

Utah's Great Outdoors Open Space Project Phase 1 Results of Conference Working Group Sessions

This is the first step in a three-phase process for identifying projects and addressing open needs and projects in Utah. The focus is on lands that provide *amenity* (e.g., parks, recreation, and esthetics) and *ecological service* (e.g., wetlands and wildlife habitat and corridors) benefits, based on the opinions of people who are interested in open space issues throughout the state. In Phase 1, we collected input from people who attended the Utah's Great Outdoors conference on February 17, 1999 in Salt Lake City, Utah. These results were then used in a mail survey during the summer (Phase 2) and 22 public meetings (Phase 3) in the winter.

Conference Overview

Over 250 people attended the Utah's Great Outdoors conference on February 17, 1999 in Salt Lake City. The conference was organized by the Utah Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Parks and Recreation, and supported by the Division of Wildlife Resources, KSL Radio, *Salt Lake Tribune*, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Utah Travel Council, Utah State University (USU), and several other state and federal agencies. The conference theme was "outdoor recreation, conservation, and resource protection in Utah...the next 20 years...the next 1,000,000 people." Speakers during the first half of the day included Governor Mike Leavitt, Ted Stewart, Kathleen Clarke, John Kimball, and Courtland Nelson of the Department of Natural Resources, and guests Jeff Packer, Fee Busby, Will Saforth, and Norma Hansen. The second half of the day featured small group working sessions developed and facilitated by USU's Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism and the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation. The purpose of the breakout sessions was to develop a list of open space and outdoor recreation priorities for different Utah regions and communities for the next 20 years.

Working Group Process

Participants were divided into small working groups based on the Utah planning district in which they live (see Table 1). Using the nominal group process, participants generated a list of regional and local recreation and open space needs on flip charts. Rather than address agriculture or commercial zoning, facilitators asked participants to focus on needs related to parks, trails, greenways, wildlife areas, wetlands, and other natural areas that are available for public use, recreation, and tourism. To prioritize those needs, each person had six "votes" that could be distributed any way they wanted. The general process consisted of four steps: 1) silent generation of ideas in writing; 2) round robin recording of ideas on a flip chart; 3) discussion for clarification of the ideas; and, 4) individual voting on the ideas listed on the flip charts. Group facilitators then tallied and recorded the votes. This process was followed for two different questions (described below) that were developed and pilot-tested specifically for the conference.

There were 176 participants in 19 groups which included at least one group from each of the seven planning districts (Table 1). Group sizes ranged from 6 to 15 individuals, but most groups contained 9 to 12 participants. Below is a summary of results for the items that received the highest number of votes for both questions. Differences between the more urban, northern Utah planning districts (Wasatch Front, Mountainlands, and Bear River) and the more rural, central and southern Utah districts (Uintah Basin, Central, Southeastern, and Southwestern) are also discussed.

Table 1. Working group information.

Planning District	Counties	Number of Groups	Number of Participants
Bear River	Box Elder, Cache, Rich	1	15
Wasatch Front	Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake, Weber, Tooele	11	83
Mountainland	Utah, Wasatch, Summit	3	40
Uintah Basin	Duchesne, Daggett, Uintah	1	9
Central	Juab, Millard, Piute, Sanpete, Sevier, Wayne	1	10
Southeastern	Carbon, Emery, Grand, San Juan	1	9
Southwestern	Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, Washington	1	10
Totals		19	176

Results

Question 1: What do you feel are the most pressing outdoor recreation and open space needs in your region of the state for the next twenty years?

For Question 1, each participant was asked to contribute up to three ideas to the group's list--one item at a time, in round robin format. After clarification, participants in most groups were allowed to add a fourth idea before voting. This resulted in 414 individual open space needs being listed for Question 1, which was an average of 22 items per group. (The top ranked items for all groups are listed in Table 2 at the end of this section. A list of all items generated during Phase 1 is presented in the Phase 2 results).

Based on the highest ranked needs in *all* the groups, five general themes were identified as reflecting **statewide** concerns: 1) funding and fees; 2) identification, protection, and acquisition of critical recreation, wildlife, and other amenity resource areas; 3) communication, education, and constituency development; 4) maintenance of existing areas and facilities; and 5) regulatory or policy reform. Depending on the group, regulatory needs were either related to general recreation and open space policies or linked to other specific needs listed above (e.g., funding and fees).

For **northern Utah** districts (Bear River, Mountainlands, and Wasatch Front), the specific issues of concern are: 1) linear open space and recreation opportunities and canyon access; 2) open space protection, recreation access, and natural amenities in “developing” areas; 3) wildlife habitat; 4) recreation impacts, carrying capacity, and conflicts in canyons and high use areas; 5) Great Salt Lake/Utah Lake/river/wetlands protection; and 6) motorized and nonmotorized opportunities. Linear open space and recreation needs were clearly the most important concerns in northern Utah, and they were often related to the other needs (e.g., wildlife habitat). Trails, streams, and canals were highlighted for special protection.

In **rural Utah** districts (Uintah Basin, Central, Southeastern, and Southwestern) open space concerns were similar, but there was less emphasis on wetlands and wildlife protection and linear recreation opportunities, and more emphasis on: 1) historic/heritage resources, 2) protecting community and regional quality of life, 3) forging partnerships, and 4) area or site specific designation and acquisition of parks, sites, and trails. While linear open space resources were listed less often for rural districts than for northern Utah, specific trails and green space connections were still a concern in some regions, especially the Southwestern district.

Question 2: What are the most pressing outdoor recreation and open space problems or needs for specific towns and communities in your region of the state?

Question 2 was designed to get more community-focused needs than Question 1. There was less time available for question two, and, in most groups, participants only had the opportunity to contribute two ideas to the list, and one group did not finish the question. This was not a major problem, because there was considerable overlap with the results of Question 1, and community-based needs were often expressed for both questions. In the 18 groups that completed Question 2, a total of 242 needs were identified, for an average of 13 per group. (The top ranked items for all groups are listed in Table 2. A list of all items generated during Phase 1 is presented in the Phase 2 results)

Statewide the major themes resulting from Question 2 were: 1) funding, 2) trails and access to existing opportunities, 3) corridors and linkages between existing green areas, and 4) education (especially for children) and education-related opportunities.

In ***northern Utah*** districts, protecting open space and recreational opportunities in urban and “developing” areas are the crucial concerns. Related to that is the need to increase the emphasis on city parks in general, and either provide more off-road vehicle (ORV) opportunities *or* deal with ORV impacts, depending on the specific group. Four groups also indicated a need for more planning in general or for regional or inter-agency planning, and three groups pointed to the need to improve fishing, water quality, or both. Needs that were priorities for one or two groups are: 1) improving fishing and/or water quality, 2) wildlife habitat, 3) air quality, 4) protecting riparian areas, 5) dealing with zoning, and 6) developing state standards for development. Specific areas or resources needing attention include the following: Bonneville Shoreline Trail, Weber and Ogden River watershed protection and fishing quality, renovating park and recreation resources in Provo, and the need to renovate facilities in low income neighborhoods.

Trails and funding were also the highest ranked concerns in ***rural Utah*** planning districts. For trails, the Piute, Great Western, and Three Rivers (connecting Moab and Spanish Valley) were specifically mentioned. Education needs were also important, and related to this is the need to build a multi-agency center in Torrey, and the need to help develop an understanding of community quality of life and the role of recreation in community economic development. ORV and recreation development issues were *not* among the higher ranked needs, but better inventory and planning needs were highlighted in two of the rural Utah groups. Other site specific needs identified for rural Utah are: developing parks in Vernal, renovating facilities at Piute Reservoir, improving water quality in the San Rafael drainage, and developing regional water park opportunities for Sand Hollow and Wide Hollow in the southwestern part of the State.

For both study questions, there was more interest in developing economic opportunities and local funding and job opportunities expressed by participants from rural planning districts than those from northern Utah. Conversely, participants from northern Utah were more likely to be interested in setting aside places to recreate and in using open space to control growth and alleviate congestion.

Phase 2 Surveys

The nominal group process is a facilitated *visioning* or brainstorming exercise. As such, the working group results described above provided an *initial step* in the overall research process. The results were used in follow up surveys to conference participants and other key informants asking for more input on the needs and priorities generated in the working groups. Survey participants were asked to rank all the items generated by the working groups, and to rank the importance of 25 different land and resource protection methods (e.g., easements) for addressing the open space needs in their region of the state. Along with the survey questionnaire, the mailings included a three-page summary of the open space protection “tools” so that all participants had at least a basic level of knowledge of these methods. The full set of Phase 1 results and the mail survey results are presented in the Phase 2 results.

Table 2. Highest Priority Recreation and Open Space Needs for Each Planning District Group

Priorities by Planning District	Number Votes	Percent¹
Bear River District		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Funding	20	22%
Local community growth planning	12	13%
Educate people to take care of resources	11	12%
Maintain existing facilities	9	10%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Require public school curriculum in recreation and outdoor use and ethics—educate adults, communities, and children	15	20%
Funding	13	17%
More linkage between open space areas (e.g., trails, bike paths, etc.)	11	15%
Sales tax for recreation extended to municipalities	8	11%
Wasatch Front District (Group 1)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Funding independent of state legislature	6	13%
Preserve the wetlands and wildlife areas surrounding the Great Salt Lake (buffer zone)	4	8%
Revoke the no-net-loss of private property view that the state legislature has	4	8%
Create a coordinating body	4	8%
Rehabilitate existing recreation infrastructure	4	8%
Expand and tie trail systems together across all ownerships	5	12%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Renovate existing facilities	5	12%
Lack of a process to stop loss of property and open space to development (keep lands open)	5	12%

¹percentages are based on the number of votes the item received by group members compared to the total number of votes for all items listed for each question. Percentages do not add-up to 100% because only the top four to six priorities are listed for each question and region.

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Wasatch Front District (Group 2)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Identify, map, and set aside for use existing roads, trails, travel ways, and RS2477 right-of-ways	10	19%
Acquire and provide public and sportsmans access points through private property to and state federally operated and regulated areas (river trails, wilderness areas, etc.)	6	11%
Hold municipalities, counties, and developers accountable to preserve and protect open spaces	6	11%
Build a network of walking, hiking, and biking trails (multiple-use trails) and parks	6	11%
Implement local, state, and federal regulations that would increase incentives for private landowners to conserve wildlife habitat and open space	5	9%
Wendover Interpretive Center to capture natural resources interests of visitors to the state of Utah	4	7%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Increase financial and regulatory opportunities for private landowners to preserve wildlife habitat and open space	9	19%
More designated areas, parking, and trails for off road motorized vehicles	8	17%
Increase experiences and education in outdoor settings among school children	7	15%
Too much development of homes, businesses, etc. without regard to preserving open space and visual values	7	15%
Wasatch Front District (Group 3)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Insure access to trails, canyons, and public lands (anglers, equestrians, etc.)	8	19%
More local outdoor recreation environmental conservation education opportunities, particularly for youth	6	14%
Identify and secure a steady source of funding	4	9%
Preserve open space in urban areas	4	9%
Reduce conflicts and misunderstandings among the various users	4	9%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Funding for local communities to purchase and manage open space	8	19%
More urban open space (e.g. parks, playing fields, greenways, etc.)	6	14%
Require city planning and ordinances to include open space in new housing developments	6	14%

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Wasatch Front District (Group 4)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Publicly acceptable funding mechanisms (i.e., public must support means of funding)	10	15%
Loss of habitat from urban sprawl	7	11%
Easily accessible urban recreational sites	7	11%
Management of heavy recreation in riparian zones	7	11%
Assure appropriate access to public land	6	9%
Protect and use the Great Salt Lake (e.g., for outdoor recreation, migratory birds, habitat, and eco-tourism purposes)	6	9%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Safe and convenient parks and walkways near neighborhoods (developed and undeveloped)--urban wild areas near neighborhoods	11	17%
More aggressive and progressive efforts towards protecting critical properties and trails	11	17%
Pressure from rapid conversion of rural landscapes to suburban /bedroom landscapes	8	13%
Renovate and upgrade existing parks	7	11%
Wasatch Front District (Group 5)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Preserve native habitats	7	15%
Expand opportunities for diverse recreation	6	13%
Establish goals of carrying capacity and develop systems of control to avoid deterioration	4	8%
Establish "vehicle free" (non-motorized) zones	4	8%
Preserve access to publicly owned land on Wasatch Front	4	8%
Public and private development of priorities to spend available money	4	8%
Preserve native habitats	6	13%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Maintain open space (Wasatch Front)	5	11%
Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) and All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) opportunities (Wasatch Front)	4	9%
Develop community recreation sites (multiple use)	4	9%
Maintain and expand access to public lands	4	9%

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Establish nature learning centers (ecological and environmental)	4	9%
Wasatch Front District (Group 6)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Improve fishing quality	5	14%
Emphasize more education in our schools on recreation and wildlife	5	14%
Identify and preserve the remaining open spaces on the Wasatch Front	5	14%
Work toward land acquisitions and easements along rivers	4	11%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Provide quality urban recreational opportunities to an ever-increasing Wasatch Front population	7	19%
Improve water and fishing quality along the Weber and Ogden River drainages	6	17%
Improve air quality (Provo and Orem)	5	14%
Wasatch Front District (Group 7)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Manage and protect wildlife, streams, river ways, riparian corridors, wetlands, and open spaces	7	19%
Protect public access to Wasatch Front recreation areas (e.g., canyons, trails, parks, and streams)	6	17%
Manage people and establish carrying capacity (i.e., find ways to handle crowds and avoid over use in the Tri-Canyon area)	5	14%
<i>Question 2</i>		
A need to develop a responsible land ethic	7	19%
Control urban sprawl	5	14%
Develop riparian parkways (e.g., stream restoration, trails, and parks)	5	14%
Funding in general, and specifically to establish education programs	5	14%

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Wasatch Front District (Group 8)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
More green and buffer space in planned developments and neighborhood parks	6	17%
Protection and acquisition of functional open space corridors of all kinds	6	17%
Need for more public hiking and biking trails and motorized trails	5	14%
Networking and communication, constituency representation, education, and enforcement of diverse uses	5	14%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Preserve open space corridors and neighborhood parks	7	29%
State guidelines for space requirements for parks and community development	6	25%
Lack of regional outlook, need increased coordination	5	21%
Conflicts of interest in making zoning decisions	5	21%
Wasatch Front District (Group 9)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Overuse of existing facilities--need to expand amount of areas near populations (e.g., boating, Off-Highway Vehicles)	7	13%
Increase protection, interpretation, and access to the Great Salt Lake	6	11%
Canyon and trail access issues	5	9%
Outdoor recreation education related to conservation and stewardship ethics	5	9%
Designate trails or areas for jogging, walking, and off-road vehicle use	5	9%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Community trails and inter-connections with island parks	8	19%
Community-based cooperative planning (state, federal, local, and private)	8	19%
Fully develop and complete the Bonneville Trail	6	14%
Wasatch Front District (Group 10)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Contiguous open space corridors, especially rivers, streams, shorelines, and canals	9	25%
Ensure public access to public lands	6	17%
Complete urban trail system (e.g., Bonneville-Jordan Parkway Trail)	4	11%

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Local open space, but not athletic (natural)	3	8%
More focus (preserve open space, education, information) on national historic trails (pony express, Great Western trail, Mormon pioneer, California)	3	8%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Communities need a coordinated long-term strategy for open space that considers regional context and funding	7	20%
Build more parks (local, etc.) broadly defined	6	17%
Various funding mechanisms (state, federal, and regional) should be developed for all local governments	4	11%
Better road systems to accommodate bikes, pedestrians and All-Terrain Vehicle access to services, gas, food, etc.	4	11%
Wasatch Front District (Group 11)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Concern for “traditional development” (sprawl) and the influence and impacts on open spaces and other natural amenities	9	25%
Integrate recreation planning with other values and concerns (clean air and water, wildlife habitat, etc.)	6	17%
Develop a vision and strategy for managing recreation in high-use areas of public lands (e.g., in canyons)	5	14%
Not enough places for diversified outdoor recreation activities--especially for the “10 to 16 years” group (trails, mountain/bmx bikes, off-highway vehicle/dirt bikes, etc.)	3	8%
More attention to impacts of new development and population--need an enforced ratio or require space and facilities to unit of population (density standards)--especially with growth	3	8%
<i>Question 2</i>		
More “interpreted” habitat and wildlife areas for public appreciation and support on or near wetlands (e.g., kiosks, nature centers, wildlife appreciation)--find ways to fund this amenity and opportunity--look to club and corporate help.	7	22%
More small parks within walking distance of neighborhoods--look for opportunities to acquire small lots for “vest pocket” or larger parks	6	19%
Long-term plan for Bonneville Trail, City Creek Canyon, and others--stop obtrusive development--have a strategy or policy in place, especially in foothills with subdivision.	5	16%
More attention and funds for restoring and improving low income neighborhoods. Do not pass them by--include open space	5	16%

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Mountainlands District (Group 1)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Funding mechanism (statewide) to address pressing outdoor recreation and open space needs in Utah (similar to Outdoor Grant Program in CO)	8	10%
Identify, protect, and secure access to current open spaces while still available	8	10%
Education program regarding outdoor recreation programs (why a need, where they are, how they could be used)	7	9%
Protect large tracts of critical wildlife habitat	6	8%
More non-motorized trail opportunities close to home--maintain and improve existing trails	5	6%
Create statewide media program to sell our needs on regional basis (open space and recreation)	5	6%
<i>Question 2</i> (no comments--insufficient time)		
Mountainlands District (Group 2)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Community education for conservation, multiple use, general use, and being more responsible (educate young and old)	15	18%
Lack of trails for family use, and interconnecting trails (e.g., urban business)	11	13%
Maintenance of current facilities and management	6	7%
Greater availability of family-orientated recreation	6	7%
Develop open space with high density housing (e.g., conservation easements)	5	6%
Statewide integrated fee for dispersed use--through agencies	5	6%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Comprehensive counties-wide trails system	27	32%
Plan and improve parks in cities for family uses and soccer fields	14	17%
Preserve local open spaces in towns (e.g., the Dimple Dell)	11	13%
Money !!	10	12%
Mountainlands District (Group 3)		
<i>Question 1</i>		
State level legislative support for local funding options.	10	13%
Youth education on resources, stewardship, and participation	7	9%

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Maintain all existing state parks and public lands better	6	8%
Increase recreation and open space accordingly with population	5	6%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Develop an endowment program to address the lack of funding sources for recreation and open space	12	15%
Renovate deteriorating park and trail facilities (Provo)	8	10%
Preserve functional watersheds (e.g., Upper Weber and Upper Provo rivers)	7	9%
Prevent further scarring of Wasatch Front by Off-Road Vehicles (ORV)	7	9%
Central District		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Ongoing facility development and maintenance fund	8	13%
Dollars go where use is	7	12%
Better approach to Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) management on public land	4	7%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Better access management.	6	10%
Dependable operation and management funding for Piute and Great Western Trail System.	6	10%
Uintah Basin District		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Develop an area-wide (city, county, state, federal, tribal, private) management plan for development, management, and protection of our resources and then implement it (i.e., wildlife and recreational resources)	9	17%
Increase partnerships between private, local, federal, and tribal entities	8	15%
Protect critical areas such as drinking water, wildlife, agriculture, watersheds, etc.	6	11%
Figure out how to pay for operation and maintenance of aging infrastructures of recreational facilities.	5	9%
Develop and establish a community identity and address issues such as quality of life, open space, recreation values, etc.	11	20%
General funding for such things as open space and outdoor recreation facilities	8	15%

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Develop quality inventory of resources (e.g., water, recreation, wildlife) and protect the places that are most critical	8	15%
Develop additional pocket parks and green space in the Vernal area	7	13%
Southeast District		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Protect public lands and resources which includes stewardship, education, and controls	10	19%
Find long range funding source for facilities and infrastructure	10	19%
Provide more recreational opportunities without degrading the resources	5	9%
Manage recreational growth to maintain the quality of the experience	5	9%
Protect the quality of life for southeast Utah	5	9%
Protect regional significant, historic, and heritage features	5	9%
<i>Question 2</i>		
Need to obtain land and funding for parks and recreation facilities	10	14%
Setting aside bias--thinking outside the box with regards to economic opportunity associated with recreational opportunities	7	10%
Build a trail system linking areas in Moab and Spanish Valley to each other and to trailheads and sites outside the community	7	10%
Outdoor education programs in public schools	6	11%
Maintain the quality of life in Emery County for Emery County residents or compensate financially for impact	6	11%
Water quality on the rivers and reservoirs of the San Rafael drainage	6	11%
Southwest District		
<i>Question 1</i>		
Acquisition of regional park properties (e.g. Confluence Park, trail heads, Austin properties [Boulder] addition to Anasazi [Springdale], Kanarraville)	7	12%
Education--children and adult awareness for protecting and enjoying	4	7%
Coordination, acquisition, and construction of the Three Rivers Trail in Washington County (Gunlock to Zion)	4	7%
More protection of southwest Utah's prehistoric and historic resources and utilizing more Native Americans	4	7%
Preserve access to public lands (through private lands)	4	7
<i>Question 2</i>		

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Small communities have insufficient funds for purchase of critical lands or development of recreation facilities (e.g., Confluence Project and Three River Trail)	9	14%
Urban sprawl--improper development into open spaces	7	11%
Money, money, money, and technical assistance	7	11%
City planning--emphasize recreation planning	5	8%
Developing regional water park opportunities (Sand Hollow and Wide Hollow)	5	8%