U.S. Department
of Agriculture

Forest Service

**National Technology &
Development Program**

2300—Recreation Mgmt
0923 1801—SDTDC
March 2009

PLANNING FOR YOUTH DAYS—Planting the SEED to Get Youth Outdoors in Nature

PLANNING FOR YOUTH DAYS—Planting the SEED to Get Youth Outdoors in Nature

by

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March 2009

INTRODUCTION

In a statewide survey in Oregon, parents indicated how much time their child spent relative to their own outdoor childhood experiences. The results indicated children spent as much time as their parents at that age in structured outdoor activities, such as organized sports, but they spent much less time than their parents did at that age in outdoor chores and unstructured outdoor play (Lindberg 2007). The same study found that outdoor skills have changed over the generations, with younger generations having fewer nature-based outdoor skills, such as pitching a tent or cooking outdoors in comparison to their parents (Lindberg 2007). Louv (2005) suggested that children today suffer from a nature-deficit disorder. What can be done to change that trend? This paper reports a brief summary of one effort to connect kids to nature through the use of technologically-linked outdoor activities. It goes on to describe in detail how the same kinds of activities or other activities can get kids outdoors.

This guidebook is meant for anyone with an interest in getting youth outdoors to natural areas and in getting them engaged in outdoor recreation activities. People interested in this might include outdoor recreation planners and managers of public land management agencies (Forest Service), State (State Parks), local agencies (county and city parks), for profit groups and their partners (vendors of recreation outing equipment), and non-profit groups with outdoor recreation interests (Tread Lightly).

Why Do We Want More Kids Outdoors in Nature?

In a cross-cultural examination of favorite places (included Senegal, Ireland, and the United States), 61 percent of adult respondents identified some part of the natural environment as their favorite place (Newell 1997). Beyond attachment to places, natural areas provide many benefits for adults and for children. For example, connection to nature can enhance attentional functioning in adults and children (Faber Taylor, Kuo, Sullivan 2001). In addition, connections to nearby natural areas play a significant role in the well-being of children residing in poor urban environments (Wells 2000).

Additional benefits relate to environmental attitudes and actions. An emotional affinity toward nature can serve as a motivational basis to protect nature (Kais, Schumacher, Montada 1999). A study of university students found that people who see greater potential for restorative experiences in natural environments also do more to protect them by behaving ecologically, such as recycling or reduced driving (Hartig, Kaiser, Bowler 2001).

Children deprived of the spiritual, emotional, and psychological benefits of exposure to nature are more prone to depression and attention disorders, and miss out on improved cognitive development, creativity, and cooperative play (Louv 2005).

In a study of elementary school children, Huang and Yore (2005) found that the most popular source of environmental information was television. On average, American children spent almost 6-1/2 hours per day with electronic media, including more than 3 hours watching television (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout 2005), whereas they spent about 30 minutes per week on unstructured outdoor activities (Doherty 2004).

Introducing the Concept of SEED

These studies suggest that your efforts to get children outdoors can result in SEED:

- Secure the well-being of children who reside in poor urban areas.
- Enhance attentional functioning.
- Encourage children to protect nature in the future.
- Determine future ecologically responsible behaviors.

These are powerful outcomes and they will require a substantial amount of effort on your part. The remainder of this document provides guidelines to assist you getting more kids outdoors in nature. Along the way we'll provide several examples of what we tried—the effort we called "Youth Day." We'll provide ideas for you to use (denoted by "SEED"). We'll tell you what worked and what did not work so well for us. Our hope is that you are encouraged to get youth outdoors in nature and that you'll share your stories and efforts with us.

SETTING UP THE FIRST YOUTH DAY

Youth Day did not happen because we wanted it to. It required the collaboration and coordination of several groups. More than 30 persons at the Partners Outdoors Conference (Lake Arrowhead, CA, in January 2007) participated in planning the regional recreation forum to be held in Los Angeles in March 2007. Participants in that process included the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, California Parks and Recreation Society, American Recreation Coalition, Los Angeles County Department of Recreation and Parks, California State Parks, and

Tread Lightly. Potential forum topics that were discussed included access, connecting Americans to the outdoors (especially youth and urban populations), and volunteers/partnerships with non-profit organizations and others. One topic of interest was technologies and whether youth would be more likely to go outdoors if some technologies were available for their use outdoors. After considering the difficulties of having youth at the Recreation Forum (held midday during the school year) a subset of the planning committee formed and decided to conduct an exploratory study as an effort to engage children in outdoor recreation activities, to determine the success of the effort, and then to develop a process for others to follow. The result was Youth Day, March 2007, in Los Angeles.

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Start by inviting several partners to join in your efforts. We found it beneficial to have people from different agencies and groups as that brought a variety of thoughts and a variety of resources.

Our Process

There is a connection between the quality of the child's outdoor experience and the way it is engraved in memory as he or she matures—an experience in which the child is actively involved with his body, his senses, and his awareness, is likely to be etched in memory for a long time (Sebba 1991). Thus, the planners of youth day sought activities in which the participants would be personally and cognitively involved.

Informal educational settings can promote environmentally sustainable attitudes and behavior (Ballantyne and Packer 2005). Thus, we selected a natural area site for the setting.

To begin, we developed a list of activities in which we might ask youth to engage. The activities were then placed into the following categories: technology-based activities, water-based activities, land-based activities, environmental education activities, and research activities. These are not mutually exclusive categories and the activities are not an exhaustive list.

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Before checking out the options we identified, think about what activities you would have available for youth to do in your resource area.

Technology-based activities

- Camera safari to take pictures while out on a nature walk. Bird-identification binoculars (point binoculars toward the bird and it "listens" to the bird sounds, and offers an identification of the bird—this is still in prototype).
- Geocache for treasure.
- MP3 podcasts which tell stories about the place.
- Using cell phones to take pictures while on hike.
- XBOX 360 station with outdoor games.
- Wii station with fishing game.
- Mountain biking.
- Mountain boarding.
- Mountain roller blading.
- Ride an all-terrain vehicle or off-highway vehicle.

Water-based activities

- Fishing (real fish, or use magnets, use hoops, use small pool).
- Wildlife watching.
- Beach play (build dams or sand castles).
- Streamside play (turn over rocks).

Land-based activities

- Camera safari to take pictures while out on a nature walk.
- Set up a camp site.
- Hike set up to focus on a story about Native American cultures.
- Hike set up to focus on a story about early U.S. or local history.
- Bug collecting.
- Etching/rubbing natural surfaces onto paper.
- Horseback riding.
- Collecting wood or pinecones.
- Hike.
- Mountain biking.
- Mountain boarding.
- Mountain roller blading.
- Ride an all-terrain vehicle or off-highway vehicle.

- Hike with a guidebook (focus on birds, trees or plants).
- Wildlife watching.
- Collect rocks or fossils.
- Geologic hunts (locate the fault line).
- Hunt for the oldest tree (or the tallest).
- Nature scavenger hunt (rocks, fossils, etc.).

Environmental education activities

- Hike set up to focus on a story about Native American cultures.
- Hike set up to focus on a story about early U.S. or local history.
- Artistic session—could be colored pencils, crayons, finger paints—to draw something about nature.
- A touch box—might include animal skins, bark samples, leaves, etc.
- Bird-identification binoculars.
- MP3 podcasts.
- Ecological exploration (such as dead and down logs).
- Bug collecting.
- Hike with a guidebook (focus on birds, trees or plants).
- Build an animal home (bird house).
- Collect rocks or fossils.
- Geologic hunts (locate the faultline).
- Hunt for the oldest tree (or the tallest).
- Nature scavenger hunt (rocks, fossils, etc.).

Research activities

- Use tools to measure temperature, humidity, wind.
- Take soil samples.
- Take water samples.

Other ways to categorize these activities include: nature appreciation, cognitive in nature, engage the senses, allow for artistic expression, allow for cultural expression, express connections with nature, scientific purposes, ecosystem awareness, physical fitness (activities might be sedentary, walking, or very active), or skill building. There are probably innumerable other ways to categorize the same activities.

SEED

How would you categorize the activities you thought about offering? Do they fit in multiple categories like ours did? What do you really want to measure or know once your youth day is complete? Your collaborators probably want to provide input on these decisions.

Narrowing Down the Activities for the First Youth Day

The need for active participation (Sebba 1991) directed the actions taken on Youth Day. In order to determine if kids are attracted to the outdoors by technology, four activities were offered—two were dependent on technology and two were not: (1) camera safari where each child borrowed a digital camera and took pictures of things that interested them as they took a short hike, (2) etching or rubbings on paper of natural surfaces of their choice, (3) geocache for treasure where each participant used a global positioning system unit to locate hidden treasure along a trail, and (4) nature scavenger hunt where each child had a list of items to locate along a trail. Our purpose was to determine if technology matters in youth outdoor participation. In addition, two of our activities could be considered artistic expression (camera safari and etchings) and two we considered as a treasure hunt (geocache and nature scavenger hunt). In other words, we tried to match a technology dependent activity (camera safari) with a similar (artistic expression) activity that was not technology dependent (etchings).

Technology Dependent	Non-technology Dependent
Camera safari (artistic expression)	Etchings/rubbings (artistic expression)
Geocache (treasure hunt)	Nature scavenger hunt (treasure hunt)

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You might consider whether you want to exactly replicate what we did or come up with other activities because your interests lie elsewhere. For example, you may want to conduct activities that are water based, or you may want to provide environmental education activities, or both.

Lesson Plan for Each Activity for the First Youth Day

Camera safari

Each child used a digital camera to take pictures of things that interested them as they took a short walk along a trail. One photo was printed for each participant in this activity to take home.

Lesson plan for the Camera Safari activity
Purpose: To allow children to explore nature through a camera lens.
Materials: Digital camera, printer, paper.
Meeting Spot: Dining Hall.
Process: 1. Give each child a digital camera. 2. Instruct each child on the proper use of the camera. Remind children to hold the camera steady, so the picture will not be blurry. 3. Take children out on a short hike. (Time: 15-20 minutes) 4. Instruct children to take pictures of items in nature that they find interesting. Please no picture of other kids and faces. 5. Each child can take up to seven pictures. 6. Return group back to the dining hall. 7. Download and review pictures. Select one image that will be printed. Photos will be given at the end of the day.

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Use this lesson plan or edit it if you select camera safari as an activity. Note the items needed to offer the activity.

Figure 1—Children engaged in camera safari activity.

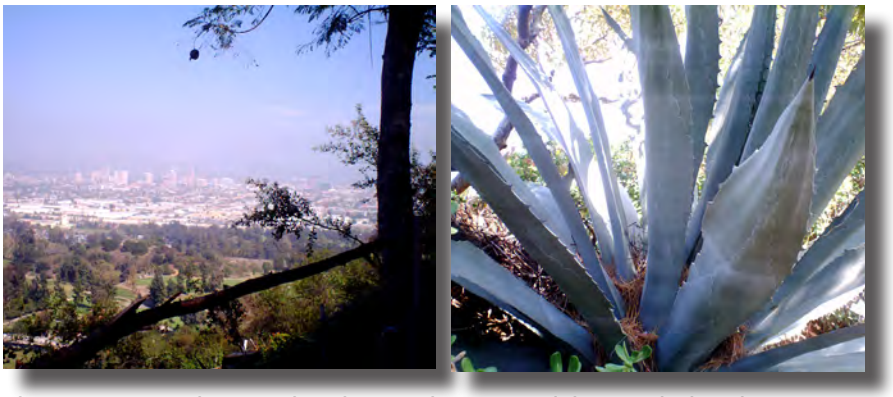

Figure 2—Two photos taken by Youth Day participants during the camera safari activity.

Etchings/Rubbings

The youth etched natural surfaces (leaves, rocks, twigs, pine cones, etc.), on paper, and then made rubbings of plastic forms onto foil (leaves, spiders, etc.) at an art center. Each participant took home their etchings/rubbings. This activity was held in two places, nearby an art center and at the art center. There was a leader at the art center who gave instructions on what to do, but facilitators led the activity.

Lesson plan for the Nature Etchings/Rubbings activity
Purpose: To explore and capture images and textures found in nature.
Materials: Rubbing booklet, crayons, foil, templates, and sample poster.
Meeting Spot: Craft area
Process: Paper Rubbings 1. Show children the sample poster of rubbings. 2. Give each child booklet and crayons. Crayons should have the paper wrapping removed. 3. Take children on a small hike around the area. (15 minutes) 4. Have children record the different patterns and textures around them. 5. Place a piece of paper over the leaf or bark. 6. Gently rub the paper using the long edge of the crayon. 7. Children can use multiple textures and colors on one piece of paper.

Once children are through with their hikes and rubbing. Have children do foil rubbings.

Foil Rubbings

1. Give each child a rubbing template.
2. Tape foil over template.
3. Gently rub foil using a stick. Be sure to rub over the entire template. (10-15 minutes)

SEED

Use this lesson plan or edit it if you select etchings/rubbings as an activity. Note the items needed to offer the activity.

Figure 3—Children engaged in the etchings activity.

Geocache

Each participant used a global positioning system (GPS) unit to locate hidden treasure along a trail. Each participant took home a treasure found during the hike. Two technical facilitators taught the kids about geocaching and led the activity.

Lesson plan for the Geocache activity

Purpose: To introduce the activity of geocaching and allow children to experience nature through technology.

Materials: Basic GPS units, caches (plastic boxes with notebook, pencil, and prizes inside), prizes to trade, clue cards.

Process:

1. Preprogram GPS units and set up course.
2. Divide group into pairs or trios.
3. Give small groups a GPS unit.
4. Instruct children about what a GPS unit is and how it works.
5. Go over safety rules, such as walking only; walk slowly so units can track; and what to do when a cache is found.
6. Give each child an object to put in the cache.
7. Start the activity at one starting point (waypoint 001), then have the two groups proceed to their respective waypoint 002 on the hiking trail by using the GPS unit.
8. Have the children look for a paper clue at each waypoint and read it so they will know they have found the right spot.
9. Follow the clues until they reach the geocache.
10. Have each child sign and date the log book and take an object from the cache.
11. Have each child put an object back in the cache.
12. Hide the cache.
13. Return to the trailhead.

SEED

Use this lesson plan or edit it if you select geocache as an activity. Note the items needed to offer the activity.

Figure 4—Children engaged in the geocache activity.

Nature scavenger hunt

Each child was provided a list of natural items to locate along a trail. Once they located an item they sketched it in a notebook. Each child took home their notebook.

Each of the 38 youth (ages 6 to 17) participated in each activity.

Lesson plan for the Nature Scavenger Hunt activity
Purpose: To improve children's observation skills and to increase interest and understanding of our natural environment.
Materials: Nature booklets, crayons, and prizes.
Process: 1. Give each child a booklet with the list of items to be found. 2. Take children on a short hike to find the items. (20 minutes) 3. Instruct the children that while on the hike, they need to find items listed in booklet. 4. Draw or create a rubbing of the items on their nature booklet. 5. Discuss with children their experience: Did they complete the list, what did they find, what was the hardest to find, etc.

Please collect books at the end of the activity. Booklets will be returned at closing.

Scavenger Hunt List

- Five types of leafs
- Something perfectly straight
- Something that is yellow
- Something that is fuzzy
- Something rough
- 5 pieces of manmade litter
- A seed
- A chewed leaf (not by you!)
- Something beautiful
- A flower

SEED

Use this lesson plan or edit it if you select nature scavenger hunt as an activity. Note the items needed to offer the activity.

Figure 5—Children engaged in the nature scavenger hunt activity.

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You will need to develop lesson plans for the activities you will offer. See appendix A for other lesson plan examples.

Who Did What and When for the First Youth Day

Recall that we called upon several groups to plan and execute Youth Day. Here are some of the groups and their tasks:

- The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, which oversaw the recruitment of children, estimated 25 to 35 children would attend the event. The target age range was 10 to 13, with a focus on diverse youth from the San Fernando Valley, Hollywood, Harbor, East Los Angeles, and West Los Angeles neighborhoods. The planning group also decided on group sizes of 4 to 5 youths, and assigning youth to groups based on age.
- City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks: printed agenda, wrote lesson plans (except geocache), ran the registration desk, provided the Boys Camp site at Griffith Park in Los Angeles, provided a lunch meal and snacks, recruited youth participants, arranged for facilitators, developed the registration/parental permission form, and provided the nature and scavenger booklets.

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A few of the tasks that you'll need to do are included in the list below, most are done in advance of your youth day but some also occur on the youth day (for example, the registration desk required planning in advance and required being open on Youth Day):

- Agenda for the day.
- Registration desk.
- Determine site/location.
- Plan meals and snacks.
- Recruit youth participants.
- Plan on transportation.
- Lesson plans (3 of the 4 activities).
- Develop registration materials.
- Develop parental permission form.
- Arrange for facilitators (who run the kids through the activities).
- Plan for ice breakers with the youth.

- San Dimas Technology and Development Center (FS): wrote the lesson plan and set up the geocache activity, recruited observers, set up photo download process, purchased printers, purchased cameras and GPS units, and provided bags with Smokey Bear items for each child to take home.

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A few of the tasks that you'll need to do are included in the list below, most are done in advance of your youth day but some occur on the day:

Lesson plans – geocache.

Arrange for observers (who watch particular activities and record information).

Arrange and purchase equipment (cameras, printers, GPS units).

Plan for giveaways at the end of the day.

- Pacific Southwest Research Station (FS): developed the observation process, provided note pads, developed voting process, provided items for geocache treasure (along with the American Recreation Coalition), and meeting development.

SEED

A few of the tasks that you'll need to do are included in the list below, most are done in advance of your youth day but some occur on the day:

Select activities

Arrange for data collectors (who gather data from the youth participants about each activity)

Plan what is needed to complete each activity (where the youth should go, what they will do on the activity, what items are needed to engage in the activity, etc.)

Plan for giveaways with each activity so the youth have items to enhance remembering the activities

Plan for training the facilitators, observers, and data collectors

- American Recreation Coalition: built partnerships/made connections, provided items for geocache treasure.

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A few of the tasks that you'll need to do are included in the list below, most are done in advance of your youth day but some occur on the day:

Determine site/location

Plan for giveaways

Bring together various groups that can assist Youth Day

As noted previously, some things need to occur in advance of Youth Day, some occur only on Youth Day, and some items occur in advance and on Youth Day. The following provides our process notes on what occurred and when:

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A few of the tasks that you'll need to do are included in the list below, most are done in advance of your Youth Day but some occur on the day:

Agenda for the day – before

Registration desk – before and on Youth Day

Select activities – before

Lesson plans – before

Determine site/location – before

Recruit youth participants – before

Plan on transportation – before and on Youth Day

Plan meals and snacks – before and on Youth Day

Develop registration materials – before

Develop parental permission form – before

Arrange for facilitators (who run the kids through the activities) – before and plan on training either in advance or on Youth Day

Arrange for observers (who watch particular activities and record information) – before and plan on training either in advance or on Youth Day

Arrange for data collectors (who gather data from the youth about each activity, debrief observers at the end of each activity, and debrief the facilitators at the end of the day) – before and plan on training either in advance or on Youth Day (see section below on sending data to Dr. Chavez)

Plan what is needed to complete each activity (where the youth go, what they will do on the activity, what items are needed to engage in the activity, etc.) – before (see section below on how to obtain some Youth Day activity items)

Plan for giveaways with each activity so the youth have items to enhance remembering the activities – before and on Youth Day

Plan for ice breakers with the youth – before and on Youth Day

First Youth Day Agenda

Here is an example of the agenda we used at the first Youth Day. Note that we offered games (see appendix B) for the youth to do while we trained the facilitators and observers (this was done by the data collection team who had already been trained). Also note that we divided the youth into eight groups based on age and that each group did each activity:

9:00 – 9:30	Check in	
9:30 – 9:45	Welcome and Announcements	
9:45 –10:45	Training and Games	
	Orientation of Facilitators and Observers	
	Initiative Games with Children (see “Group Games”)	
	Assign children into one of eight groups	
10:45 – 11:45	Round 1:	Camera safari (groups 1 & 5)
		Scavenger hunt (groups 2 & 6)
		Nature rubbings (groups 3 & 7)
		Geocache (groups 4 & 8)
11:45 – 12:15	Lunch	
12:15 – 1:15	Round 2:	Camera safari (groups 2 & 6)
		Scavenger hunt (groups 3 & 7)
		Nature rubbings (groups 4 & 8)
		Geocache (groups 1 & 5)
1:15 – 2:15	Round 3:	Camera safari (groups 3 & 7)
		Scavenger hunt (groups 4 & 8)
		Nature rubbings (groups 1 & 5)
		Geocache (groups 2 & 6)
2:15 – 2:30	Break and Snack time	
2:30 – 3:30	Round 4:	Camera safari (groups 4 & 8)
		Scavenger hunt (groups 1 & 5)
		Nature rubbings (groups 2 & 6)
		Geocache (groups 3 & 7)
3:30 – 4:00	Closing and Wrap-up	

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Use this agenda as a template for your own Youth Day activities.

Time Breakdown for Youth Day Activities (one hour)

5 min - Introduction of the activity

30 min – Activity

15 min – Wrap and debriefing

10 min – Transition to next activity

SEED

Use this time breakdown for your youth day—we found it to be useful.

Figure 6—Children engaged in the initiative games.

Data We Collected at the First Youth Day and What You'll Need to Collect

Data were collected on four areas: (1) votes by activity, (2) observer notes by activity, (3) photos for camera safari, and (4) facilitator feedback.

Votes by Activity

Korpela, Kytta and Hartig (2002) used scales with images of faces that represented levels of agreement (happy face) and disagreement (sad face). These were tested on youth from ages 8 to 13. Similarly, we used cards (green, yellow, and red) for the participants to rate each activity. We had one data collector per activity.

We had the youth line up and approach the voting table one at a time after each activity. We told them “We want you to think about the activity you just completed. Select one card for your vote.” Green means: “This was cool,” “This rocked,” or “I like this activity.” Choose yellow if this is what you think: “I’m not sure,” or “It was just all right.” Pick a red card if you were thinking: “This was dumb,” ‘This was boring,” or “This activity was a waste of my time.”

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You’ll also need to collect votes on the activities and send them to Dr. Chavez at PSW.

Observer Notes by Activity

We also had two adults observing each group of children, reporting back what they heard. We assigned observers to particular activities rather than have them trail a group of children all day. This was done so the observers would be experts at a specific activity and would not bond with a particular group of children. During the 9:45 a.m. session we provided training and offered time for questions and answers. We asked observers to restrict their activities to observations (rather than assist the kids with activities, for example) and to look for:

- Interest in the activity. Did the activity hold youth attention for the entire time? What specifically seemed to be most involving? Why?
- Ease of understanding. Was the activity easy to do? Too easy? Too difficult or confusing?
- Ease in the outdoors. Were they comfortable in the out-of-doors? Did they complain about the sun, bugs, etc.?
- Social interactions. Did the youth make friends? Did they talk about the activity among themselves?
- Other observations. Is there anything else you think we should know about this particular activity?

We provided notebooks for the observers to take notes and had them debrief with research team members after each round of activity.

SEED

You’ll also need to have observers and have the data collection team debrief after every activity. Then send information to Dr. Chavez at PSW.

Figure 7—Training observers on what their tasks were for Youth Day.

Photos from the Camera Safari

We downloaded every photo taken by the youth during the camera safari. The participants were asked to not take pictures of each other but to take photos of the natural area and items of interest. Each photo was categorized into the following groups: vegetation/natural views (such as trees, bushes, etc.), wildlife (such as lizards, birds, etc.), human influenced views (such as fences, cars, buildings, etc.), and humans (included photos of people, shadows of people, etc.). A photo might contain more than one category.

SEED

You'll also need to electronically collect all the photos from the Camera Safari and send them to Dr. Chavez at PSW.

Facilitator Feedback

The facilitators (two per group) were employees of the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. Most were camp counselors from the Boys Camp or the Girls Camp at Griffith Park. The facilitators had previous training for working with kids and had background checks in place. During the 9:45 a.m. session we provided training and offered time for questions and answers. The facilitators worked in groups of two and had the same group of children throughout the day.

Although the target ages were 10 to 13, many youth brought younger and older siblings with them. Rather than turn any children away, we accepted all ages. The youth were divided into groups based on age.

We met with the facilitators at the end of the day and asked their opinions about how the day went. We asked the same questions as we asked of the observers on interest in the activity, ease of understanding, ease in the outdoors, social interactions, and anything else they felt we should know.

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If you borrow from our caches then you'll need send all your data (votes, Camera Safari photos, observer notes, and facilitator notes) to Dr. Chavez at PSW. If you decide not to use our materials we'll still invite you to send your data to Dr. Chavez at PSW.

Figure 8—Training facilitators on the activities and their roles during Youth Day.

Lessons We Learned So You Don't Have To!

What to expect—

- The kids will enjoy being outside.
- The staff and everyone will have a great day.
- It will be tiring.
- Kids will tune into natural things (such as hawks and lizards).

Items to consider in planning—

- Logistics will be intensive—there were about 30 adults for 38 kids. This suggests the need for two adults for every three kids.
- The theme of taking away something from each activity (like a photo) worked well.
- Having technical facilitators for GPS and geocache is a good idea.
- Each activity needs a specific area for the activity (some different activity groups were led onto the same trail) and instruction needs to be clear about those areas—it can expose kids to more places if each has its own area and will result in decreased confusion about where to go.
- Consider a shorter day, especially for younger children. The teens wanted the day to continue.
- Give upfront instructions to youth to keep cell phones turned off and no iPods.
- Provide transportation as necessary.
- Provide snacks and meals.
- Let planning groups do what they do best. For example, the city had access to people who could serve as facilitators while the Forest Service had people who could best plan the research.

SEED

We had two adult facilitators per group, two adult observers per activity, and one adult data collector per activity. We also had adults running the registration desk and the meals. You'll want to consider how many people it will take to run your Youth Day. Also, you should plan on having items each child can take away from the experience.

Problems you might avoid—

- The hike was too strenuous for some kids, especially the younger ones.
- After the first round we had to change the timing on the camera safari (restricted prints of photos to one per child) and the etchings/rubbings to stay in time limits (since this was in two parts we decided to use half the time on one part and half on the other).
- The batteries for the cameras were a problem. We needed better quality batteries and recommend changing to fresh batteries between each group.
- Simplify the geocache instructions because kids were not that engaged when listening about satellites, etc.—they got engaged when they could hold the GPS units.
- Make lesson plans well in advance of outings (one of the lessons was written onsite right before facilitator training).

SEED

Make sure you change batteries on cameras often. Keep the age and education of level of the children in mind when deciding on instructions.

Conclusions

A survey of Los Angeles County (southern California) residents found that less than half the respondents had visited a national forest, state park, or open space preserve outside of a city during the height of travel season for even a 1-hour excursion (Tierney, Dahl and Chavez 1998). In a study of 50 years of use of various public lands in the United States, national parks in Japan, and national parks in Spain, Pergrams and Zaradic (2008) reported an ongoing and fundamental shift away from nature-based recreation. At the same time, consider that the primary role played by diet and physical activity in emotional and physical well-being is complemented by secondary roles played by connections to nature and social communities (Pretty, Griffin, Sellens and Pretty 2003). These authors suggest that closeness to nature increases sense of well-being, as well as the likelihood of understanding of and care for nature, and its rediscovery, can lead to transformations in people and nature. It also suggests that disconnections are harmful – both to individuals and to societies. How then do we make the reconnections? How do we save our children from nature-deficit disorder (Louv 2005)? You can plant the SEED! Have a Youth Day.

We're happy to assist in whatever ways we can and ask that you contact us as needed.

Who to Contact and How to Obtain Activity Caches

Either author can answer questions for you.

Obtain caches with activity items for Camera Safari, Etchings/Rubbings, Geocache, or Nature Scavenger Hunt from:

John Fehr, Manager,
San Dimas Technology & Development Center,
(909) 599-1267,
e-mail: jfehr@fs.fed.us

Note that if you use our caches then we do expect you to send data from your Youth Day to Dr. Chavez at:

Dr. Debbie Chavez,
Supervisory Research Social Scientist,
Pacific Southwest Research Station,
4955 Canyon Crest Dr.,
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If you decide to conduct a Youth Day and do not need to borrow our materials then please do collect data and send it to Dr. Chavez:

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Acknowledgments

We are thankful for the Kids in the Woods funding that allowed us to obtain everything needed for four activity caches. We are grateful to the following groups for their active participation in the first Youth Day: the American Recreation Coalition, especially Derrick Crandall, the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, the Angeles National Forest, and the San Bernardino National Forest Association. We also thank our staffs at the San Dimas Technology and Development Center and the Pacific Southwest Research Station for their insights and active participation.

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Collecting Wood or Pinecones

Purpose: To teach children how to make different types of campfires.

Materials:

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Teach children about the different ways to build a campfire (Teepee fire, Star fire, Platform/Log Cabin fire, etc.) and the purpose of each type of fire.
2. Divide children into small groups; each group has a leader.
3. Assign each group a particular type of fire to make.
4. Children wander around area looking for different sized pieces of wood or logs that will help them make their assigned fire.
5. Each group will build their fire with the help of their leader.
6. Have children walk around and observe the fires made by the other groups.

Artistic Session

Purpose: To have children make a collage of things they have collected and pictures they have taken while exploring nature and to increase interest of our natural environment.

Materials: Paper, glue, crayons/makers, glitter, scissors, printer

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Have children collect different items from the area to use in a collage (i.e., leaves, sticks, berries, small pine cones, etc.).
2. Print off a few pictures that the children took while participating in the Camera Safari activity.
3. Let children cut pictures, arrange their pieces of nature, and use the art supplies to create a collage of what they found during their time spent in the wilderness.

Artistic Session

Purpose: To have children create something that could live in the natural environment that they have been visiting.

Materials: Paper, crayons/markers, glitter, pencils, scissors, other art materials.

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Have children invent their own animal that might live in the woods.
2. Draw or design this animal on a piece of paper.
3. Have children write down what their animal is called and information about their animal (does it live in a nest, does it fly, can it run fast, etc.).
4. Have children present their animal to the group.

Beach Play

Purpose: To have children spend time outdoors and work together with their group.

Materials: A variety toys to make sand castles- enough for each group to have their own set of equipment.

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Divide children into small groups.
2. Give each group their supplies and tell them that they have a set time (20-30 minutes) to build the best sand castle.
3. Select a few leaders to be the judges and decide on the ‘best’ sand castle.

Wii Station with Fishing Game/Fishing

Purpose: To allow children to experience fishing via technology and real life fishing.

Materials: Wii station and fishing game, fishing poles, fishing bait.

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Divide the group so that some are inside using the Wii station and some are outside fishing in the stream.
2. Set a time limit. After time is up, have groups switch places.
3. After the groups have finished both activities, discuss whether they liked real fishing or the fishing game better and why.

Mountain Roller Blading/ Mountain Boarding

Purpose: To have children remain active and enjoy their time outdoors.

Materials: Skateboards, different sized roller blades.

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Have children divide up according to age.
2. Have each group race each other via roller blades and then race via skateboards.
3. Have the winners of each group race each other in a final race.

Hike with a Guidebook

Purpose: To have children experience the outdoors, appreciate nature, and learn about the birds and plants and their guidebooks.

Materials: Trail mix, water bottles, guidebooks, pencils

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Give each child a bag of trail mix and a water bottle.
2. Give each child a guidebook that has pictures and information of certain plants, trees, or animals.
3. Let children know how long the hike will be and about how long it will take to complete.
4. Tell children to check off the items in their guidebook if they see them while hiking.
5. Set out on hike and enjoy the time spent in nature (leaders can teach the children different camp songs while hiking).

Hunt for the Oldest Tree

Purpose: To teach children how to decipher the age of a tree, and to improve their observation skills.

Materials:

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Tell children to count the rings on a tree stump to determine how old a tree was.
2. Allow children to search for tree stumps and figure out how old a tree was.
3. Have children search for the tallest tree, the shortest tree, the widest tree, etc.

Hike Set up to Focus on a Story about Native American Cultures

Purpose: To teach the children about the Native American cultures

Materials: Native American clothes, games, props for the leaders throughout the hike.

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Have the group set out on a short hike.
2. Along the trail have leaders stationed at different points dressed as Native Americans.
3. Have each leader discuss an element of Native American Culture (how they found food, how they made clothes, games that children played).
4. After the hike, have a few games that Native Americans would have played set up and allow the group to play with those games.

Exploration (Combination of activities)

Purpose: To allow children a chance to explore the area and appreciate the natural environment.

Materials: B lankets, jars to collect bugs.

Meeting Spot:

Process:

1. Set out several large blankets and tables for children to sit on.
2. Let children explore the area freely.
3. Children can collect bugs, rocks, or fossils.
4. Allow children to observe wildlife and the atmosphere that they are in.

1. Toss a name game (group juggle):

Group forms a circle. The leader will say someone's name in the group and tosses the ball or object. Make sure everyone gets the ball once or object, ball/object should end up back in the leaders hands (if you do not know the person's name ask, remember who tossed the ball to you). Do another round passing the ball/object to the same person. As the object is being tossed you may add additional objects.

2. I like people who...:

Group forms a circle. Each person will sit in a chair or stand by a marker. The leader will be in the middle and will state their name and say something they like. Example "I like people who wear jeans," "I like people who wear glasses," "I like people who wear tennis shoes." If you are wearing jeans you must find a new spot, but it cannot be the two seats/markers to your left or right. The person in the middle will also find a chair or marker. The person who does not find a seat goes in the middle and the game continues.

3. Copy cat or find the leader:

All players stand in a circle facing the center. One player is removed from the circle while the leader is selected. The absent player returns and takes position in the center of the circle. The leader imitates movements which are copied by the rest of the players in the circle (stretching, clapping, patting your head, stomping your feet, jumping on one foot). The player in the center tries to guess who is starting it. Once the leader is identified he/she leaves the circle. A new leader is selected and the game continues. The person who was the leader becomes the person who is the guesser.

4. Line up by your birthday (month/day):

With out talking, the group will line up by their birthday (month and day) or by shoe size.

5. Cat and mouse:

Everyone divides into pairs and then have them link their elbows with their partners. They should keep their elbow bent and their outside hand on their waist. One volunteer is needed to be the “Cat” and the other to be the “Mouse.” The Cat is it and the Mouse is the runner. The cat tries to tag the mouse, but the mouse can avoid being tagged by linking elbows with the free elbow of any pair on the playing field. When the leader shouts, “Go!” the cat chases the mouse. If the cat catches the mouse, the mouse switches roles with the cat, and the cat becomes the mouse.

6. Human knot:

Stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder and place your hands in the center.

Have each individual hold hands with someone who is not next to them with their left hand.

Repeat same procedure with right hand; make sure people are not holding both with the same person or the person to their immediate right or left. Once everyone is holding hands with someone to try to untangle your human knot.

7. Pocket scavenger hunt:

Divide group into two – four teams. Call out items that would be common to the group and can be found on them. Such as: a shoelace, a sock, blue jackets, pencils, etc. The first team to bring the item to the leader gets a point. The team with the most points wins.

8. Giants, elves, and wizards:

This game is based on the same concept as rock, paper, and scissors. Instead of using just the hands, we use the whole body and it's a lot more active. Everyone should first become familiar with each of the three different types of beings, their actions, and their functions.

"Giants" stand on their toes, stretch their toes, and stretch their bodies as tall as possible, spread their arms, look very, very fierce, and shout, "Giants!" as loud as they can. Because the giants are strong, they can overpower the tiny elves.

"Elves" squat down, and pull in their shoulders, and look very, very tiny as they whisper their names. Cover your ears with your hands. However, because they are so clever, they can easily trick the wizards into casting the wrong spell.

"Wizards" stand hunched over with their hands trusted forward in the best spell casting fashion while saying their name in a strange and magical manner. They can fool the giants.

Note: Giants beat elves, elves beat wizards, wizards beat giants.

Practice these characters several times before playing the game. Divide the group into two teams, each with a goal line at either end of a field about 15 yards long. Each team huddles at its goal line and decides which of the three characters its members will portray (the whole team must choose only one character for each round). The teams then face off in the center line between the goals. On the first three counts everyone says, "Giants, Elves, and Wizards," assuming the proper voice and stance for each character. On the fourth and final count, each team shouts the name of its chosen character while taking the appropriate posture.

If it ends up with elves facing giants, the giants can capture the elves by tagging them as they run for safety behind their own goal line. OR it would be elves chasing wizards or wizards chasing giants. Any player who is tagged by the overpowering team before reaching his/her goal line becomes part of that team. Play continues until one team totally engulfs the other.