



Overview

Outdoor engagement presents a unique opportunity to serve diverse constituencies because it provides mental and physical health benefits, supports economic development, and connects communities. Time spent outside has been shown to reduce stress, help treat ADHD in children, and ameliorate PTSD symptoms in veterans. However, there is increasing recognition that these benefits aren't distributed equally, and states are working to ensure nature access is equitable and available for all communities. Outdoor recreation can also provide new economic opportunities for community development and several states have established Offices of Outdoor Recreation to better coordinate these efforts.

Legislation

There are several legislative approaches to promoting outdoor engagement and increasing time in nature, including:

- Developing grant programs for outdoor access, such as No Child Left Inside programs in [Washington](#) and [Minnesota \(HF 133\)](#) and Outdoor Equity Funds in [New Mexico \(SB 462\)](#) and [Colorado \(HB 21-1318\)](#).
- Expand outdoor learning opportunities, such as Outdoor School in [Oregon \(SB 439\)](#) and licensed Outdoor Preschool in [Washington \(SB 5151\)](#).
- Promoting outdoor wellness such as a [New York Outdoor Rx Act \(AB 8094A\)](#), which requires a review of veterans' abilities to access state parks, lands, and facilities.
- Increasing access to parks, such as [Nevada AB 385](#) that grants students ages 9 to 11 free entry to state parks.

KEY POINTS

- There is a growing body of research demonstrating the physical and mental benefits of outdoor recreation and time in nature. ([Children and Nature Network](#))
- The outdoor recreation economy consists of \$788 billion in consumer spending and 5.2 million direct American jobs. ([Outdoor Industry Association](#))
- Parks in communities of color are half the size of parks serving majority white populations and five times as crowded. ([Trust for Public Lands](#))

Other Resources

- [Youth Outdoor Policy Playbook](#) featuring a policy library and case studies.
- The Children and Nature Network [research library](#) regarding the benefits of time in nature.
- The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Rural [Economic Development Toolkit](#).
- Outdoor Industry Association overview of [State Offices of Outdoor Recreation](#).

