishing in Idaho: An evaluation of the IDFG's 2005 angler recruitment and retention program. Prepared for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. March 2006. Online at: http://www.rbff.org/uploads/Research_section/Program_Evaluation_Files/IDFG-RBFF_Final_Report_March_2006.pdf

SCORP research indicates that fewer and fewer individuals are accessing nature/outdoors, and that youth specifically are decreasing their time spent in outdoor recreation activities. Advisory Committee members identified that a critical barrier to addressing this problem is the lack of organization and communication among outdoor recreation providers in Oregon related to outdoor recreation services. There is currently no such section that exists in the ORPA serving these functions.

Committee members recommended creating a Special Section (Outdoor Recreation) in ORPA, to take a proactive approach to addressing issues related to outdoor recreation programming and education and environmental education. This section should reach out to outdoor equipment manufacturers and retailers, guides and packers, and non-profit organizations such as the American Camping Association, scouting, and church-based programs. For assistance with the educational components, the Community Education Association and the Oregon Department of Education Association would also be key partners.

Local Recommendation #1: Provide funding and assistance for innovative park designs to connect youth with nature in OPRD-administered grant programs.

SCORP parent and youth survey findings show that almost all of Oregon parents feel that it was a priority for their child to spend more time in outdoor activities. Based on parental reports, Oregon's children are spending considerably less time than the parents did on outdoor play while not at school. Research shows that increasing use of electronic media has been implicated in negative psychological and physical effects, including obesity, loneliness, depression, and attentional problems. In addition, research shows that direct contact with nature, especially as children, is the most critical influence on later attitude toward the environment.

Advisory Committee members felt it critical to have a strategy in place to reconnect Oregon youngsters with nature. The statewide survey of Oregon youth identified that favorite outdoor activities evolve over childhood, with going to parks / playgrounds being the favorite activity for 3-5 year olds and a top favorite activity for 6-11 year olds. According to a recent research report, planners need to create safe, wild spaces in urban areas because unstructured natural areas offer children rich opportunities to learn how to find their way in strange territory and gain other skills[56]. According to the report, for youths in urban settings, woods, unmanaged fields and other natural spaces are just as important for learning and growing up as baseball parks and other traditional outdoor recreational opportunities. These findings indicate that developing neighborhood park settings that are more conducive to youngsters learning about and interacting with nature could be and effective strategy targeting the 3-11 year old demographic.

There are a number of different types of designs currently available to purposefully pull kids into an area and hardened for sustainable use. Such designs encourage activities that we used to do as youth such as digging, climbing, and playing. Such area are designed to be relatively safe for the kids and hardened to protect the natural resource.

[56] Bixler RD, Floyd MF, and Hammitt WE. Environmental Socialization: Quantitative tests of the childhood play hypothesis. Environmental Behavior 2002; 34(6): 795-818.

According to Advisory Committee members, there are a few excellent examples of innovative youth park designs in Oregon including Eugene's River Play Park. Many of Eugene's unique experiences are captured in River Play Park. Visitors can climb a small replica of Skinner Butte, uncover fossils at an ancient history sand dig, play with sand and water along a miniature Willamette River, and recreate the life of the original native inhabitants and early settlers of the area at the Kalapuya and pioneer villages.

The Advisory Committee identified a need for greater priority for park projects including design features that are conducive to youngsters learning about and interacting with nature in OPRD-administered grant programs. Such designs should be age-appropriate, with differing designs to provide opportunities for the 3-11 demographic. OPRD could also provide local recreation providers with assistance in identifying the best designs available for the park space and target age group.

Because the level and distribution of youth within the population will not be uniform across the state, grant funding for innovative park designs connecting youth with nature will be directed towards high-priority counties and communities in the state which are projected to experience higher levels of increases in youth population between the ages of 6-17 in the coming years. Counties identified as "high-priority" based on increase in youth population include: Clackamas, Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Lane, Marion, Morrow, Multnomah, Washington, and Wheeler. High-priority cities include Albany, Banks, Barlow, Beaverton, Bend, Boardman, Coburg, Creswell, Donald, Eugene, Fairview, Gresham, Happy Valley, Helix, Hillsboro, Medford, Oregon City, Portland, Redmond, Salem, Sherwood, Tigard, Wilsonville and Woodburn.