



Children in Nature - Key Recommendations
February 27, 2009

Nature Deficit Disorder

- Describes the human costs of alienation from nature
 - ✓ diminished use of the senses
 - ✓ attention difficulties
 - ✓ higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses
 - ✓ detected in individuals, families and communities
 - ✓ can even change human behavior in cities

Richard Louv
Last Child in the Woods



Healing the broken bond between our young and nature is in everyone's self-interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demand it, but also because our mental, physical and spiritual health depend upon it.

Richard Louv

Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder

- Governor O'Malley Established the Partnership through Executive Order
- Charged with:
 - Developing a plan to provide youth with structured and unstructured opportunities for outdoor recreation and learning
 - Developing and implementing an Environmental Literacy Plan
 - Devising a method for measuring the baseline and increased time spent by children outdoors

Partnership Vision

- Maryland's youth will form deep and personal bonds with nature through abundant time spent playing outdoors, discovering the beauty, awe and wonderment of the Earth.
- This connection to nature will be strengthened by adult mentors and environmental education programs, inspiring and motivating children to be stewards of their environment.
- The collective result of these experiences will sustain and enrich the physical and mental well-being of children throughout their lives.



The Partnership recognized that while government actions are important to removing barriers and increasing opportunities for children to access nature the true antidote for success will be...

Raising public awareness – particularly among parents, teachers and youth mentors – about the importance and value of time spent in nature by children – playing, exploring, discovering and learning.



Community & Public Lands Workgroup

- Schoolyard habitat and natural play areas.
- Trails that connect communities, parks, and schools.
- Nature play areas in communities.
- Civic Justice Corps.
- Outdoor classroom aligned to curriculum and service learning.
- Naturalists to provide interpretive activities.
- Increased opportunities for under-served communities to access public lands

Environmental Literacy Plan Workgroup

- a) Review of current EE efforts (by-law, C2K, etc.).
- b) Identification of curriculum.
- c) Model outdoor field and service learning experiences
- d) Professional development opportunities.
- e) Methods to measure and report environmental literacy.
- f) Revising or updating the plan every 5 years

Partnership's eight recommendations under three themes

- Strengthening students' connection to nature during the school day
- Connecting families to nature
- Reaching out to underserved communities that have the least access to nature



Strengthening students' connection to nature during the school day

- Provide an annual meaningful outdoor environmental education experience for every student every year, pre-K through grade 12.
- Require for graduation that every high school student take and pass a designated environmental literacy course.



Strengthening students' connection to nature during the school day

- Establish a comprehensive initiative to green all schools and school grounds to create opportunities for outdoor learning experiences for students and members of the community.
- Provide professional development for teachers, state park rangers and naturalists, and other service providers.



Connecting families to nature

- Incorporate Nature Play Spaces into community health planning, land use planning and community development design.
- Connect communities and parks with trails by establishing a Trail Development Office to provide leadership and to accelerate community trail development through a Trail Town grant program.



Reaching out to underserved communities that have the least access to nature

- Develop and implement a comprehensive program to increase access and utilization of public lands and waterways for underserved communities.
- Expand and improve the existing Civic Justice Corps (CJC) model to provide at-risk youth statewide by 2015 with summer conservation jobs and outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and community non-profit organizations.



Next Steps...

Finalize Report for Presentation to Governor

Develop & Execute Public Awareness Campaign

Develop Public-Private Funding Plan

Develop Performance Indicators & Monitoring Systems

Meet Quarterly to Track Progress

