

Parks, People and Partnerships

by

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Abstract

National Park Service (NPS) units across the U.S. receive hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, but visitor demographics have generally not matched the increasing diversity of the U.S. population. The purpose of this study is to provide the NPS and community-based organizations (CBOs) with useful information and tools to improve their outreach efforts through partnerships.

This study focuses on the Los Angeles metropolitan area because of its diverse population and relative proximity to several national park sites. In addition to the review of relevant literature and examination of model partnership programs, the study is based on interviews with NPS staff and 15 CBOs representing faith-based organizations, female organizations, urban nature centers, and youth organizations. While our interviews covered multiple topics, the primary focus was on the challenges and benefits to partnerships. Despite recognition of perceived barriers, all interviewees were interested in building partnerships. Furthermore, both NPS and CBO participants saw common benefits afforded by such arrangements.

Our recommendations focus on three domains of effort for NPS focus: improving information exchange, strengthening logistical support, and enhancing cultural awareness and staff diversity. By addressing these areas, we believe that the NPS will facilitate partnerships with community-based organizations and meaningfully engage underserved audiences not currently visiting national parks.

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Chapter 1. The Context

National Park Service Mission

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

To achieve this mission, the National Park Service adheres to the following guiding principles:

Excellent Service: Providing the best possible service to park visitors and partners.

Productive Partnerships: Collaborating with federal, state, tribal, and local governments, private organizations, and businesses to work toward common goals.

Citizen Involvement: Providing opportunities for citizens to participate in the decisions and actions of the National Park Service.

Heritage Education: Educating park visitors and the general public about their history and common heritage.

Outstanding Employees: Empowering a diverse workforce committed to excellence, integrity, and quality work.

Employee Development: Providing developmental opportunities and training so employees have the “tools to do the job” safely and efficiently.

Wise Decisions: Integrating social, economic, environmental, and ethical considerations into the decision-making process.

Effective Management: Instilling a performance management philosophy that fosters creativity, focuses on results, and requires accountability at all levels.

Research and Technology: Incorporating research findings and new technologies to improve work practices, products, and services.

Shared Capabilities: Sharing technical information and expertise with public and private land managers.

Project Goals and Problem Statement

The National Park Service (NPS) receives over 400 million visitors a year. These visitors, however, are demographically a relatively homogeneous group. Finding ways to encourage minority and other underserved groups to connect with this extensive national resource is a major challenge for the agency. At the invitation of the NPS, we explore in this project the ways in which the NPS could address this problem. Specifically, we focus on the potential of partnerships between underserved groups and the NPS in the Los Angeles area.

The NPS has a responsibility to serve the entire population of the United States. Southern California's population is large and diverse and has several major NPS sites in the region. This makes it a particularly appropriate focus for addressing the possibilities of partnership as a means of connecting more people with the NPS.

It is imperative that the NPS find ways to increase awareness and create meaningful engagement opportunities for diverse audiences. As current and future taxpayers and voters, urban youth, senior citizens, and people of color will play an increasing role in the decision-making process regarding the fate of the national park system.

In this introductory chapter we briefly summarize recent visitor trends focusing on demographics and regional variation, as well as the demographic profile of our study region. We then discuss the partnership concept and the benefits it can offer in this context.

NPS Visitorship

Information about ethnic composition is more readily available for the U.S. than for NPS visitorship. We draw on the information provided by Floyd (1999), which is based on parks in California, Colorado, Washington, Virginia and New Mexico. As such the comparison offered in Figure 1.1 is not a definitive analysis, but it nonetheless provides a general picture of visitors and usage by different ethnic groups.

NPS Annual Visitorship by Ethnicity

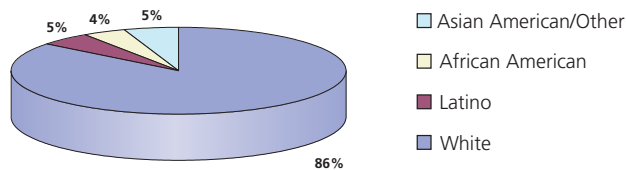
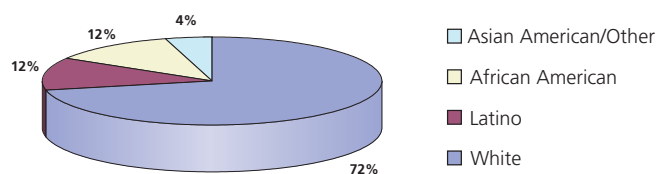


Figure 1.1

U.S. population by ethnicity

Source: U.S. Census Factfinder, 2005.

U.S. Population by Ethnicity



NPS visitorship at national parks in California, Colorado, Washington, Virginia, and New Mexico

Source: Floyd, 1999.

The contrast between the two pie charts is important. While the annual visitorship includes many millions, the demographic distribution shows that White/Non-Hispanic groups are over-represented relative to the country's population. By contrast, both the Latino and African American groups are clearly underrepresented, with less than one-tenth of visitors and almost one-quarter of the population.

Below, figure 1.2 provides a sense of the volume of visitors to U.S. National Parks. According to the National Park Service Comprehensive Survey of the American Public Technical Report (2001), approximately one third of the U.S. population had visited a national park within the last two years and 86% of visitors to a National Park unit reported an intention to visit a National Park unit again within the next year. The annual report produced by the TIAA reports on visitation to national parks. A brief review of a selection of their data is included in Appendix A.

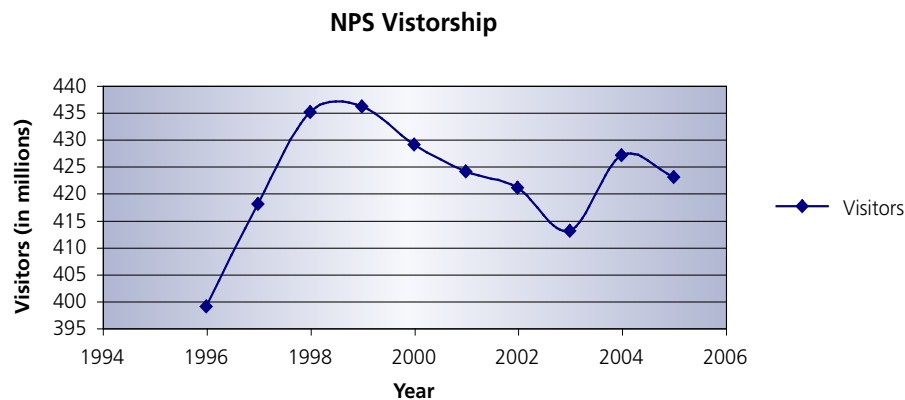


Figure 1.2 NPS Visitorship in millions between 1996 through 2006. Source: Adapted from the NPS Public Use Statistics Office.

Why California?

Our reasons for focusing on California include its current and projected ethnic and demographic diversity as well as the important role the outdoors plays in the lives of Californians. California, with a population of almost 34 million in 2000, is a minority-majority state, which means that collectively people of color outnumber the White/Non-Hispanic majority of the country as a whole. Given the under-representation of these groups among National Parks visitors, the state provides a particularly appropriate focus.

The projected changes in California's population over the next several decades are dramatic. By 2020, the projection is for a 31% increase compared to 2000. This change is attributed to increases in ethnic population and immigration. In fact, by 2020, Latinos are estimated to comprise 58% of the population and Asians are estimated to increase by 55% (Sheffield, 2006). In the subsequent two decades, with a projection of 50 million Californians, Latinos will outnumber whites by nearly 2:1, and Asian Americans will comprise nearly 15% of the state's population (Figure 1.3). The U.S. Census, Factfinder (Accessed 2006) further projects that by 2040 people of color will make up nearly half of the entire country's population (Sheffield, 2006).

Ethnicity as a Share of Total California Population, 2000

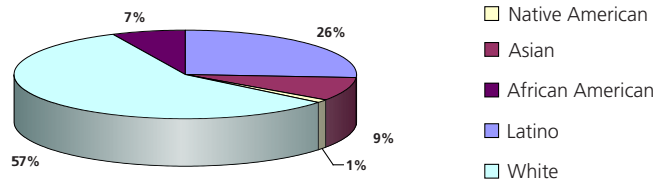
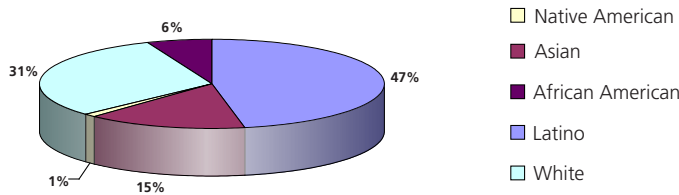


Figure 1.3 Ethnicity as share of total California population in 2000 and 2040.

Source: California Department of Social Services, 2001.

Ethnicity as a Share of Total California Population, 2040



Other demographic trends of importance to the NPS’s long-range goals are changes in the senior citizens and urban youth populations. More people are either at the end of, or the beginning of, their life span than ever before in California. The number of people over 65 will double between 2000 and 2020. Baby boomers – many of whom are well-educated, have disposable income, an aversion to slowing down, enjoy traveling, and an outdoors lifestyle – will also have increasing amounts of leisure time in their retirement years. Urban youth, another skyrocketing group, tends to be more sedentary, less fit, and less familiar with outdoor recreation. Nonetheless, they are adventurers and seek fun. To maintain active lifestyles they need role models, skills, equipment and urban opportunities (Sheffield, 2006).

People of color share many of the same outdoor recreational interests as other Californians but have distinct preferences as well. Californian Latinos prefer to recreate in extended family groups, especially in highly developed recreational and forested settings with water features that involve on-site meal preparation and accommodate a range of activities. One major reason they like to be outdoors is to relax and get relief from the stress of daily life (Chavez, 2003; Sheffield, 2006). The most preferred outdoor activities among Latino Americans include day hiking, camping, picnicking, visiting nature centers and viewing and photographing scenery. Latinos are less likely to visit historic sites, photograph wildlife and wildflowers, sightsee or drive for pleasure (Cordell et. al., 2005 as cited in Sheffield, 2006).

Latinos also have similar and distinct attitudes toward recreation as other Californians, as indicated by Sheffield’s (2006) recent studies. They are more likely to view parks as beneficial to public health and safety, yet still believe many parks are unsafe and warrant additional safety enforcement. They believe parks help create jobs, promote tourism and they are supportive of private businesses in parks. Latinos believe that more campgrounds are needed at parks. They support additional recreational opportunities, land acquisition and facility development. They are also more supportive than other

Californians to increased taxes, higher user fees, and bond sales, and reallocating general fund and lottery money to support these endeavors (CORP, 2003; State Parks, as cited in Sheffield, 2006).

Asian Americans have some overlapping outdoor preferences as Latinos and other Americans. They prefer walking for pleasure, family gatherings, landscaping, driving for pleasure, attending outdoor concerts, and picnicking. They are more likely to mountain climb and attend family gatherings than other ethnic groups. They are less likely than other ethnic groups to visit a wilderness area or hunt (Cordell et al., 2005, as cited in Sheffield Presentation, 2006).

Californians' love affair with the outdoors was among the many reasons we chose to focus our study area in this state. As this love affinity of the outdoors continues to increase, more Californians are likely to visit national parks and other outdoor recreational areas. Activities including hiking, biking, family gatherings, walking, camping, sightseeing, and wildlife viewing are all projected to be in higher demand by 2020 (Sheffield, 2006).

Although California offers a very diverse state with a variety of communities, we felt it would be important to focus our study on one region of the state. Los Angeles County is a region of many outdoor recreation opportunities and great ethnic diversity. In 2006, the county's population was comprised of more Latinos than whites (~46% vs. ~30%), as well as sizable representation of Asian Americans (~13%) and African Americans (~10%). (U.S. Census Factfinder, 2005).

Why Partnerships?

To examine ways for NPS to reach greater numbers of the underrepresented and underserved groups in the Los Angeles region, we focused on opportunities for partnerships. These can entail many kinds of arrangements, varying with the needs and missions of the partnering organizations. The success of these efforts will also range widely depending on the ownership the partners take of the project and the perceived benefits. Thus, it is important to consider all the parties involved in the partnership well before a project can be launched.

Partnership: "an on-going arrangement between two or more parties, based upon satisfying specifically identified mutual needs. Thus a true partnership is characterized by its durability over time, its inclusiveness, and its sense of focused cooperation and implicit flexibility."
(Uhlik, 2000)

Why Partnerships are Valuable

Outdoor recreation literature suggests that a more collaborative effort in wild land area management would benefit not only the managing agencies, but also the visitors and neighboring communities of outdoor recreation areas (Anderson 2000; La Page 2000; Tuler & Webler 2000; Uhlik 1995). Park units as a whole, park visitors, volunteers, and neighboring communities all may benefit from a more collaborative planning process and greater public participation in decision making through partnering.

Meet Community Needs

Partnering with advocacy or community groups can help natural resource agencies improve the likelihood that community interests and needs are being met. They provide the agency a mechanism to regularly communicate with community members and leaders, as well as better incorporate or consider community or interest group needs in decision making. For instance, technical experts from a natural resource agency may approach a problem in a fashion that seems perfectly acceptable to them but due to lack of contact, may have unwittingly ignored the opinions of others in the community who will be impacted by a decision. Such an unintended exclusion of the community (or segment of a community) from a decision process can quickly lead

Partnerships have the potential to:

- Ensure community interests and needs are being met
- Enhance legitimacy and build trust
- Increase community and sense of ownership
- Allow for resource sharing
- Promote visitor diversity through above steps

to a sense of alienation among members of that community. If a partnership exists, such failures to recognize the public's sentiments would be less likely. When local citizens are included in the decision process they can offer more perspective and solutions possibly not considered by technical experts. Consequently, a decision is reached that is beneficial and accepted by all of those concerned. In fact, public participation is among the most effective and efficient means to producing community benefits (Anderson et al., 2000).

Enhance Legitimacy

A government agency such as the NPS can enhance its legitimacy and build trust by cultivating a sense of openness and inclusion through partnering. Communities gain a sense that their government officials are committed to including them in the planning and development of public projects or decisions and will be more likely to contribute and support an agency or park unit. Partnerships between citizens and government agencies can be particularly significant in that citizens gain a sense of empowerment by contributing to government decision processes. Citizens may well experience a greater sense of security and well-being because they are able to exert some influence in the public policy planning and implementation process.

Sense of Ownership

Additionally partnerships can strengthen a greater sense of stewardship among constituents. As people come to feel proprietary about an area or project, a sense of ownership develops. With this sense of ownership, community members feel more responsible and protective over a project and invested in its success, development, and continuation (La Page, 2000).

Conflict reduction or avoidance may also result through partnering. If communities or groups feel included in decision making in the early stages of a project, they may become invested in the project by virtue of their contributions of time and effort.

Community groups will have played an important role in the project and will likely feel less inclined to pursue legal action over disagreements about planning, development, or implementation. Through partnerships, more voices are heard and included, which results in fewer opportunities for resentment or anger and a sense of exclusion from a project later on (La Page, 2000).

Resource Sharing

Partnerships can also reduce operating costs. Many functions that an organization may not be able to adequately fulfill, such as office administrative duties, can be accomplished with volunteers from partner organizations. Public outreach or community awareness efforts can be done by volunteers or partnering groups that staff visitor centers and information kiosks, act as tour guides, or operate shuttles. Partnerships with other organizations may also help partner organizations build their internal capacity and develop new skill sets.

Improving Diversity in Visitorship

The NPS mission, as indicated earlier, is to protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources available throughout the national park system for the enjoyment and education of current and future generations of all Americans. Through partnerships with community-based organizations serving communities of color, the NPS not only has the potential to improve its service in general, but also may realize increased benefits from serving more diverse audiences. Through simple partnership strategies, the NPS may be able to reach segments of the population who may benefit greatly from experiences gained in national park visits. Diverse groups could also bring to the national park landscape exciting new sets of interests and a renewed purpose, thereby contributing to the future well being of the national park system

Building a Successful Partnership

There are numerous possible approaches to constructing partnerships. The following process, described by Uhlik (1995), offers some points to keep in mind when considering entering into or building a partnership. Uhlik's approach consists of six main steps (paraphrased below), with the first three intended for building the proper foundation for a partnership while the final three address resources.

Six Steps to Building a Successful Partnership

Building the Proper Foundation:

- 1) Education
- 2) Needs Assessment & Resource Inventory
- 3) Identify Prospective Partners

Resources for Partnering:

- 4) Compare Needs and Resources
- 5) Partnership Proposal
- 6) Partnership Agreement

—Adapted from Uhlik (1995)

Education

It is important for all of those in a group or agency who will be involved in the partnership to have a clear understanding of what partnerships are, how they work, what individual roles will be, and what outcomes can realistically be expected.

Conduct a Needs Assessment and Resource Inventory

A group or agency should spend some time carefully defining what it is that they expect or require from a partnership. Equally important, the group or agency must consider what resources they will bring to the table. A partnership is a collaborative effort, which requires all involved parties to use the resources at their disposal to effectively contribute. It is also important to recognize that “resources” does not have to mean *additional* resources but can include a realigning or restructuring of existing ones.

Identify Prospective Partners and Assess Their Needs and Resources

Just as this process is essential in a self-assessment, a group or agency must do the legwork and research to find other agencies or organizations whose needs and resources compliment theirs. Partner organizations must share some commonalities in mission, goals, needs, resources or other areas. Without some common ground or some degree of shared perspective, the likelihood of successful partnering is greatly diminished.

Compare and Contrast Needs and Resources

An agency or organization should compare its needs and resources with those of its prospective partner's. Areas of overlap should be noted as well as areas where there is exclusivity. Potential connections should not be ignored or dismissed.

Reciprocity is a key element in this step since a strong partnership depends upon equal exchange of benefits for all participants. As with any relationship, a partnership depends upon trust, good faith and sharing. As part of trust and good faith, partners should recognize that some needs may not be met, and some resources will not be useful. Partners must be realistic in their expectations of what other parties may be able to accomplish given resource or logistical constraints.

Develop a Partnership Proposal Designed to Achieve Success

Potential partners should seek realistic goals by asking questions such as “What does my partner expect from me and what do I expect from my partner?” or “What are my short term and long term goals for this partnership?” It is important to ask these questions early to develop a realistic picture of what kinds of outcomes may be expected. Certainly, it is understandable and often useful to have lofty goals in mind at the outset of a partnership, but eventually for success to be realized, more modest and achievable goals should be discussed and agreed upon.

A broad but focused plan should be prepared that describes objectives, goals, and anticipated outcomes. Potential partners should be prepared to outline a plan of action, explaining how goals will be met and for what purpose.

Propose a Partnership Agreement

A partnership agreement need not imply a set of complicated legal documents. Indeed, such measures may be prohibitive in cost and time. Rather, an informal written or oral agreement may be entirely sufficient to solidify the participants understanding and commitment of the partnership arrangement.

The complexity of a partnership may influence the need or desire for a formal or semi-formal agreement. For example, factors such as the number of organizations participating or agency standard operating procedures may necessitate a more formal arrangement. Finally, an agreement may facilitate the partnership’s continued success over time by establishing a sense of stability and security. A written agreement can be beneficial in that it provides new participants with a guide to help them easily determine what their roles are and where their resources may be most helpful.

Overview of Document

To briefly summarize, the study approaches the issue of underrepresented groups among NPS visitors by exploring partnership possibilities in the Los Angeles area.

Chapter 1 outlines California as a diverse state – ethnically, geographically, socioeconomically and one that is a harbinger of what may occur in the rest of the country. Further, this chapter explores the importance and makeup of partnerships.

Chapter 2 describes the methods we used for the study. In addition to extensive literature reviews, we conducted interviews with NPS staff as well as representatives from 21 organizations in the Los Angeles area.

Chapter 3 examines the benefits and concerns regarding partnerships as expressed by both NPS staff and our community organization interviewees. Despite their different missions and experiences, the interviews showed a number of common themes.

Chapter 4 offers a diverse range of recommendations that address the challenges perceived by potential partnering organizations as well as the barriers mentioned by NPS staff.

Chapter 5 includes our conclusions as well as next steps that might help NPS achieve the goals of the study.

Chapter 2: Study Methods

This chapter details our study methods. We began by reviewing the literature as well as exploring potential organizations in the study region. The study included interviews with both staff members from the NPS and with members of organizations that have experience with partnering. The chapter concludes with an overview of the interview format and the types of issues the interviews tapped.

Literature Review

The study is informed by an extensive review of the literature on underserved audiences and their usage of national parks. The literature we reviewed covered a broad range of topics, including ethnic minority park usage, attitudes about the environment, and recreation patterns and tourism; successful outdoor programming for youth; women and outdoor experiences and the effects such activities had on self-esteem; and institutional values often found in land management agencies. In addition to information we accessed through various search engines and scholarly journals, we contacted several researchers who have contributed to this body of knowledge.

These sources gave us a foundation and insight into the issues addressed by this study. From the readings and discussion of the material we began to appreciate the diversity of ways in which partnerships have played an important part in the NPS as well as other organizations. This led to a focus on partnerships as mechanism for connecting target groups with resources offered by our national parks.

Further effort was then invested in identifying potential organizations and reviewing their missions and programs in order to identify a group of organizations in the Los Angeles area with whom we could engage in conversation. The internet was particularly important for this step.

Focus of study

The study consisted of two separate components: discussions with NPS staff and meetings with members of community-based organizations (CBOs).

Community-based Organization Component

Based on our review of available information as well as recommendations from colleagues we focused on CBOs representing youth, women, low-income residents, and ethnic minorities in the urban centers of greater Los Angeles. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the organizations that participated in the study. These organizations represent a range of public, private, and non-profit groups. Nearly all of the organizations serve a range of socioeconomically diverse constituencies. Further information about each of these organization types is provided in the following section.



Table 2.1: Overview of Organizations

Organization Type	Purpose/Audience	Number of Interviews	Type of Entity
Faith-based	Serve spiritual needs of local and regional communities.	5	4 private churches 1 NGO
Urban Nature Centers	Provide public with environmental education, stewardship, and nature-based activities.	5	1 city agency 2 county agencies 1 state agency 1 NGO
Female	Serve social, educational, and developmental needs of at-risk girls and women.	4	2 members of umbrella organizations 1 public agency 1 state agency, privately funded
Youth	Serve social, educational, and developmental needs of youth.	3	1 public school 1 private organization 1 NGO

National Park Service Component

The National Park Service interviews were arranged primarily through our NPS contact, Ray Murray, Partnerships Program Chief for the NPS Western Region. A fellow graduate student provided us with Mr. Murray’s contact information at the end of 2005, when we also made contact with him. Mr. Murray put our group in touch with Superintendents at national park sites located in Southern California. Additional prospective interview participants were located and contacted through those park Superintendents as well. One superintendent was contacted independently to arrange an interview. All but two of the initial contacts with NPS staff or affiliates were made via email using a pre-prepared outline for content and wording. The other contacts were made via telephone calls again using a pre-prepared template as a guide for initial contact. One interview participant had not been contacted prior to the interview. This individual participated in a group interview session and had been invited by one of the other participants. A total of eight interviews were conducted with NPS staff.

Selection and description of CBO types

The organizations NPS can potentially partner with in the Los Angeles region are vast in number and complexion. This section provides our rationale for each of the four types of organizations included in the study.

Faith-based Organizations

Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) are significant entities in most urban communities; they thrive in greater Los Angeles. Faith-based Organizations typically constitute churches and community service charities or non-profits, and are generally aligned

with major religions. Relative to other types of charities, the religious background and community connections of FBOs can offer a unique credibility and opportunity to build social capital. Many FBOs often have greater access to local residents, both in terms of beneficiaries and recruitment of volunteers for service opportunities.

Research has shown that ethnic minorities have greater rates of affiliation with voluntary associations, such as churches (Taylor, 1989). National Park Service partnerships with FBOs could be an effective means of increasing visitorship and resolving racial and ethnic disparities in recreation patterns. Such partnerships can serve to counteract perceptions that outdoor recreational opportunities are outside the domain of appropriate activities for ethnic minority groups (J. Nor, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

Urban residents may perceive greater credibility in the mission of FBOs, relative to other charitable organizations (Chaskin, 2001). Religious entities often have greater rootedness in the local community, as they are often staffed by local residents and offer shared religious affiliation with the people they serve (Lockhart, 2005).

Female CBOs

From a historical perspective, management and use of natural resource recreation areas has reflected much of the hegemony within society. The definition of hegemonic masculinity created and perpetuated by society teaches all genders from a very young age the proper actions expected of their respective gender (Connell, 1987). Among these lessons are the restrictions placed upon females in regards to sport and participation in outdoor activities.

During the early 20th century, white middle and upper class elite men experienced the outdoors through hunting, fishing, and hiking. Women were limited to supporting their male counterparts with preparation for outings and the occasional carriage promenade through urban parks, such as Central Park (Spencer-Wood, 1994; Fox, 1985). Physical exertion by women was perceived in society as inappropriate and a sign of masculine behaviors. As the establishment of wildlife refuges and national parks began to increase in the mid-1900s, more women were exposed to the outdoors through their male relatives and friends. The women's suffrage movement also helped to expand women's experiences in the male dominated realm of outdoor exploration (Fox, 1985).

Today, participation in outdoor recreation by women is commonly accepted by society in principle, yet women and girls are poorly represented among those who visit parks and nature centers (Kaufman, 2006; Connell, 1987). Among some of the reasons that women continue to maintain low levels of participation in outdoor recreation are the perceived levels of danger, low self-esteem, and efficacy in the use of nature areas by women (Gaarder & Wesely, 2004; Autry, 2001).

Gaarder and Wesely's (2004) study of outdoor recreation use by women and girls has shown a great loss in the beneficial rewards of outdoor activities largely as a disparity in existing programs geared specifically toward females. The use of nature therapy for at-risk youth has focused largely on boys and young men. Few programs are specifically geared toward *only* girls and women, yet those that are have shown



significant results in the form of increased self-esteem, teamwork, trust in oneself and others, and personal values that can extend to an appreciate for others and perhaps even nature itself (Autry, 2001).

Additionally, as management of natural resources has evolved from a historical base of male dominated hunting, angling, and trapping, women who feel they can now participate in outdoor recreation, further develop an interest in nature and consequently may become more comfortable and active in decision-making processes that affect land management agencies (Anthony et al. 2004). The implication of constructivism (when individuals find meaning from actual experiences rather than just passive learning) in girls and women sparked by outdoor recreation opportunities has great potential to expand into a societal appreciation for natural areas and decisions that affect them (Autry, 2001).

In light of these reasons, female organizations (FOs) were chosen as one of the CBO categories for this project. Specifically, organizations that represent a variety of women constituents were chosen to represent the diversity of existing programs and groups that engage women and girls. A focus was placed upon three areas of concern: (1) adult women at risk, (2) teenage girls at risk, and (3) young girls (regardless of risk potential).

Youth Organizations

The NPS has a history of partnerships with Youth Organizations (YOs), as demonstrated by the educational and interpretive studies on the NPS partnership web site. The Minority Youth Education and Employment Program offers an example of the NPS engaging ethnic minority youth in participating in environmental education and employment programs at various national park sites (National Park Service, 2006). Youth CBOs cover a broad range of ages (pre-kindergarten to college students), foci (e.g., career exploration, academic programs, service learning), and timing patterns (e.g., after school groups, summer camp programs, environmental student organizations). This versatility offers a myriad of partnership possibilities, as well as logistical challenges.

Today's youth spend less time outdoors, which adversely affects their well-being. A 1999 study showed that children ages 9-13 watched an average of 4.8 hours of television a day, in addition to surfing the Internet and playing video games (CDC, 2000). Lack of physical activity and less time spent outdoors has detrimental effects; childhood obesity is on the rise, as are diabetes and warning signs of cardiovascular diseases in children (CDC, 2000). Louv (2005) coined the term "nature-deficit disorder" to account for the negative impacts resulting from the diminished connection between humans and nature. He cites increases in obesity, ADD, and depression in children in this context and argues for getting children outdoors to improve their physical and mental health. Time spent outdoors at National Parks could be one solution to the problem of getting kids outside and active.

Youth organizations are also important to partner with because of the benefits to students and the NPS that can be achieved through partnership. Several studies suggest that positive outdoor experiences during childhood build affection for the outdoors that lasts into adulthood. However, just being outside is not enough; the

experience is heightened by positive role models teaching youth about the natural world (Chawla, 1998). The NPS can greatly contribute to the development of youth's positive outdoor experiences. By engaging students while they are still young, the NPS can build environmental sensitivity and build future support for national parks as youth mature and become voters and more adept decision-makers.

Urban Nature Centers

Urban Nature Centers (UNCs) were selected as potential NPS partners because they already have a strong environmental ethic and their constituency is the type that the NPS is seeking. Through education, as well as habitat restoration and preservation activities, nature centers are dedicated to helping citizens develop an understanding of, and sense of stewardship toward the natural world.

Urban Nature Centers attract a broad cross-section of local communities. Since they offer a substantive venue, including bathrooms, trails, informational kiosks and other amenities, they are easy to locate and adapt for orientation activities. It may also be easier to attract potential program participants who are initially visitors to these facilities.

Since they are located in urbanized areas, nature centers are more likely to attract all types of people, including citizens of various socioeconomic backgrounds. The nature centers we investigated accommodated between 30,000 and 100,000 visitors per year from diverse ethnic and class backgrounds, representing a cross-section of the surrounding community. In addition, nature centers tend to attract students from local schools. Approximately half of all visitors at the nature centers we investigated were students whose teachers brought them to supplement and enhance their curricula.

With high visitor rates and built-in audiences, nature centers can access members of the community more readily than outsiders. If joint programming existed with the NPS, nature center staff could engage constituents in participating in it. This would be one substantial way in which the NPS could potentially increase visitorship to parks, particularly from diverse, urban citizens.

Interviews

Once the organizations were identified initial contact was made by phone or email to establish willingness to participate in the study. Staff from all of the urban nature centers and organizations serving women we contacted agreed to participate. Half of youth organization staff agreed to participate, while approximately 10% of faith-based organizations we attempted to contact agreed to participate.

Before interviews were conducted each participating organization was sent a cover letter with a brief description of the project. In some instances, this material was conveyed by phone. Participants were also sent information about the questions we would cover during our interviews. All interviews were conducted in August 2006.



CBO Interviews

While all interviews included the same material, the order of the questions was modified to allow for the smooth and logical flow of the conversation. Interviews began with introductions and a description of the project, as well as information about informed consent regulations (see Appendix B for consent letter). The crucial leadership and organizational roles of CBOs in urban communities was mentioned as the core reason behind the research team's choice to include the organization in the project.

Interview questions tapped the following issues (see Appendix D for list of questions):

- Organizational mission and programming aspects
- Outreach efforts
- Constituency environmental concerns
- Perceived benefits of past partnerships
- Perceived challenges of past partnerships
- Perceived benefits to partnering with NPS
- Perceived challenges to partnering with NPS
- Willingness to partner with NPS
- Ideas for partnering with NPS

The semi-structured interview format allowed for some flexibility not only in the order of the questions, but in the probes as well. Generally, the tone was both conversational and questioning and the sessions were permitted to continue as long as the participants wished. While, on average, the interviews lasted 45 minutes, they varied considerably in their duration. Some interviews lasted about a half hour, while others continued for two hours, evolving into a more freeform discussion about NPS programming, various CBO types, challenges of the urban poor, and other issues of interest to the participants.

In general, one or two project members interviewed executive directors or program officers at their respective offices. No recording devices were used. The interviewers took notes throughout the interview.

NPS Interviews

Interviews with NPS employees and affiliates were conducted in a similar manner to that of the CBO interviews. Interviews were primarily conducted one-on-one between interviewer and respondent. They generally lasted approximately an hour to an hour and half.

Interviews were carried out to provide information in four general areas:

- The amount and type of support the NPS provides for partnerships, as illustrated by past partnerships
- Perceived barriers and obstacles that exist between the NPS and potential partners
- Perceived benefits to the NPS partnering with CBOs
- Ways in which NPS may be able to more effectively engage underserved audiences

A copy of the interview questions posed to NPS staff is attached in Appendix C. Though conducted in a semi-formal, conversational manner, the interviews generally maintained close adherence to these questions. Exchanges often inspired additional questions beyond the structured set and these were allowed to carry on to their conclusion.





Chapter 3: Results

The interviews provided rich, diverse, and important insights about Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and their partnership experiences. At the same time, the interviews with NPS staff were useful in showing the perspective of the agency. The major focus of this chapter is on the perceived benefits and challenges to partnerships as seen by both CBO members and NPS personnel.

I. The View From CBO Participants

CBO Demographics and Outreach

Although their missions varied widely, the community-based organizations in the study were similar in serving minority groups, youth, and low-income residents. In some cases the members and clients came from the immediate neighborhood, while in other cases they were drawn more widely from the Los Angeles region.

Urban nature centers (UNCs) in the study overwhelmingly reflected the broad diversity of Angelenos in their visitorship. All participants indicated strong Latino and Caucasian visitorship. Additionally, three of four centers reported a significant population of Asian visitors. All indicated sizeable visitorship from people of all income levels.

Female organizations (FOs) in this study worked with women and girls from a diverse range of backgrounds. Beneficiaries ranged from youths and adolescents, to adult women, including mothers and those of middle and elderly ages. Considerable attention was paid to at-risk women, aged 14 and up, with various programs geared toward emancipated youth.

Youth groups (YOs) in this study served primarily minority audiences representing the demographics of the geographic area they serve. One organization indicated that 80% of beneficiaries were low-income, whereas another reported that their activities cater to a wider income range. Two of the organizations primarily serve high school age students, while one served pre-K through high school and another served youth as well as offered programs specifically for adults.

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) included some that reflected their local community as well as two that described themselves as “commuter churches.” Regardless of their congregation’s ethnic background, all participating churches worked to benefit their diverse local communities, comprised of Latino, East Asian, Southeast Asian, African-American, and Caucasian constituencies (in descending order).



Outreach Trends

We asked about the organizations' approaches to spreading the word: disseminating information about themselves for capacity building and mission fulfillment.

Recruiting members and engaging the community is a challenge for all CBOs, making outreach a large component of most participating organizations' missions. Larger organizations tended to have specific staff devoted to outreach. Although challenging, these organizations have had success in engaging their audiences, as illustrated by their relatively large constituencies.

Table 3.1: Outreach Trends

- Word of Mouth
- Train-the-Trainer
- Staff Training
- Volunteer Training
- Publications & flyers, often bilingual
- Advertisements
- School visits

Table 3.1 identifies the most frequent approaches mentioned in the interviews to engaging new and current audiences. Word of mouth was the most commonly used approach. It readily offers credibility by the implicit endorsement of the organization, program, or event.

Some organizations have employed the "train-the-trainer" model to help disseminate by word of mouth. This approach entails having staff from the organization teach programs or train other staff members or volunteers who then, through frequent face-to-face interactions disseminate this information to

constituents. The contributions of individuals who can easily relate to constituents were often behind the success of word of mouth outreach.

Many CBOs mentioned that they offer their constituents opportunities to learn about particular positions or job functions in their organization. Such activities may also fulfill community service requirements. These training opportunities help to create a cadre of constituents and volunteers who can liaise with community members and eventually become counselors or fill other leadership roles within their CBOs.

Another effective way CBOs reach their constituents is through the written word. Organizations that used newsletters found them useful in informing their members on an ongoing basis. Typical distribution is weekly or monthly, and often electronically. Flyers are often posted at the organization itself, in addition to community centers, schools, libraries, and the like. Bilingual materials are often standard. Several organizations also mentioned placing advertisements in the local papers.

For reaching young people, making contact through schools is also a useful method for organizations serving youth. Approaches have included mailings to teachers about field trip opportunities, sending materials home with students, posting flyers, and giving presentations at schools. Faith-based organizations often disseminate information through church bulletins and announcements at religious services.

Constituent Environmental Concerns

Since the mission of the NPS encompasses environmental issues, we asked participants to gauge the types of environmental concerns their constituents had. Our literature review indicated environmental concerns show meaningful demographic differences. Environmental concerns among the groups we interviewed showed many similarities.

Table 3.2 provides an overview of concerns reported by our respondents on behalf of themselves and their constituents.

The most frequently reported environmental concerns were tangible, with local consequences. As one might expect, Angelinos said air quality was their greatest concern. Organizations serving children mentioned that air pollution is an issue that even young children understand. Several groups also mentioned water pollution and the closing of beaches due to outbreaks of red tide, particularly due to such an event prior to our interviews. Issues affecting constituents' health and safety were also frequently mentioned. Such issues are particularly salient if people see them every day and make connections of personal relevance.

A variety of other local concerns were mentioned in the interviews. Though they have environmental dimensions, they range widely in terms of their link to NPS concerns. Stray dogs, graffiti, litter, traffic, and lack of recycling programs all received mention by several organizations. Lack of local, accessible green space for the CBOs' constituencies is often an environmental justice issue, and one that the NPS can help address.

While local issues were frequently mentioned, some groups also mentioned a lack of environmental concern and awareness among members. The struggles of many constituents' daily lives, such as having enough money to support their families, often preclude overt concern about the environment.

CBO Experience with Partnering

The majority of the interviews were devoted to discussion of partnering. The topics included the types of organizations the CBOs had partnered with, what they perceived as the benefits to their organization as well as to the partners, and the challenges they have encountered and anticipate may be barriers to partnering with the NPS.

Table 3.2: Environmental Concerns

- Air Pollution
- Water Pollution
- General Threats to Health
- Stray Dogs
- Litter
- Traffic
- Graffiti
- Lack of Recycling
- Lack of green space

Partnerships encompassed a diverse range of organizations including schools, public and private organizations, state and federal agencies, and non-profits.

Categories of CBO Partnering

The organizations in the study spanned federal, state and municipal governmental levels, as well as volunteer organizations, social service agencies, environmental organizations, and public and private companies.

All participating Urban Nature Centers were involved in partnerships with local school districts. Other types of academic-related partnerships were mentioned, including one environmental education program related to the preservation of the San Gabriel River. Since several nature centers were located near the San Gabriel, many were involved in related coalitions to restore and protect it. Some UNC's partnered with local park and recreation departments, as well as social service agencies, including a youth and family services organization, a probation department, and mental health organizations. Two participating UNC's mentioned substantial involvement in volunteer work. Two centers also reported partnering with a national outdoor outfitter to lead community service projects.

All Female Organizations in the study reported that fellow local CBOs comprised the majority of their partnerships, including family homeless organizations, after school programs, and agencies working with youth at risk. Additionally, several private businesses supported their efforts with donations and in-kind contributions. Half of those surveyed received state funding, but most donations were received through private foundations and local non-profits. One organization had a long-standing career program involving several government organizations.

Three of the Youth Organizations in the study indicated that non-profit organizations constituted the majority of their partners. The non-profits they partner with are located in Los Angeles County and serve inner-city youth. One organization mentioned that most of their partnerships involved mutually beneficial service projects, such as trail maintenance and park beautification. The only school interviewed expressed a wider partner trend; in addition to non-profits, their partnerships included private organizations, individual donors, and other public educational institutions, such as local universities. Many of the school's partnerships promote career exploration and college preparation.

Faith-based organizations have a long track record with after-school programs, as evidenced by four of the five participants reporting such partnerships. Other religious organizations were also a frequent partner; three of five mentioned partnerships with other churches, synagogues, and ecumenical organizations. Two FBOs mentioned partnerships with municipal governments such as parks and recreation departments. Other partnering organizations included community development organizations, sports programs, job training and mentoring programs, crisis services, and substance abuse treatment centers.

Perceived Benefits

Discussions about benefits gained from partnerships ranged widely. While most of the focus was on the benefits to the CBOs and their constituents, the interviewees also felt the partnering organization gained from these arrangements.

Benefits to CBOs

When we discussed what benefits CBOs experienced from partnerships, there was no lack of examples (summarized in Table 3.3). Across the interviews one common theme prevailed: The most beneficial aspect of partnering with other organizations and agencies is the mutual fulfillment of missions, often through sharing of knowledge and resources. Interviewees often mentioned appreciating access to other groups that provide programs, materials, or other resources they cannot offer through their own programs. In other words, partnerships often help avoid “reinventing the wheel.” An investment in the creation of already existing programs would be a waste of staff time, money, and other resources.

The majority of CBOs mentioned sharing financial resources. These groups indicated that the ability to partner on a grant strengthened their chances of being able to obtain more funding because it is seen as a double investment by grant issuing agencies. Another benefit of partnering is the sharing of material resources that would be difficult for tight budgets, such as buses, camping gear, educational and recreational equipment.

Many CBOs discussed the benefits of partnering in the context of their educational and job training missions. They considered such programming to be more effectively handled through partnerships. Community-based Organizations that serve youth indicated that through such programs, young people gain educational skills and expertise that may otherwise be hard to find. For example, partnerships with museums were important for one FO because it gave their constituency exposure to an array of natural sciences and arts that would not necessarily be taught in school. Partnerships also were frequently cited for providing training for organization members to gain experience and for staff to be able to train others. Examples include exposure to science-based careers through partnerships with government science programs, and partnership with an animal rehabilitation expert who taught staff how to handle injured wildlife. Staff were then able to educate their constituency about what to do if injured wildlife are encountered at the UNC.

Nearly all of the CBOs mentioned that partnerships were essential to fostering a sense of community and involving new audiences. Without partnerships, many CBOs said they would not be able to access non-traditional, underserved, and diverse audiences. If both partners can attract unique audiences, they needn't duplicate their outreach efforts. For example, one participating UNC invites artists, musicians, and poets to perform at their location. Art aficionados are drawn to such events, often returning to the center independently and spreading the word to others that may not otherwise become involved.

Table 3.3: Past CBO-Partner Benefits

- Mutual Mission Fulfillment
- Sharing Knowledge, Material, and Financial Resources
- Education and Job Training
- Offer Logistical Capacity
- Broaden Audiences
- Volunteer and Service Opportunities

Partnerships provided employment and volunteer opportunities for constituents and the community at large. Urban Nature Centers in particular mentioned that workers from other organizations were a key way to do on-site work beyond budgetary limitations, including restoration projects and maintenance. Three-quarters of UNC's had contractual relationships with a local conservation corps. This group was instrumental to on-site management efforts, such as removing invasive plants, planting shrubs and trees, creating and maintaining trails, and providing an on-site recycling service. The conservation corps fulfilled their mission of protecting and restoring the environment and providing on-the-job training to youth corps members, while the UNC sites benefited from having their sites restored and maintained.

Benefits for CBO Constituents

In addition to the indirect support for constituents through various partnership programs, the interviewees mentioned examples of how partnering afforded benefits specifically to constituents. Volunteer opportunities often occur through CBO partnering, helping constituents develop key skills, fostering a sense of community, and making participants feel valued. For example, the constituents of one YO explored career avenues through hands-on experience in community service and volunteerism. Another YO that partners with the NPS receives access to an exclusive campsite in exchange for participating in stewardship activities benefiting the park. After completing these projects, students report feeling a sense of ownership toward the area, as measured by their desire to return to that area with the youth organization, friends, or family members. Additionally, upon the completion of stewardship projects, students show increased understanding and sensitivity to nature, as well as a greater sense of camaraderie.

Working for FOs has given many women who once benefited from these programs the opportunity to share their experiences and the resources they now have. Program participants experienced an improved self-esteem, which assists them in helping others now in similar need. Other partnering organizations also benefit by maintaining a relationship with these FOs, such as allowing access to constituents and direct referrals. In turn, sharing additional resources allows for all participating organizations to succeed in making positive and effective changes in women's lives.

Perceived Benefits to the Partnering Group

The discussions about the benefits that the partnering organization might gain from the partnerships were closely related to the perceived benefits to the CBO. One of the most significant benefits participants felt they provide to their partners is reaching new constituents through outreach programs. Community-based Organizations often provide a volunteer base for their partners or conversely, a volunteer outlet for partner constituents. They also offer the opportunity for their partners to widen their community and give back to communities that support them.

Program resources are another way that CBOs have assisted their partners. All UNC's in the study indicated that they provided community meeting sites, educational programs, and other resources for community partners, such as programs for students that fulfill teachers' learning objectives. Partnerships can also improve logistical

capabilities to carrying out programs. One youth-centered environmental organization has developed, through a 30-year track record of partnerships, the expertise and safety record to lead young people into wilderness areas.

Perceived Challenges to Partnering

We had extensive discussions with participants regarding the challenges and barriers they experienced in partnering activities. Although the information received from the CBOs was cast in terms of their specific needs and type of organization, there were many commonalities in the barriers to effective partnering that they have experienced. Table 3.4 provides a summary of these issues.

Resource Challenges

As might be expected, funding issues and other resource limitations were a dominant theme in the discussion of challenges. Financial constraints entailed both operational budgets as well as the many funding-dependent resources such as limited staffing and resource procurement. An interrelated recurring issue was the added strain on time and resources of each partnering organization.

Urban Nature Centers and FBOs often experienced accounting challenges needed to meet local, state, and federal monitoring regulations.

Some additional negative partner experiences included FBOs whose partners' general perception of churches led to a presumption of greater resources than the church actually had. On some occasions, when in-kind support was needed most, some FBO constituents found it easier to write a check than to donate their time or additional resources.

Table 3.4: Partnership Barriers

Resource Challenges

- Lack of funding, resources, time
- Additional work generated through additional activities
- Organizing and dispersing limited resources
- Misperception of partners' resource availability
- Preference toward monetary donations when volunteer efforts are more important

Management Challenges

- Hidden agendas in partnering organizations
- Micromanagement by partnering organizations
- Failures of delegating tasks and responsibilities
- State and county bureaucratic hurdles, e.g., maintaining nonprofit status, volunteer background checks

Partnership Relationships

- Building trust with partners
- Differences in levels of willingness and commitment
- Limited scope and lifespan of partnerships
- Partners' lack of experience

Management Challenges

Various organizations experienced challenges related to the management of the partnerships. For example, one of the UNCs discussed a disparity between staff and their supervisors with respect to their understanding or desire to work with volunteers in these partnerships. Some participants expressed concern about hidden agendas in past partnerships, such as a CBO approached to partner with another organization as a last ditch effort to sustain the latter's existence. Micro-management was cited by one of the FOs in the context of a partner's reluctance to cede control of certain elements of a collaboration. In several instances, it was difficult for partners to give up control to the CBO staff who were considered experts in their particular abilities.

One of the FOs discussed difficulty in communicating issues of limited flexibility, such as direct access to their constituents, which was sometimes not allowed due to safety concerns of the girls and women. Another reflected on issues that arose in initial stages of a partnership and problems around not receiving the money and resources they were due throughout the collaborative effort.

Partnership Relationships

Though also at times reflected in management issues, some of the challenges mentioned in the interviews entailed underlying concerns about how the CBO and partnering organization viewed each other and established a trusting relationship. Preconceptions, such as stereotypes recounted by one FO, can undermine effective partnering. At the same time, however, these groups indicated how helpful it was for them to learn about their partner's concerns and to try to address such issues in future partnerships.

Comments about perceived lack of commitment from some of the partners were raised as obstacles to working together. Such indifference to maintaining a thriving partnership led to significant frustrations; in some cases, work had to be re-delegated among employees of one of the Female Organizations. The differing levels of experience between the organization and partner can also create barriers to effective relationships. An additional challenge, mentioned by a few groups, involved disappointment that an event was not repeated despite hopes of a continuing relationship with a partnering organization.

While the question posed was about challenges, the discussions at times moved to means of avoiding these barriers. Chapter 4: Recommendations incorporates these topics.

II. The NPS Perspective

Interviews with NPS staff also focused on partnership experiences, including perceptions of benefits to NPS and the partnering groups, as well as the challenges such partnerships entail.

Perceived Benefits

As the demographic makeup of the United States continues to change, one major goal of the NPS is to ensure visitor demographics more closely reflect the general population. The NPS hopes to increase the number of visitors from underserved communities by making the parks more welcoming and attractive to them. National Park Service interviewees expressed interest in partnerships with CBOs to help accomplish this goal. Respondents replied that they were looking for CBOs to be ambassadors between NPS units and local communities. They indicated that the NPS needs help creating culturally sensitive and meaningful messages that will resonate with diverse audiences. The interviewees expressed the hope that by engaging in more partnerships with CBOs that serve non-traditional visitors, the NPS would gain a greater understanding and awareness of the kinds of experiences such visitors are expecting, while providing these visitors with helpful information about the NPS. Thus, through partnerships, underserved audiences would learn more about the NPS itself and what it can offer.

Respondents replied that they were looking for CBOs to be ambassadors between NPS units and local communities.

Staff members saw a direct link between increasing ties with CBOs and the needed changes in NPS diversity. They recognized that NPS staffing currently lacks diversity but expressed the conviction that through partnership opportunities, improvement can be realized. Partnerships can provide valuable work experience and connections for urban, inner city youth, and others not traditionally associated with park employment. Internships, volunteering, and inter-organization employee swapping can permit those who may not have had the chance to work for the NPS to construct a competitive resume for future employment. Some of the staff interviewees felt that the absence or presence of diversity in the agency may mean the difference between success and marginalization.

Participating NPS staff also expressed the critical importance of making meaningful changes to its operations and procedures in order to maintain its relevance for future generations who have diverse backgrounds and interests. Researchers predict that over the next 30 years, 82% of the population growth in the U.S. will occur primarily in Latino, Asian, African American and other ethnic minority groups (Sadisharan, 2002). In order to promote its future welfare, NPS staff acknowledge the importance of ensuring that the agency is relevant to segments of the population from which future community leaders, policy decision makers, and voters will be emerging. The citizens who provided strong support for the national parks in response to the growth of the environmental movement are an aging cohort. The NPS will certainly continue to serve the needs of those early supporters of wildland preservation. At the same time,

Table 3.5: Perceived NPS Benefits to Partnering with CBOs

- Effectively Engage Diverse Audiences
- Increase NPS Staff Diversity
- Information Exchange
- Ensure Continued Public Support for NPS

however, some interviewees discussed the urgency of expanding the NPS support group by making efforts to reach out to underserved audiences to ensure that the NPS may continue to serve the citizens of the U.S.

Perceived Challenges

Despite the major differences in organizational structure and mission, many of the obstacles to partnerships the NPS staff discussed have strong parallels with the challenges presented by the CBOs. To highlight these similarities, the major categories introduced earlier are used here to present what NPS respondents saw as constraints to effective partnerships.

Resource Challenges

All of the NPS interview participants felt that the park units did not receive adequate resources for outreach and partnership efforts. They all felt that they were not

The NPS faces annual operating budget shortfalls in many areas.

supplied with sufficient staff and budgetary resources to accomplish all of their objectives. The NPS faces annual operating budget shortfalls in many areas. Although the Office of Management and Budget often directs

units to engage in partnerships with appropriate organizations, guidelines stipulate that basic services be given priority. Consequently, funds for outreach and interpretive programs are routinely cut. Park operations, maintenance needs, law enforcement, visitor services, as well as health and safety programs all receive priority over outreach efforts in the NPS. As a result, it routinely experiences resource shortages including chronic understaffing.

One respondent, however, said that using lack of resources as a justification for not engaging in stronger outreach efforts was not a constructive position to take. This respondent believed that staff must learn to accept that parks will likely never get enough money allocated in operating budgets to fund every program, and that Congress can really only be relied upon to provide the bare essentials in funding. While the NPS could try to compete more aggressively for federal funds, the probability of receiving substantial increases beyond bare bones maintenance and operations funding is minimal. This respondent, therefore, felt that rather than focusing

Using lack of resources as a justification for not engaging in stronger outreach efforts was not viewed as a constructive position.

on what will not be, a more productive approach is to find creative ways to stretch or maximize the power of the resources they do have. This respondent suggested that new funding opportunities should be sought with alacrity and that park staff need to be more innovative in generating sources of funding and support.

A better approach is to find creative ways to stretch or maximize the power of the resources that are available.

Respondents also mentioned that relationships take time to develop and grow. While time is frequently a resource constraint, the interviewees saw it as further exacerbated by

the frequent personnel changes throughout an agency. This makes it more difficult to foster and support partnership relationships. Staff members who were excited about a partnership may move elsewhere. Even if remaining staff continue the relationship, anticipated outcomes may be diminished or fail to be realized altogether.

Management Challenges

Staff diversity

From the interviewee's perspective, perhaps one of the biggest obstacles to partnership with CBOs is the lack of staff diversity within the NPS. Many of the respondents reported that they felt the lack of diversity among staff members made the parks less welcoming for CBO visitors. They believe that minority visitors do not feel at ease while visiting the park units because they cannot easily identify with the staff they encounter.

National Park Service staff expressed the opinion that the NPS's "Market Information" for CBOs and their constituents is insufficient. One respondent made the comment, "We don't know what we don't know," meaning that the park staff cannot address the issues or needs of those who are not coming to sites. Furthermore, a lack of staff diversity in the parks means that staff members are less able to understand diverse visitors' expectations about park experiences. One respondent explained a situation in which Latino visitors had been invited to a park area for a special event and had come with the expectation that they would be permitted to barbecue, only to find that barbecuing was not allowed due to fire concerns.

Several respondents indicated that they felt that staff members often feel more comfortable associating and hiring those who are like them. Consequently, creating diversity in a non-diverse workforce becomes that much more difficult. Rigid federal hiring standards may add to the problem since often there are educational or prior work experience requirements that constituents of CBOs we spoke with tend to lack.

Table 3.6:
Perceived Obstacles to Partnerships: NPS Perspective

Resource Challenges

- Budget shortfalls
- Time constraints

Management Challenges

- Staff diversity
- Organizational constraints
- Group think
- Bureaucratic challenges

Partnership Relationships

- Networking skills
- Information exchange

All respondents felt that increasing diversity in the NPS staff would go a long way to improving contact and outreach to underserved audiences.

Organizational Constraints

Interviewees discussed that the NPS lacks the institutional mindset to engage CBOs for several reasons. The NPS still relies on hiring lists with only a vague mandate to improve diversity. All respondents felt that increasing diversity in the NPS staff would go a long way to improving contact and outreach to underserved audiences. A second reason can be attributed to the NPS leadership in Washington D.C. The decisions about which programs get supported at the unit level depend largely on the agenda of the current NPS administration and leadership. Some NPS Directors make outreach a higher priority while others do not. Therefore, often the outreach efforts which may have been supported by one director get marginalized or dropped into second or third tier status in favor of the many other pressing needs facing the NPS as changes in leadership occur.

Group Think

Another obstacle that was raised in the interviews arises as a consequence of strict bureaucratic rules and guidelines, described as a kind of agency “group think.” A bureaucratic mindset can take over as a consequence of a rigid adherence to standard operating procedures, which may blind some within the organization to new avenues not yet explored. Group think may also provide a convenient excuse

Breaking with traditional procedures will expose reluctant staff to the inevitable “growing pains” of innovation.

for some who do not wish to undertake the challenge of amending established methods and comfortable ideas in favor of risky and uncertain new strategies. Breaking with traditional procedures will expose reluctant staff to the inevitable “growing pains” of innovation.

Bureaucratic Challenges

Some of the constraints mentioned in the course of the interviews reflect the Agency’s policies and procedures that are legislatively mandated, narrowly defining projects parks can support. One respondent mentioned a potential partnership opportunity with a local college to work on alternative energy production. The park would have supplied land on which alternative energy production equipment would be installed and in return receive free energy. The unit could have acquired enough energy to run its operations, the park, and provide energy to other units in proximity. The project could not be pursued, however, because of the NPS’s operating guidelines. Since the NPS is not legislated as an energy production agency it is prohibited from generating its own energy supply.

Partnership Relationships

Most respondents felt that the NPS does not provide adequate formal training for networking and partnership building in general. This is despite the broadly accepted notion within the NPS that a unit’s survival and well-being depends greatly upon the relationships it builds with visitors and neighboring communities. National Park Service

staff are highly trained in specific job related skills and engage in cultural competency training, however, staff training in its current state is proving insufficient to improving understanding of the unique needs of diverse audiences. As it stands now, outreach efforts are ad-hoc. Several respondents reported that there is no common vision or central, collective effort or directive for outreach. Each national park unit creates its own outreach plan, some more elaborate than others. In general, however, there is no concerted effort driven by the NPS leadership at the highest levels. Without a clear, unifying vision throughout the NPS, respondents were convinced that outreach efforts would, in general, remain splintered.

Although park staff members face a lack of formal outreach training, NPS policy does allow for experimentation to improve outreach. Interviewees unanimously agreed that they felt free to experiment and explore different approaches to engaging CBOs as long as their efforts conform to NPS guidelines and policy. One park unit located in a more urban area has experimented with various new and different programs to connect to diverse communities, including a “Local Heroes” program that annually selects a local community group and develops and prepares a visitor center exhibit highlighting its culture and history for one year.

Lacking or weak information exchange was also seen as a problem. Failures in partnering occur when there is an information deficit between actors. Supervisors and park unit staff concerned with outreach need to be aware that inner city and CBO families generally do not know what to expect from a wilderness experience. In order to create positive experiences for CBO partners and volunteers, park staff need to devote time to educate and train volunteers and staff who will work with the visitors and volunteers from diverse communities. However, the information deficit is not limited to NPS staff; respondents reported encountering the misconception among potential partners that the NPS as a federal agency has deep pockets. Respondents also felt that there is often some sense of mistrust of the NPS as a federal agency and that partnering with them would lead to a loss of sovereignty.

III. Shared Perceptions

Interviews with organizations representing diverse domains of underrepresented groups in the Los Angeles area, as well as our discussions with NPS staff were striking for raising many common themes. With respect to the challenges of partnerships and the benefits that come from such arrangements, both the CBOs and the NPS shared common perceptions – perhaps to a greater extent than either group would have anticipated. In this section we briefly summarize these commonalities.

Table 3.8: Shared perceptions of benefits with NPS partnerships

- Shared Resources
- Expansion of audience or broadening of organizational scope
- Opportunity for career exploration and expanded volunteer/intern base

Perceived Benefits

The NPS and CBOs recognize benefits from the resources each can offer to the other. Both have knowledge and skills that they could share with each other. They can also pool their resources to expand their programming and partnership options.

The NPS would certainly benefit from an expansion of their audience by partnership with CBOs serving underserved audiences. By getting into these communities they can build support among their constituencies. By partnering with a large organization like the NPS, the CBOs can expand their audience as well. They can also expose their members to new opportunities and potentially broaden the scope of their organization.

A partnership with the NPS would offer youth or others in CBOs a chance to explore a career or volunteer position they might not have otherwise experienced. The exposure to these audiences would also benefit the NPS by expanding their intern and volunteer base.

The interviews with CBOs and NPS staff offered many insights into the values that partnerships offer. Although all involved have experienced obstacles and challenges, they have also all gained from partnership experiences. The next chapter provides some recommendations that are based on these insights.

Perceived Challenges

Both the NPS and CBOs recognize lack of staff diversity as a barrier to expanding the NPS’s partnerships. The lack of minority staff members at parks makes minority visitors less comfortable when visiting.

Table 3.7: Shared perceptions of challenges associated with NPS partnerships

- Lack of NPS staff diversity
- Limited resources: staff, time, and money
- Limited procedural knowledge and poor communication between partners

All CBOs and the NPS expressed resources limitations as a barrier to partnership. These limited resources included small staffs that already have too many responsibilities, lack of funding for planning partnership events, and time constraints – both in terms of getting to parks and planning visits.

Poor communication and lack of procedural knowledge was another barrier. Many of the CBO constituents are not familiar with national parks and have some fear about what to do and expect when visiting. National Parks Service staff has also noticed this problem;

they have observed that CBOs they invited often do not arrive properly prepared. In addition, when groups arrive without appropriate knowledge they need more on-site help from park employees.

Chapter 4: Recommendations

The interviews with community-based organizations (CBOs) as well as NPS staff showed many parallels in perceptions of benefits afforded by partnerships as well as in challenges that need to be considered. All of the CBOs in our study expressed willingness to explore partnerships with the NPS. In turn, the NPS is interested in developing partnerships as a way to strengthen their ties with underserved groups.

In this chapter we discuss some steps that could make the expressed desire for partnering become a successful reality. These recommendations are informed by our literature review and exploration of some partnership precedents (see Appendix E). The main source for the recommendations, however, is the information gained from the interviews.

Across diverse organizations, with a wide range of experiences and missions, there was considerable similarity about common goals and potential concerns. Many of these should come as no surprise to the NPS, as it is already aware of some of the agency's hurdles and dilemmas that can stand in the way of working with groups that differ from the mainstream. The shared perceptions are important, but require translation into steps that can lead to useful and manageable partnerships. We offer some of these steps in this chapter.

Study Limitations

Before we begin, however, we want to acknowledge the study's limitations, particularly its limited scope. While the organizations included in the study represent the kinds of groups that are currently underserved by the NPS, the number of organizations included here is relatively small. Even for these organizations, the views we heard may not reflect those of their constituents. Within each organization we spoke with only one or two individuals. As is true for the organizations themselves, our own resource limitations precluded a more extensive study. Despite the study's limitations, we hope that the information the participants shared with us and the reflections they generated will lead to positive outcomes that benefit the CBOs and the NPS alike.

Addressing Common Barriers

Examination of the experiences the CBOs and NPS staff have had with past partnerships lead to three main areas of shared perceptions about potential difficulties: information, logistical, and cultural. Each of these themes, in turn, leads to some suggested directions that can be taken.

Informational Barriers

For those who are familiar with national parks, camping, or often spend time outdoors, and especially for park staff, it may be difficult to imagine nature as unknown territory. For many urban residents, however, there is not only lack of knowledge about what to do at a park, but no sense for how to do it. Because of their location in the outdoors, NPS staff seldom encounter visitors who are true novices.

The failure of imagery or knowledge about what to do can be daunting. In fact, this can be a sufficient impediment to venturing out at all. While this may seem extreme, it is hardly different than the reluctance of someone unfamiliar with inner-city communities to venture into such alien places. Even a small amount of familiarity can help bridge this gap. Thus, finding ways to overcome this barrier is an essential step to effective, proactive outreach efforts. Doing so can help remove problematic institutional mindsets of nontraditional visitors, increase park accessibility, and make new visitors more welcome.

Recommendations:

- **Visits from park rangers** to locations jointly set up through a CBO partnership, where urban residents can learn and ask questions.
- A targeted **web site** and **printed materials** can be useful ways to explain:
 - what to expect in parks for those who may have never visited the park;
 - information on specific locations, such as trails, services, and facilities;
 - common misperceptions;
 - what to bring;
 - answers to frequently asked questions
- A phone-based **information access number** providing a single source where potential visitors can receive answers to any question. The “311” phone service that residents in many cities can now use to obtain information about city services serves as a model.

Logistical Barriers

Two commonly mentioned logistical barriers involve transportation and the lack of disposable income characterizing many of the communities these partnerships wish to reach. Given the sprawling nature of Los Angeles and its lack of a comprehensive public transportation system, getting to NPS sites can be particularly challenging. Both transportation and cost-reducing issues can be explored through joint efforts of a partnering organization and the NPS. Discussions leading to some ways to handle these issues can in and of themselves be useful for building trust and learning about each others’ approaches.

Recommendations:

- **Transportation issues** can be addressed through many mechanisms. CBOs and the NPS could seek cooperative solutions involving low or no-cost public transportation to NPS sites. Alternatively, a regional transit program could be organized to serve such needs.

Funding for such projects could come from:

- Municipal sources or federal and state grants for outdoor education programs, or from private transportation companies.
- National Park Service units could jointly underwrite grants with CBOs or local conservancy organizations to further supplement transportation program costs. One example is the arrangement of a low-cost transfer ticket for a shuttle serving outdoor recreation destinations, available when riders purchase a standard city bus ticket. Shuttles could then be made available at various bus stops to transport riders directly to and from park sites.

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in Los Angeles (SMMNRA) has had significant success with its Recreational Transit Program and ParkLINK Shuttle service. Both programs provide free or low cost transportation services for inner city residents and other visitors to the SMMNRA. The ParkLINK shuttle service is a joint partnership effort between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the National Park Service, and California State Parks which provides service to ten sites within the SMMNRA. More information is available at www.smmc.ca.gov.

- **Cost of Passes and Parking:** In addition to finding reliable transportation to national parks, the costs of passes and parking can also be problematic for CBOs with already restricted budgets. In an effort to assist CBOs with the costs and difficulties regarding park passes and parking, the following recommendations are suggested:
 - **Tour Package Discounts** – Offering discount passes to partners who plan tours with their constituents can assist the CBOs with general costs of attendance and help to encourage repeat use. Packages that cover a series of parks, perhaps representing a diverse array of park types, would also help CBOs expose their constituents to an array of activities possible at national parks.
 - **Parking Availability for Busses** - To help CBOs parking large vehicles such as busses and vans, partnering with local businesses that can offer large parking spaces on a regular basis is highly recommended. Additionally, a review and potential rearranging of current parking available to visitors may help limit the need for off site parking of larger vehicles.
 - **Fee Waivers for Veterans** – The U.S. armed forces consist of a diverse number of currently underserved park visitors. The NPS can offer free park entrance and parking waivers to veterans and their families as an encouragement for more frequent visitorship.
- **Physical Accessibility:** As described in Chapter 1, the population of American senior citizens is growing larger than ever before. To meet its obligation of providing meaningful experiences to all Americans, the NPS must be mindful of this change and adjust services accordingly.

The NPS has made great strides toward park accessibility for Americans with disabilities. It should now expand those efforts to accommodate a much larger population that requires enhanced services. Seniors do not necessarily need handicapped services; many simply require a middle ground between wheelchair accessibility and rugged terrain. The NPS's efforts at outreach should include this growing segment of visitors. Beyond making accommodations for older visitors, there is the need to let seniors and potential senior partnering organizations know about such accommodations. Both web-based information and on-site accessibility information will help visitors find available paved trails and know about the difficulty level of trails.

- **Other Program Costs:** Some of the transportation recommendations also address the challenges of financial constraints. An additional barrier mentioned by some interviewees involved the lack of necessary outdoor supplies, such as camping equipment. The problem here involves both lack of knowledge about what is needed as well as the cost of obtaining it, especially for a whole group. Possible remedies include:
 - Offering an on-site equipment rental service. Either existing vendors or the NPS could offer such a service, perhaps at a discounted rate to low-income visitors.
 - Another way to accommodate participants is to partner with recreation outfitters, offering equipment rentals to community and/or low-income group participants.
 - One group suggested offering a mobile equipment supplier that NPS staff could use to meet groups at various sites and provide them with necessary equipment for their overnight stays.

Cultural Barriers

Outdoor destinations are often “not on the map” for urban residents. For many of them, outdoor recreation is typically associated with whites. Furthermore, some who have come to more distant outdoor places report feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome. Such concerns were frequently mentioned by CBOs as a barrier to partnership. Some CBOs reported perceiving NPS staff as discriminatory, unable to communicate with people of color, and uninviting. One organization with minority constituents reported being discouraged by park staff from taking a trail deemed too difficult, while this staff member then suggested the trail to a primarily Caucasian group. In order to form healthy partnerships, the NPS must overcome this barrier and change the negative perception some groups may have of national park staff.

 **Recommendations:**

- **Staff Development and Education** is an important dimension for addressing such cultural concerns.
 - One suggestion is to hire more people of color. Having greater staff diversity will help minority visitors and NPS staff relate more readily to one another.
 - Student internships are a low-cost option for increasing minority representation at national parks. Internships offer youth a hands-on learning experience and the opportunity to explore a potential career path. Interns also have the opportunity to gain an in-depth exposure to the parks while helping the NPS build their workforce by recruiting more ethnic and other minority groups into a field lacking in diversity.
 - While it may not be feasible to hire additional staff members, ongoing cultural competency training is another option. Some agencies use web-based training sessions to meet this goal. Having a culturally sensitive staff helps to reduce stereotypes individuals may harbor, reducing the likelihood of unintentional negative treatment of visitors.
 - General communication training is also suggested, as it is important that staff be able to deal with the variety of people and circumstances they may encounter on a daily basis.
- **Outreach in surrounding communities.** Urban residents will be more likely to consider a park visit if they believe they will not be discriminated against. If the NPS strives to build legitimacy through outreach it can help to clarify what national parks can offer the community. To address visitors' preconceived notions and stereotypes, NPS staff members could talk with potential visitors before their park visit, which will help them prepare and learn what to expect while also diminishing negative stereotypes they may hold.
- **Food as expression of culture.** The lack of ethnic food at national parks was also mentioned as a major drawback when visiting. Groups felt that traditional American foods are offered, but not food that ethnic minority groups would commonly eat. One way to address this problem is to provide vending machines with diverse food selections. Another way is to contract with vendors providing ethnic foods and publicize these options with visitors.

Addressing CBO-Specific Concerns

This section focuses on recommendations that may be more specific to particular types of organizations. Partnerships with different kinds of organizations are likely to raise some concerns that pertain to the particular issues the organizations address. The discussion is organized in terms of the four types of organizations in this study.

Faith-based Organizations

As a government agency, the NPS may find working with faith-based organizations presents unique challenges. However, these need not be major obstacles if one starts with small or pilot projects and establishes prudent guidelines with respect to First Amendment concerns.

Existing NPS and Department of Interior policies and precedents should be examined with respect to collaboration with faith-based organizations so that the focus of partnering does not overstep established boundaries. It is worth noting that since many projects will not involve a transfer or exchange of funds, initial concerns about separation of church and state may not be well founded. However, guiding principles should be established regarding this domain of partnerships for the clarification of future projects.

A chief concern of participating FBOs in this study was the prospect that any additional projects per se would draw on already constrained human resources. National parks are overwhelmingly viewed as distant destinations, with time seen as the most constraining factor. The NPS would do well to overcome this widespread opinion by working actively to correct this impression through a tangible presentation of potential time commitments. For instance, the NPS could spell out exactly what reasonable day trips and longer stays would entail. Proactive inclusion of more local parks in some instances could add to the appeal of outdoor recreation: Nearby urban parks can serve as a gateway toward greater desire to explore wilderness areas in the future.

With similar regard to potential time commitments, it is suggested that the NPS develop a pilot program that would train park staff in the management and supervision of urban groups, particularly those involving children, to reduce the inputs from a partnering FBO with already strapped resources. In doing so, the NPS could offer more viability in presenting recreation opportunities to urban residents.

Another avenue for reducing the time commitment from potential partners would be to establish procedures to expedite the fixed time costs surrounding park visitation. For example, park entrance and orientation procedures could be handled off-site, before arrival, perhaps during transit. Information technology may be useful in this realm in order to transfer data about an arriving group so that the park may adequately prepare.

Organizations, particularly FBOs, may strongly desire to have a greater sense of control over how they spend their time, relative to other park visitors. Therefore, the NPS could present opportunities where organizations could have the freedom to recreate in their particular way, such as offering facilities that could be individually reserved for spiritual retreats.

Several CBOs in this study indicated the value of having a packaged presentation of park resources that would be amenable to their interests and concerns. For example, a FBO may be interested in visiting the park for reasons that primarily include a spiritual retreat. But spending time and learning about the outdoors per se is also a highly valued activity, as indicated by all participating FBOs. Interviewees suggested that a schedule of events that offered time for park education through rangers or trail guides along with later time on their own for religious observance in a multiple use facility that can be reserved ahead of time would be quite appealing.

Female Organizations

Participating Female Organizations indicated three main barriers. Although these concerns may be extrapolated to other organizations, those dealing with safety and overcrowding were particularly indicative of FO constituents' fears of sexual and other physical assault or abduction by men while outdoors. These fears primarily stem from the feelings of isolation and openness produced by being in a large natural area.

The FO participants indicated concerns for partnering with the NPS, with potential solutions as follows:

Participating FOs were concerned that they do not have the time or resources to invest in a NPS partnership.

- The NPS can provide clear examples of previous partnership experiences with the use of a brochure or flyer directing potential partners to the NPS Partnership web site. Consideration should also be made to create hard copy information for organizations that do not use or do not have internet capabilities.
- Work with NPS staff to ensure their ability to communicate with CBOs and their constituents. This will be particularly beneficial in maintaining productive and infrequent meetings which will address time restraints for both the NPS and the CBO.
- Have independent third party sessions with the CBO to facilitate partnership foundation, roles, responsibilities, and goals.

Participating FOs were concerned as to the motivation behind why NPS would want to partner with them.

- Host information sessions and/or tours for CBO executives. Sessions should focus on what the NPS has to contribute (resources, centers, etc.) and specific reasons as to why the NPS wants partners. It will be beneficial to gear reasons to specific organization type.
- Bring info sessions/rangers to the CBO locations and maintain follow up letters/phone calls/emails reiterating the NPS interest in the individual CBOs.
- Clearly state the NPS goals and objectives for partnerships while keeping in mind those organizations not able to access the NPS Partnerships web site.

Participating FOs were concerned about overcrowding and related safety issues.

- If possible, the NPS can offer facility reservations for large groups which will help limit or allow proper CBO event planning to cope with other visitors.
- Monthly visits to CBOs by park rangers to provide staff and constituents information about nature, safety, and to familiarize them with parks and outdoor recreation in order to help establish trusting relationships.
- Provide more visible presence of rangers/law enforcement that check-in and assist groups.
- Create and increase use of signage/brochures on respectable use of the area and basic camping/hiking etiquette in parks and along trails.

Youth Organizations

Youth organizations could enjoy NPS partnership through visits from rangers at their program site, guided programming at national parks, residential programs, service learning projects, or career mentorship. All CBOs interviewed were supportive of the potential partnership and understand that theoretically, the benefits of partnering outweigh the drawbacks. By addressing these perceived barriers successful partnerships can be built.

Youth Organizations found lack of awareness among youth as a barrier to park visitation. To counter this limitation the NPS could market national parks to young people. Many young people use the Internet, making it an excellent outreach tool for engaging youth. The NPS could gear a section of their web site to students or advertise on networking sites already used by young adults such as MySpace, Friendster, or Facebook. Another option for addressing this barrier is to give youth more opportunities to interact with the NPS, through internships or site visits by NPS staff members. The NPS could also address this barrier by doing more outreach through visiting CBO facilities, participating in career fairs, or setting up booths at community gatherings.

Urban Nature Centers

Recruiting families to participate in UNC programming is particularly challenging, as many potential visitors come from households with single parents or dually employed parents. Parent participation is important to both UNCs and the NPS because their support will more likely ensure their children's participation. Furthermore, it will expose parents to public resources and recreational activities, which is especially important in terms of garnering support for public lands. To accommodate working parents, UNC and the NPS could schedule relevant environmental education and outdoor programming in short segments to account for busy schedules. For example, activities that do not require travel, such as on-site lectures, would be shorter and closer to home. These factors make it more likely that parents could participate. Another possibility is for parents to take turns chaperoning. Encouraging parents to participate in the planning process is another way to promote parental involvement. Staff could host short meetings and solicit programming ideas from parents to give them the opportunity to get involved.

Further Suggestions for NPS

While many of the recommendations suggested in the previous sections of this chapter emanate from discussions with community-based organization personnel, this section highlights approaches that are drawn from the conversations with NPS personnel. As would be expected, there are some common themes even though the bases are different. The different ways to frame the suggestions, however, may facilitate putting these ideas to use. In all cases, the overarching intent is to find ways to improve NPS outreach efforts to underserved audiences and facilitate partnerships with CBOs serving non-traditional visitors.

Development Strategies

Active Pursuit of Partnerships

The NPS units will benefit greatly not only by remaining open to partnerships in general, but more importantly, by engaging in a more vigorous, strategic pursuit of suitable partnerships. The NPS may accomplish this by “plugging into” existing networks of partners (such as a group of youth organizations for example). In doing so, the NPS can add another layer of resources to the partnership benefiting the existing partners and also providing valuable new resources for the NPS unit. One participant in this study has spent a great deal of time researching possible partners for various projects. This respondent recounted a situation in which his park unit was seeking to renovate an historic garden space. Rather than conduct the project themselves, park staff performed the necessary research, located and contacted an organization that was looking for a project of this nature, and worked together to reach an agreement for a partnership. The organization provided volunteers to perform restoration work and maintenance under the guidance and supervision of a professional landscape architect and handled the fundraising to finance the project.

The same park unit benefited from partnerships in its efforts to reposition itself in the market place for recreational activities and strengthen community awareness, involvement, and visitation to the unit. The park staff realized that they needed to engage in a “re-branding” effort to increase community interest in the park site, but did not know how to go about it. Park staff contacted preeminent local media, advertising, and marketing professionals to engage them in the park’s re-branding efforts. Through the consistent relationship-building efforts by park staff over time, these media professionals became excited about the park and the proposed project and ultimately provided pro bono services as partners for the park unit and improved visitor numbers and community involvement.

Act as an “Honest Broker”

The NPS might try to create a different role for itself in a partnership, such as that of a coalition builder. The NPS could take the lead in identifying potential partners with common interests, goals, and policies, and build coalitions with them to further each other’s mission. The NPS could act as a kind of “honest broker” among organizations which may be in competition with one another for resources or target audience members.

“Embedding”

Embedding suggests incorporating the views and input from representatives of underserved communities into planning processes. National Park Service units may want to make greater efforts at early outreach when considering a new project or educational program to ensure that the needs of diverse communities are met. Rather than checking with diverse communities after the planning process has begun (or worse yet, been completed), park staff are advised to include diverse audience members immediately in the initial planning phases of a new project or program.

Greater Public Involvement in Planning

National Park Service units will benefit by involving neighboring communities and diverse community members early in the planning and development process for programs and activities. The NPS needs help identifying areas where it is lacking in its service to diverse audiences and also requires assistance in developing metrics to gauge how well its outreach efforts are performing. By building stronger relationships with diverse community members and involving those community members in the early stages of program development, park staff will be better able to provide programming and education that is relevant and engaging for diverse audiences. It would be useful for NPS units to develop staff training designed to create greater awareness in park staff of what potential CBOs serving underserved audiences may need in order to become partners.

Information Exchange and Market Research

National Park Service staff may try to engage in more community outreach events. For instance, a portion of a unit's operating budget which is earmarked for executive travel to conferences could be redirected to help finance some sort of promotional travel package for local community and business leaders from the areas neighboring a park. Local leaders could be brought to the park, given the chance to experience what the park has to offer and learn about the potential economic, cultural, and environmental benefits the park brings to their community. When the community leaders return to their areas, they can then promote the parks and act as ambassadors between the park and their constituents.

Park units could organize and sponsor special events at their site targeting diverse visitors. Park staff working with partner organizations from diverse communities could prepare special day or weekend events designed to encourage and teach members of underserved communities about what national parks have to offer. Such events would require proper planning, and logistical support (especially transportation), and in particular, park staff would need to conduct ample research and outreach to discover areas where a lack of information about national park outdoor experiences exists.

Internal Innovation

Encourage and Promote Diversity in Staff

National Park Service staff diversity may be improved in several ways. Park units could work more closely with local school districts to incorporate classroom curriculum requirements into on-site educational programs. By working in partnerships with school districts from diverse communities, park units can improve the likelihood that students are receiving training in disciplines and academic areas which will promote their interest in national park employment and simultaneously make students more competitive candidates for national park positions.

If not doing so already, an NPS unit could engage in employee sharing agreements with allied organizations. For example, a conservancy organization can hire a member of an underserved community who is qualified to perform the duties required of an NPS position but lacks the necessary job history required by federal hiring standards. That is, the conservancy can hire such an individual under less burdensome standards than the NPS faces. As a result, such an individual is provided with a better opportunity to gain necessary work experience, through an employee sharing program, to become competitive for future NPS employment. Conservancy organizations frequently have pre-existing arrangements with their natural resource agency partners under which their employees may be loaned to the agency on a temporary basis to work directly for that agency while still formally employed and paid by the conservancy. In this way, a qualified member of an underserved audience group who may not otherwise have been able to include NPS employment on a resume, now has the opportunity to do so and is thus a more competitive candidate for future NPS job openings.

Alternative Funding Sources

National Park Service units cannot rely on significant funding for partnering or outreach efforts from federal sources and should consequently seek out innovative and alternative funding sources. For example, a conservancy organization may prove to be a reliable source of short term funding for partnership projects or may be able to act as a fundraising body for a NPS unit seeking to enhance outreach efforts.

Incremental Steps

Small incremental steps can be a key to building productive partnerships. National Park Service units should perform adequate research to find appropriate partners and then select or propose small scale projects initially. Through this method, both the NPS staff and its partners can determine whether further partnering is possible and beneficial for all parties. If success is realized on the small scale, progressively larger, more ambitious projects can be pursued gradually over time with all partners performing periodic evaluations of the partnering benefits and costs.



Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary

The goal of this study was to contribute to the continuing efforts of the National Park Service (NPS) in determining ways that it can engage more underserved audiences in visiting national parks. As the U.S. population continues to grow and diversify, the NPS faces a critical need to reflect demographic realities in their visitorship. To address this urgency, the NPS must move beyond symbolic consideration toward meaningful engagement of diverse audiences.

Our study focused on partnerships as a mechanism to increase the ties between the NPS and targeted groups. We chose to connect with local community-based organizations (CBOs) in Southern California and NPS staff to help in the process of partnership building by analyzing their prior experiences and expertise. Through interviews and examination of existing partnerships, we identified many ways that partnerships can be beneficial. At the same time, there are challenges that must be faced if the benefits are to be realized. Attention to the problems identified in this report and the recommendations offered may significantly contribute to ensuring the future of the organization and success in managing the country's natural resources.

The NPS must move beyond symbolic consideration toward meaningful engagement of diverse audiences.

Community-based Organizations – Partnership Concerns and Recommendations

Among the many CBOs in the Los Angeles area, we chose to narrow our study to include representatives from four main organization types – Faith-based Organizations (FBOs), Female Organizations (FOs), Urban Nature Centers (UNCs), and Youth Organizations (YOs). Despite their diversity and experiences, the organizations all expressed willingness to form partnerships with the NPS and all have had many beneficial experiences with partnering.

Along with each organization's specific concerns about partnering with the NPS, several areas of concern were found to be common among the CBOs interviewed including:

- The NPS's motivation in partnering
- Transporting constituents to NPS sites and knowing what to do there
- Outdoor safety

Key recommendations to assist the NPS in alleviating these concerns and for building stronger partnerships included:

- Visiting communities more frequently
- Offering orientation prior to park visits
- Arranging logistical aspects of national park visits
- Offering comparative site tours
- Offering additional volunteer opportunities
- Further incorporate local historical culture

National Parks Service – Perceived Barriers to Partnerships

In addition to CBOs, NPS staff members were also interviewed with regard to the challenges and recommendations to building stronger, successful partnerships with local communities. Barriers described by the park staff included:

- Lack of staff diversity
- Bureaucracy
- Group think: Institutional mindsets
- Time
- Information exchange

Shared Perceptions

While the obstacles highlighted by the CBOs and NPS staff reflect very different perspectives, they have underlying similarities. The most notable shared perceptions were:

- Informational
 - Knowing what to do at a park
 - Park units have incomplete information about underserved audiences
- Logistical
 - Lack of transportation and disposable income
 - Scarcity of resources for outreach in park units
- Cultural
 - Past experiences of bias and lack of cultural awareness
 - Wild area outdoor recreation associated primarily with white community

Recommendations

The shared perceptions serve as a useful springboard for suggestions we discuss in Chapter 4. This wide range of recommendations addresses the issues of concern to both CBOs and the NPS in launching future partnerships to attract more underserved groups to the national parks. In this concluding chapter, we incorporate some of these approaches in the context of two main strategies that draw on our interview data and literature review. To accomplish diversification, we suggest the NPS should:

- Establish partnerships with community-based organizations serving non-traditional visitors
- Change institutional norms

Establish Partnerships with Community-based Organizations

In order to establish effective partnerships with CBOs, we recommend that the NPS should focus on:

- Informational issues
 - Develop materials specifically for visitors new to the outdoors
 - Conduct more NPS staff visits to local communities
 - Increase information exchange through partnerships and conduct “market” research to determine how best to attract and engage currently underserved audience members
- Logistical issues
 - Directly involve CBOs in planning decisions
 - Explore and support internal innovation, including alternative funding sources

Change Institutional Norms

Changes to institutional norms will involve addressing:

- Cultural issues
 - Encourage and promote diversity in staff to give underserved audiences more people they can relate to
 - Offer internships geared toward partnership constituencies
 - Maintain ongoing cultural competency and strengthen communication and networking skills training for staff

Next Steps

The recommendations include some that may be less demanding, while others require more commitment or support. Small incremental steps are more likely to lead to building productive partnerships. At the same time, with each incremental step, the next step seems more manageable.

The informational domain may be a relatively straightforward starting point. Current NPS partnerships can be a useful source of input about desired information on the web site. These ideas and comments can then be used for soliciting feedback specifically from organizations serving underserved groups. Since all the organizations in the study expressed interest in being contacted by NPS, speaking with a few of these may be a way to find out what information would be helpful and to initiate discussion about partnering. Some potential partners may experience resource constraints making Internet access a greater challenge. That would provide an opportunity for NPS to explore other kinds of outreach efforts. For example, a joint venture to create a promotional brochure might lead to the members of that organization eager to share the information with some of their partners.

Having initiated contact and worked on a joint project, both the CBO and the NPS may find it much easier to try other ventures. There may be opportunities for visits that introduce groups to park units, links to schools and internships, and so on. Clearly, there are some steps that require less time, money, and commitment on the part of the NPS or the organization. In the long run, these are not sufficient to achieve the major goals of the study. They can, however, move the NPS from hopes to realities. We expect that such realities will offer many benefits to the partnering organizations as well as the NPS.

Appendix A: Summary of additional data; other material related to NPS visitorship

- Households traveling to national parks spent an average of US\$627.00 per trip. 20% of travelers surveyed spent \$1,000.00 or more on trips to national parks but the majority (59%) spent under \$500 per trip. These figures do include transportation costs. They are more reflective of lodging and other accommodations costs and also reflect the longer duration of stays at national parks than other leisure activities. The survey defined a trip as consisting of travel of 50 miles or more, one way.
- Approximately 93% of person-trips¹ to national parks involved at least one overnight stay. The average length of a stay in a national park was 5.4 nights. About 39% of person-trips lasted three to six nights and about 28% of person-trips lasted seven or more nights.
- Nearly half (46%) of trips taken to national parks are taken by households headed by Baby Boomers. The average age of the households taking trips to national parks is 47. Households with ages over 55 represented 29% of those taking trips to national parks and households headed by those aged 18-34 constituted about 25% of trips taken to national parks. Households making a national park trip were about 37% likely to include children and about 39% likely to contain two or more adults.
- Households making trips to national parks tended to have achieved higher education levels with 55% of households headed by someone with a college degree or higher.
- The majority (67%) of national park trips were taken by households residing in major metropolitan areas or large cities with populations of over 500,000.
- Median annual household income for national park travelers was \$56,600. About one third of households taking trips to national parks had annual household incomes in excess of \$75,000. 38% of trips were carried out by households headed by someone working in a managerial or professional capacity and 16% of trips were made by households headed by a retired person.
- The majority (80%) of national park visitors reached their destination by car, truck, rental car or recreational vehicle, accounting for 69.9 million person-trips. Air travel accounted for about 13.3 million person-trips in 2003, or about 15% of total person-trips.

Source: Patkose, Stokes, & Cook, 2004.

¹ Person-trip is defined as one person on a trip. For example, if three persons from one household take one trip together, the travel counts as one household trip and three person-trips.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Letter

Informed Consent

Parks, People and Partnerships: National Parks and Underserved Visitors

Description of the research

Through this study, we hope to find ways to enhance partnership opportunities between non-traditional visitors and National Parks. We are exploring what has made existing partnerships effective. We are also talking with leaders and representatives from community based organizations, church groups, at-risk youth organizations and other groups that work with citizens who haven't traditionally had much exposure to National Parks to learn about what might be helpful for building successful partnerships. Our study is a first step in what we hope will be many more projects and efforts to increase non-traditional visitors involvement with America's National Parks. The final product of this study will be printed materials (brochures or pamphlets for example), possibly a webpage and a final report.

Description of your involvement

We would like to ask you some questions that will help provide the National Park Service with information on how best to establish and maintain effective partnerships with your group or organization. The information we gather will also be available to you and other interested organizations for your use in reaching out to the National Park Service or other agencies concerned with natural resource preservation. This will be an informal meeting. You are free to ask questions and to decline to answer questions you don't want to answer. We will not use any recording devices, but we do need to take notes so the team can share the information we gather. Strict confidentiality will be maintained at all times regarding your identity and/or personal information. Should direct quotes or identifying information be required for the project, we will ask for your written consent. We greatly appreciate your time, and expect our conversation will last no more than an hour.

We are obligated to tell you that we anticipate no risks or discomforts associated with this request. At the same time, we hope the study will have many benefits to your organization and to furthering the use of our National Parks by people who now have little contact with it.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may skip or refuse to answer any survey question and you are free to leave the study at any time if you so desire.

Should you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board, 540 E. Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933, email: irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Researchers

Name	Role	Contact Number
Mr. Joshua Baur	Master's Degree Candidate; School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan	(734) 769-####
Ms. Laura Diprizio		(734) 222-####
Ms. Nicole Fernandes		(619) 990-####
Mr. Zachary Fried		(917) 302-####
Ms. Jennifer Sellers		(269) 274-####
Dr. Rachel Kaplan	Faculty Advisor	(734) 763-####

I have read [or been informed] of the information given above. (Josh Baur, Laura Diprizio, Nicole Fernandes, Zachary Fried, Jennifer Sellers) has offered to answer any questions I may have concerning the study. I hereby consent to participate in the study.

ADULT SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

Printed Name

Consenting signature

Appendix C: NPS Interview Questions

Theme Area 1. NPS Support

Question 1: Are you provided with the resources/support needed to adequately maintain and grow partnership opportunities? If not, what resources do you most need to improve and create partnership opportunities? If “resources = money” primarily, then where is the money most needed?

Question 2: Do you feel free to experiment with various approaches to engaging underserved/minority audiences?

Question 3: Do you think NPS adequately communicates its interest in addressing the needs of traditionally underserved visitors?

Theme Area 2. Obstacles.

Question 1: What barriers (bureaucratic, other) have you encountered in past partnerships? How did you get through them? Who was helpful in getting through them? How? Are there any examples of barriers you simply couldn't overcome?

Question 2: What kinds of outreach/educational programs/projects have been successful in the past? Where have “failures” occurred? Why?

Question 3: Do you feel NPS provides adequate resources (training, workshops, etc.) to properly manage volunteers, partners? Are there areas which need improvement?

Theme Area 3. Benefits of Partnering

Question 1: What do you hope to accomplish through partnerships with non-traditional visitors? What do you see as the NPS's responsibility in achieving this? What are partner group responsibilities?

Question 2: What do you consider attractive qualities that CBOs could bring to the table?

Question 3: What percentage of your volunteers is from outside organizations vs. just an individual helping of their own volition?

Question 4: At what level do most volunteers participate? Do you envision partnerships at the higher levels of planning and policy? Or do you need more “boots on the ground” type involvement from volunteers/partner organizations?

Question 5: What are the characteristics of a successful partnership? What are the signs of success in engaging underserved/non-traditional communities

Appendix D: CBO Interview Questions

I. Nature of Current/Past Partnerships

1. Do you currently partner or have you partnered with other organizations? If so, which types (governmental, non-profit, private, etc.)?
2. What did/does the partnership entail (i.e. nature of)?
3. Why did you partner with these particular organizations?
4. (If not covered in question #3), What were benefits you received from these organizations? What were the benefits your partner received?
5. What were the challenges partnering with these organizations?

II. NPS Partnerships

A. Organizational Willingness

1. Given what I've told you and what you know about NPS Partnerships, what aspect of partnering with NPS is most appealing to your organization and constituency?
2. What short- and long-term benefits do you envision for your organization?
3. What are the your biggest concerns in developing a relationship with NPS (barriers)?:
 - a. financial resources
 - b. staff expertise
 - c. time
 - d. transportation
 - e. participant interest
 - f. other; specify: _____
4. Would you be willing to take the next steps to partner with NPS (such as arranging a meeting, co-authoring a grant, enlisting volunteers, etc.) if you envision such a partnership within the scope of your organization's work over the next few years? Would you mind if NPS contacted your organization to discuss potential partnership opportunities?

III. Information about organization

1. How would you describe your organization and its membership?
2. Which mechanisms are most successful in reaching your constituents?
 - a. word of mouth
 - b. kiosk/on-site posters or flyers
 - c. staff members/volunteers
 - d. neighborhood flyering/ads
 - e. other community organizations
 - f. other; please specify: _____
3. How likely would each of these be attractive to your constituents during a visit to the national park (if any)?:
 - a. hiking
 - b. learning about local ecology from ranger/naturalist
 - c. barbequing
 - d. relaxing/napping
 - e. water activities (playing, canoeing, fishing, etc.)
 - f. horseback riding
 - g. skiing
 - h. bird and/or animal watching
 - i. volunteering, such as planting trees or creating/maintaining a trail
 - j. other; please specify: _____
4. What do you think are the barriers or concerns your constituents have about visiting national parks/outdoor recreational areas?
5. What environmental issues are your constituents most concerned with? (e.g. litter/trash, stray dogs, air pollution, global warming, etc.)

Other comments?

Appendix E: Examples and Precedents

This section provides examples of model partnerships between community-based organizations and government agencies. The five examples provide information about partnerships with each of the kinds of organizations included in the study as well as a partnership with the National Park Service.

Baltimore Rising: Partnership With a Faith-based Organization

The city of Baltimore offers a successful example of a partnership program between a government agency and faith-based organizations (FBOs). In early 2001, Baltimore's former Mayor O'Malley announced the creation of Baltimore Rising, a government program of faith-based partnerships intended to reduce youth violence in Baltimore. While its primary functions are not limited to outdoor recreation, this program provides a viable model upon which to organize and invite FBOs into active and meaningful partnerships.

Community members from over fifty participating FBOs serve as volunteer mentors to vulnerable and at-risk urban youth, especially those with a history of violent behavior. Organized into formal networks, the organizations operate under a contractual arrangement with the city to provide services to beneficiaries. Approximately three hundred teenagers are identified as likely to engage in criminal, delinquent and violent behavior and selected to participate in the mentoring effort to help them to reconnect more meaningfully with society.

Under the direction of the Mayor's Office for Children, Youth, and Families (MOCYF), the staff of Baltimore Rising connect members of Baltimore's religious community, social service providers, governmental agencies, parents, and volunteers.

Existing programs fall under five categories: Faith-based programs, school-based services, community-based programming, career training and employment programming, and specialized projects. Mentoring is the dominant theme throughout the various program directions and it encompasses academic, religious, community, and career domains.

The city provides a variety of incentives to Baltimore's faith community. Baltimore Rising partners may receive:

- **Use of Recreational Facilities:** MOCYF provides opportunities for FBOs to adopt a recreation center in their community.
- **Mentor Recruitment Stipend:** Provided upon linking at least ten mentors with youth, a stipend is provided to help strengthen the partnership and assist with associated costs.
- **Capacity Building:** A limited amount of free consultation is available on areas such as grant writing and non-profit development.
- **Grants Hotline:** A monthly newsletter of funding opportunities is offered to partnering organizations.
- **Advocacy:** City services intervene as needed by using mediation to resolve problems or issues facing partners that might otherwise be difficult to handle by the FBOs themselves.

- Service Linkages are provided to facilitate the connection between the organization's congregation and an assortment of community services.
- Youth Employment: Youth may receive paying jobs through the city, working on mutually agreed-upon projects in the community of the partnering FBO.

Information sharing is a crucial component of Baltimore Rising and through its web site, updates provide participants with news of related events. Data from schools, the police department, youth and parents are collected in order to assess the efforts of services in the communities served.

Under the Mayor, the program is not a permanent line-item budget, and it is hoped that the program spawns sustainable relationships that may be extended without municipal funding. Baltimore's Center for Management and Technology is considering providing ongoing management and technology consulting to the program's faith partners, in addition to providing infrastructure such as internet service to individual mentorships. The White House Office of Faith-based Initiatives has also expressed interest in repeating this model program for other efforts.

Becoming an Outdoors Women: Partnership With a Female Organization

The Becoming an Outdoors Women (BOW) Program, conducted throughout North America and New Zealand, began in 1991 at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. The program was created to provide women with positive outdoor experiences where learning in a safe environment was critical. At BOW's first weekend event, 100 women participated in the pilot program. The program has grown to include 20,000 women per year who participate in traditional BOW workshops and its newest programs, including Beyond BOW and the Jane Deere Project.

Research conducted between 1997 through 1999 on the BOW program has shown that its participants have increased their purchase of hunting and fishing license sales, as well as park permits and passes. Not only are these increased activities important to further conservation efforts, but they also result in BOW constituents identifying more strongly with resource management agencies.¹

BOW has addressed concerns regarding participation by ethnic minority women with the identification of three main barriers: Lack of minority instructors, distance of workshops from urban centers, and perceptions that the programs are not for minorities.

Focusing on "train-the-trainer" techniques, BOW held a session for minority men and women instructors in Wisconsin followed by collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service for a pilot workshop to enhance ethnic minority participation. The workshop consisted of 42% ethnic minority instructors and 19% ethnic minority participants, the highest percentage that BOW has experienced to date. Additionally, BOW is researching and exploring programs for disabled women. Since 2002, BOW has attempted to identify and address the barriers in which disabled women face at workshops.

Collaborations which contribute to the program's overwhelming success include state natural

¹ Sales go directly to resource conservation and park management.

resource agencies, local and national outdoor equipment retailers, and federal agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service. New programs and research, such as the Jane Deere Project, which focuses on exposing farm and ranch women to wildlife activities, have received direct assistance by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Boone and Crockett Club, Izaak Walton League, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, National Association of Conservation Districts, Mississippi State University and many others. Additionally, these partners provide critical expertise, equipment, staff, room and board, fee waivers, financial support for participants, and sites to conduct workshops. In return partners have access to new constituents which may likely lead to higher sales, increased club memberships and more.

With the incredible success of BOW workshops throughout the world, largely in part to an extraordinary level of partnering with like minded groups and agencies, BOW has continued to grow with additional programs such as Beyond BOW. Offering women further hands-on experience, Beyond BOW provides women the opportunity to engage in activity specific outings, such as turkey hunting, bass fishing, hiking, camping and more. With a specific focus, women can use the skills they learn from BOW workshops to further engage in specific activities they find appealing.

Multicultural Students At Sea Together: Partnership With a Youth Organization

Multicultural Students at Sea Together (MAST) is a three-week program at Hampton University for college students of color. Hampton University partners with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), various colleges and universities, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the menhaden³ fishing industry, and museums in the Chesapeake Bay area. This interdisciplinary marine education program is geared toward serving one dozen students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups per year. In addition to learning about African-American and Native American heritage in coastal environments, participants learn about marine policy, work on field-based projects that evaluate the health of the Chesapeake Bay, and explore careers in marine-related fields. Students simultaneously learn how to sail a ketch⁴ during this month long summer program.

Participants are primarily recruited from science-related programs at universities throughout the country. Although many of the participants have science backgrounds, all interested students, regardless of their background, are encouraged to apply. The program provides students with a small stipend, college credit, room and board, and covers all necessary travel costs.

The students receive numerous benefits from this program. By learning about African American and Native American maritime history they can reclaim their heritage and limit the sense of alienation they may have felt in pursuing a marine-related career. Students also benefit from the opportunity to bond with their peers and the numerous educational opportunities this unique program creates.

² Brochure available at <<http://www.aslo.org/education/aslo2003/cukor.pdf>>. Accessed 11/12/06.

³ Any large herring-like fish on the East Coast of North America valued for oil and fertilizer.

⁴ A boat with two masts.

Partners play a significant role in insuring the success of this program. One of their main partners, NOAA, provides research sites and laboratories in the Chesapeake Bay area, in addition to providing funding and mentorship for students. Other partners, such as local museums, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the fishing industry, and the EPA also offer career mentorship and sites / laboratories for students to work during the program. Universities across the nation recruit participants and ensure that they receive college credit for their participation, while local universities in the area provide laboratories and research sites. Partners benefit from this program through the exposure to and work with a diverse audience as well as the opportunity to directly recruit their future workforce.

Additional Links:

- <http://www.marinetech.org/related/index.php?phase=2&cat=College+Internships&page=Multicultural+students+At+Sea+Together+Program>
- http://erf.org/cgi-bin/conference05_abstract.pl?conference=erf2005&id=244
- <http://www.hamptonu.edu/academics/schools/science/marine/mast/>

Augustus Hawkins Park: Partnership with an Urban Nature Center

Augustus Hawkins Park is an urban nature park in the heart of south Los Angeles. The onsite Evan Frankel Discovery Center provides interpretive displays, educational resources, and programming about nature. The park is also comprised of eight southern California ecosystem types. The park was named in honor of Augustus F. Hawkins, who represented South Central Los Angeles from 1963 to 1991 in the U.S. House of Representatives. The park site is a former Los Angeles Department of Water disposal yard and is located in an industrial and low-income neighborhood. Local residents are predominately Latino and African-American.

The idea for the park was conceived by former local Los Angeles Councilmember Rita Walters, who expressed concern that her constituents lacked access to outdoor, natural area open space. Walters approached the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) about providing opportunities for residents to visit the Santa Monica Mountains. MRCA has a clause in its charter to provide all residents of Los Angeles with access to the Santa Monica Mountains. Shortly thereafter, MRCA began programming for Walters' constituents to visit nature centers in the mountains.

The program was so successful that Councilmember Walters wanted to create a natural area in her council district and began looking for open space. By 1995, a deal was negotiated between the City of Los Angeles, which owned the site of the future park, and MRCA to remove the pipes on the site and allow the park to be built, operated, and maintained using City Proposition K and State Proposition 96A funds. The planning process was protracted and slow at first, but MRCA staff was constantly onsite and traveled throughout local neighborhoods to get community members involved in the planning efforts. After about one year, community involvement increased. Community members wanted soccer fields, swimming pools and other recreational amenities. MRCA and City Council staff members were completely honest with community members and responded that the area would become a nature park, not a recreational one. People also expressed interested in jobs at the park. MRCA accommodated such requests where possible and hired qualified community members when appropriate. Doing this created a sense of community ownership of the building, landscaping, and park in general.

Scholarships were also awarded to young people in the community, which allowed them to visit and camp at Temescal Canyon, a MRCA site in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The park was successful because it had both community support and quality programming. The ranger, chief programming coordinator, and staff were all residents of the community. Programs were diverse and included after school programs, camping, a junior ranger program, and a Community Thanksgiving celebration.

Augustus Hawkins Park served as a gateway to local mountain parks. The most popular programs connected residents with the Santa Monica Mountains via a naturalist. A free bus program took residents to the Santa Monica Mountains each Saturday to help residents make connections between the local park and the natural ecosystems of the Santa Monica Mountains. Residents learned about the program through onsite flyers and sign-up sheets (which included a legal waiver), local mailings, neighborhood council offices (Department of Neighborhood Empowerment), and word of mouth. Eventually, parents became volunteer naturalists and leaders and led new families into the mountains. Relationships between Hawkins and MRCA staff members and community members were strong and parents and kids were quite involved. Unfortunately, programming between Augustus Hawkins Park and the MRCA no longer exists.

Crissy Field: A Partnership Success Story with the NPS

Crissy Field opened in the spring of 2001 and was built on a renovated military training area in the Presidio, a former army installation in San Francisco. The Crissy Field project was made possible through partnerships with community volunteers, the National Park Service staff at Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), the Golden Gate National Park Association (GGNPA), and the Haas Family Trust. These groups formed a partnership and pooled their efforts to accomplish a common goal: The development of Crissy Field as a natural recreation area for all of San Francisco's residents to enjoy (Crissy Field Center, 2006). The benefits to those who partnered with the NPS and for the entire Bay Area community may be best described by the Crissy Field webpage: "As a very popular local park, thousands of people stroll down the Crissy Promenade every week. They read signage about the site's ecology and history. They stop and talk to Interpretive and Resource Management staff. They sit and enjoy the spectacular views and begin to realize that nature is possible even in this metropolis of nearly one million people." (Golden Gate National Recreation Area, 2006)

Superintendent Brian O'Neill of the GGNRA worked collaboratively with the GGNPA to cultivate a relationship with the Haas Family Trust. The Trust is a prominent philanthropic organization in the Bay area, largely focusing on community oriented and educational projects. The Trust, GGNRA, and GGNPA shared a common vision that Crissy Field would be a natural outdoor classroom and a base for community programs to meet the needs of the entire community, not simply those privileged to live in proximity to the area (Barnum, 1998).

The city residents, neighboring community members, and other community and private organizations were invaluable contributors to the partnership efforts of the Haas family and the GGNRA. The restoration effort for Crissy Field received a great deal of help from volunteers in almost every conceivable way. Volunteers from the community, the Native Plant Society, the Gap, the Levi Strauss Company and the San Francisco Conservation Corps all contributed time, effort, and funds to the project. By 1999, GGNPA volunteers had spent 23,000 hours

working on restoring Crissy Field. Restoration of natural areas was managed by the GGNPA in partnership with the National Park Service. Between 1981 and the official opening of Crissy Field in 2001, the GGNPA channeled more than \$30 million in support to the GGNRA for the project (McHugh, 1999).

Crissy Field provides a model for groups and organizations seeking to become involved in natural area restoration and education. Of particular significance are the efforts made by the leaders in the GGNRA, GGNPA, and Haas family to engage and include diverse communities in the restoration project. For example, through advertisements in Cantonese and Spanish, the “Help Grow Crissy Field” marketing campaign encouraged diverse community members to get involved by planting native plants on the site (Crissy Field Center, 2006). The GGNRA and NPS staff continue to actively work in partnership with San Francisco’s diverse communities to develop educational programs that seek to create a bridge between natural areas and surrounding urban neighborhoods. Of equal importance are the contributions that leaders from diverse communities have made to Crissy Field. Without the active and enthusiastic support and participation of residents from diverse communities, the project could not have become what it is today. The Crissy Field example emphasizes the fact that not only must National Park staff and associates reach out to the community but communities must also be active participants in efforts to build, grow and maintain partnerships between themselves and the National Park Service.

Appendix F: Profiles of Participating Organizations

The organizations that participated in our study are listed here with a brief overview, including their mission and contact information. The organizations are listed alphabetically within each of the four categories: Faith-based Organizations, Female Organizations, Urban Nature Centers, and Youth Organizations.

Each of these organizations agreed to be contacted by the NPS.

Faith-based Organizations

Altadena Baptist Church
791 E Calaveras St
Altadena, CA 91001
(626) 797-8970
(626) 797-4164 (fax)
altadenabaptist.org

Located near the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, the Altadena Baptist Church is predominantly African American and White, reflecting the local demographics of this northern LA neighborhood. As the church is approximately 75 years old, the congregation has a multigenerational mix of 100-200 attendees for Sunday services. The Church participates heavily in the local community, offering resources such as space, equipment, and volunteers. Some activities include community coalitions, retreats, church outings, ministerial alliances, and various committees.

Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles
840 Echo Park Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90026
(213) 482-2040
ladiocese.org

Located in the Echo Park district near downtown Los Angeles, the Episcopal Archdiocese of LA oversees 147 diverse congregations with approximately 85,000 members. The Cathedral Center of St. Paul is the administrative and ministry hub of the six-county Diocese. The Cathedral Center houses multilingual services and a variety of community outreach programs ranging from youth services and a credit union to grants and scholarship programs. The Cathedral Center regularly hosts retreats, daytime meetings, and a variety of other events for Episcopal-affiliated and community groups.

Evergreen Baptist Church
1255 San Gabriel Blvd.
Rosemead, CA 91770
(626) 280-0477
ebcla.org

The Evergreen Baptist Church has a long history from its origins as the English-speaking arm of the Japanese church in the 1920's. Today the church's 600-800 members come from diverse parts of LA, while offering substantial services to local youth, such as weekly tutoring sessions and experience building opportunities. The church is active in grant writing to offer increased service to the community.

First Chinese Baptist Church
942 Yale Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 687-0814
fcbc.org

The First Chinese Baptist Church is a large church situated in Chinatown (Downtown LA), and most of its members live nearby. They offer educational and recreational activities, including camps, to the congregation's young people, and outings and other social events for all ages. With a strong volunteer base, the Church has a strong presence among LA's Chinese residents. Services are offered in Cantonese and English.

Templo Calvario Community Development Corporation
2511 W. Fifth Street
Santa Ana, CA 92703
(714) 543-3711
www.tccdc.org

Templo Calvario is both a church and an adjacent community development corporation located in Santa Ana. Its primary foci are disadvantaged youth and low-income families. In addition to religious services in the adjacent church, the organization offers a weekly food program, a charter school, a mentoring program, computers and internet services, and donated materials to local schools.

Female Organizations

Downtown Women's Center
325 S. Los Angeles Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013
www.dwcweb.org
Phone: (213) 680-0600
Fax: (213) 680-0844

Mission Statement: To offer a safe and supportive community along with the resources homeless women need to reconnect with their sense of self, reclaim goals lost in the day-to-day struggle for survival on the streets, and move toward self-sufficiency.

Located on Skid Row and founded in 1978, DWC is a non-profit organization established to assist homeless women. They provide day services including meals, safe places to rest, laundry machines, bathroom facilities and many other resources for women to help them survive beyond the streets. They also offer 47 affordable residence apartments for women.

Girls Scouts Mt. Wilson Vista Council
101 E. Wheeler Avenue
Arcadia, CA 91006
Phone: (626) 445-7771
www.gsmwvc.org

Mission Statement: Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.

GSMWVC serves 23 communities in the greater San Gabriel Valley area spanning young girls between the ages of 4 and 18. They offer an all female environment for girls to grow and experience the world in a safe and judgment free environment.

LA City Commission on the Status of Women
 Young Women at Risk of Violence Intervention Pilot Program (YWAR)
 200 N. Spring St
 City Hall, Room 211
 Los Angeles, CA 90012
 Phone: (213) 978-0300
 Fax: (213) 978-0309
<http://www.lacity.org/csw/index.htm>

Mission Statement: *The Commission assists in assuring to all women the opportunity for full and equal participation in the affairs of City government and promotes the general welfare of women in the Los Angeles community. The Commission is authorized to:*

- Inform and advise the Mayor and City Council of the needs and problems of women in the City of Los Angeles, with special emphasis given to women in City government;
- *Investigate problems and conditions affecting women adversely*
- *Recommend programs, which offer to women in the City of Los Angeles, a greater opportunity and ability to pursue life choices without discrimination;*
- *Propose methods of alleviating inequities in pay and job opportunities between men and women;*
- *Promote awareness of changing life patterns, opportunities and responsibilities of women;*
- *Maintain an active liaison with citizen groups concerned about identifying and removing obstacles to the development of a woman's full potential.*

YWAR is a school based intervention program created by the LA City Commission of the Status of Women and is offered in 12 schools throughout the LA City area aimed at teenage women at risk. The program consists of four main units focusing on identity, positive relationships, healthy sexuality, and taking care of your mind and body. Although a part of a state agency, the YWAR program is completely self-funded.

Urban Nature Centers

The Audubon Center at Debs Park
 4700 North Griffin Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90031
 Phone: (323) 221-2255
 Fax: (323) 221-2444
http://www.audubon-ca.org/debs_park.htm

The Audubon Center at Debs Park is located within the nearly 300-acre Ernest E. Debs Park, which is owned by the City of Los Angeles. The park is located on the border of Highland Park and Montecito Heights between Dodger Stadium and South Pasadena. The Center provides environmental education programming to some of the 25,000 predominately Latino children who live within two miles of Debs Park, in addition to residents across the Los Angeles Basin. The center also conducts ecological management and monitoring activities to restore and maintain the native walnut-oak woodland, grassland, and coastal sage scrub habitats.

Eaton Canyon Nature Center
1750 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena, CA 91107
Phone: (626) 398-5420
http://parks.co.la.ca.us/eaton_narea.html

Eaton Canyon Natural Area, supervised and maintained by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, is a 190-acre natural area situated at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. With its hiking trails, wildlife, rocks and minerals, and plants, there is something for everyone to enjoy. It is also the gateway to Henninger Flats, Idlehour Campground, and Mount Wilson. It serves approximately 12,000 school children annually through environmental education programming. Adults of all ages also enjoy hiking and nature activities within the natural area.

El Dorado Nature Center
7550 East Spring Street, Long Beach, CA 90815
Phone: (562) 570-1748
Fax: 562-570-8530
http://www.longbeach.gov/park/facilities/parks/el_dorado_nature_center.asp

El Dorado Nature Center is part of the El Dorado East Regional Park and consists of a 1/4 mile paved trail and two miles of dirt trail wind around two lakes and a stream. This 102.5 acre sites sits in a greenery of woodlands in the middle of Long Beach, located in south Los Angeles County. Approximately 140,000 residents of Long Beach and the greater area visit the nature center. Visitors participate in environmental education programming, stewardship activities, family events, and special events, such as Earth Day celebrations.

Whittier Narrows Nature Center
1000 N. Durfee Ave., South El Monte, CA 91733
Phone: (626) 575-5523
http://parks.co.la.ca.us/whittier_narea.html

The Whittier Narrows Nature Center is located in east Los Angeles County and is situated among two hundred acres of natural woodland, including four lakes, along the San Gabriel River. The nature center focuses on the local river environment and has a museum with graphic and live displays of plant and animal life. Other activities include hay rides, lectures, ranger tours, bird walks, and a junior ranger program. Most of the 109,000 annual visitors are local school children.

Youth Organizations

North Hollywood High School
5231 Colfax Avenue
North Hollywood, CA 91601
Phone: (818) 769-8510
Fax: (818) 508-7124

North Hollywood High School is a part of the Los Angeles Unified School District. The school has two unique magnets: the zoo magnet focusing on animal studies and biological studies and the highly gifted magnet for students with an IQ above 145. Eighty-eight percent of their students are ethnic minorities and approximately eighty percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Outward Bound Adventures Incorporated
2020 North Lincoln Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91103
Phone: (626) 564-0844
Fax: (626) 564-0904

Outward Bound Adventures Incorporated began operation in 1964. The organization's mission is to provide nature-based education that promotes positive self-development, environmental responsibility, and outdoor career exposure for at-risk, low-income, urban youth. The majority of their constituents are ethnic minorities from Los Angeles County.

REI Outreach Department
402 Santa Monica Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90401
Phone: (310) 458-4370
Fax: (310) 458-1089

REI is a national recreation outfitter. Their organization has a commitment to reaching out to the community in efforts to promote stewardship and respect of natural resources. They encourage employees to participate in volunteer stewardship efforts. They also offer a program for youth: PEAK (Promoting Environmental Awareness in Kids), which teaches youth about the environment and the principles of leave no trace.

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