

USDA Forest Service Update

August 2011

Subject: America's Great Outdoors Initiative



Issue: The report to the President on America's Great Outdoors (AGO) was rolled out in February 2011. The Forest Service will undertake actions and activities that complement the recommendations in the AGO report.

Key Points:

In response to the America's Great Outdoors initiative, the Forest Service is working on the following activities:

- Coordinate with partners and other agencies to support outdoor recreation, health and physical activity, through programs and days like National Get Outdoors Day and National Public Lands Day.
- Integrate Land Acquisition and Forest Legacy program prioritization processes with Department of Interior agencies to make coordinated acquisitions considering shared objectives. These may include:
 - Ecologically significant landscapes
 - Recreation, including sportsman's access to National Forest System lands
 - National Scenic & Historic Trails
 - Wildlife habitat connectivity
- Use the Watershed Condition Framework (which includes collaborating with state and local governments and communities) to identify priority watersheds and develop watershed action plans that focus investments to maintain and improve watersheds.
- Develop and implement a new National Volunteer Program strategy to build on Forest Service capacity to recruit, train and retain volunteers and volunteer partnerships that connect people to the land through service.
- Participate in the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation to address items identified in the AGO Report.
- Support partnership-based conservation education programs such as the More Kids in the Woods internal funding program, Children's Forest, NatureWatch, A Forest for Every Classroom, and Linking Girls to the Land to engage kids in meaningful outdoor activities that build connections with America's Great Outdoors and enhance environmental literacy.
- Implement AGO collaborative landscape conservation initiative recommendations.
- Use competitive grants to states that demonstrate focused use of resources to align with priorities identified in statewide forest resource assessments and strategies.
- In partnership with NRCS and other agencies as appropriate, implement all-lands conservation initiatives that conserve working forests.
- Demonstrate large landscape restoration approaches through application of the Collaborative Landscape Restoration Program.

Background:

In April 2010, the President charged the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality with leading an effort to listen and learn from the public, communities, and conservation leaders, and then prepare a report to the President that reviews successful non-Federal conservation approaches, analyzes existing Federal resources, and proposes strategies and activities that achieve AGO goals.

Significant points in the AGO initiative:

- Emphasis on connecting Americans with the outdoors
- Focus on youth engagement through jobs and volunteerism
- Build upon community-based conservation efforts
- Support state, local private, and tribal conservation priorities
- Use science-based management practices to restore and protect our lands and waters

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