

An Oregon Action Framework for Health and the Outdoors



There is evidence that bringing people into the outdoors and the outdoors closer to people:

- Increases access to physical activity opportunities
- Reduces stress
- Fosters community and social relationships
- Improves air quality

...all of which can improve human health.

But not everyone in Oregon has access to outdoor activities and places, which means that not everyone gets these health benefits. Communities of color, low income communities, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups face barriers to spending time in the outdoors and are also more likely to experience health disparities than white, middle- and high-income people.

How can we align goals, structures and programs in the conservation and health sectors to address these inequities? How can we leverage the expertise and resources of our communities and the conservation and health sectors to make positive outdoor experiences a part of all Oregonians' lives? And how can we support communities facing inequities in leading this change?

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The Health and Outdoors Action Framework outlines the beginnings of a strategy for accelerating positive health and conservation outcomes for all Oregonians by increasing the presence of, access to, and use of parks, nature, and the outdoors in communities facing inequities. The Framework was built by the planning team organizations and many other key voices below.

Basic Idea for Action:

Communities, with a focus on those experiencing disparities, will lead projects that address their health and outdoors priorities. The core planning team and partners support this work by:

- Raising funds and making grants to the community projects;
- Supporting aligned policy efforts at various levels;
- Developing and implementing a strategic research agenda; and
- Providing evaluation support and communication tools.

What kinds of projects are we talking about?

We are looking for projects that seek to improve physical health, behavioral health and mental health, and strengthen social cohesion. We are especially looking for new ideas, or strategies for scaling and strengthening existing ones that:

- Address barriers to spending time outdoors;
- Increase parks, trails and trees;
- Increase access to safe green space; and
- Activate and scale programs to get people outdoors.

How will we measure health, environment, and engagement outcomes?

Developing shared metrics is a priority for our work moving forward. We want to make sure the metrics we commit to work for the communities involved in this effort, so we haven't solidified them yet. Possible metrics include time spent exercising, stressor exposure, acquisition of cognitive/physiological restoration, interaction with neighbors, air and water quality metrics and habitat quality, quantity and connectivity.

What do we need to do to make this happen?

We need a cross-sector, multi-faceted approach in order to reach our goal of reducing disparities by strengthening the connection between health and the outdoors. In addition to supporting community projects, we need to:

- Acknowledge and work together to eliminate the institutional and structural racism that causes communities of color to feel unwelcome and unsafe in the outdoors;
- Secure funds to support a core planning team that reflects the communities served by this initiative and to support community projects;
- Build relationships with partners from many sectors who are committed to strengthening the health and outdoors connection and who can contribute time, skills and financial resources; and
- Develop and implement research and policy agendas that support community-driven work.

Want to help?

- Send us your ideas and input
- Join a workgroup
- Pledge to get outside today
- Invest funds to support this work
- Tell us what is happening in your community
- Stay in touch!

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