



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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CREATING AN  
INSPIRED NEW  
VISION FOR  
OUTDOOR  
RECREATION  
ON AMERICA'S  
NATIONAL FORESTS  
AND GRASSLANDS

# REIMAGINE RECREATION

Americans are finding connections to national forests and grasslands in greater numbers than ever before. Visitation to national forests and grasslands in 2020 surged to a record-breaking 168 million visits, more visitors than at any other time in the history of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USDA Forest Service 2021). During the pandemic, visitors came to safely recreate, be restored, and create new memories.

That surge also brought clarity to areas where, at the Forest Service, we can improve how we deliver affordable, safe access to outdoor recreation. We also

know that not all visitors feel welcome or connected to the great outdoors. Our national forests and grasslands belong to all Americans, and our goal is to show that national forests and grasslands are open to anyone from any background or ability.

We also are working to make investments in our infrastructure and workforce. Many of our recreation sites and other facilities need to be updated or redesigned. Despite significant reductions in the size of our workforce and increased visitation during challenging times, our staff continue to deliver the best experiences they can under the circumstances. But the costs have

shown in employee morale and retention.

We support and empower our employees to deliver a vast and complex recreation program. We hope that visitors see themselves as active participants and stewards in the heritage and respect of public lands and of the people who came before us. We hope you feel encouraged to enjoy the spiritual and physical benefits of these places.

We also know that recent funding investments in our public lands have the potential to connect even more people to the outdoors and strengthen the outdoor recreation economy, which generated an astonishing \$689



billion in economic output and created 4.3 million jobs in 2020 (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2021). For many rural and gateway communities, the outdoor economy is an essential piece of a diverse and robust economy.

Outdoor recreation on national forests and grasslands continues to be one of our best opportunities to make connections, build relationships, and foster long-term care and stewardship of our natural resources. Our public lands can also be a source of healing, inspiration, and purpose to bridge some of the divides and challenges our country has faced over the past few years.

Reflecting on what we have heard and seen from visitors and employees in the last few years, we know we need to create a bold new vision for recreation on national forests and grasslands.

**We are going to reimagine recreation and invite you to take this journey with us.**

## FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

In the coming months, we will focus on three foundations to reimagine recreation on America's forests and grasslands:

### 1 REENGAGE

partners both new and old to provide a place for everyone to feel welcome and connected to the outdoors.

### 2 REINVEST

in our workforce and delivery systems to provide our workforce with the skills, knowledge, tools, financial resources, and operating environment necessary to succeed.

### 3 REINVENT

creative ways to engage with others to steward recreation on our public lands to plan, design, adapt, and manage the recreation landscape into the future.



### INITIATION

**September 2022**

Summarize and share the preliminary vision, focus areas, and goals.

### ENGAGEMENT

**October 2022–March 2023**

Hold employee surveys, open-door discussions, and Tribal and other stakeholder engagement sessions.

### DEVELOPMENT

**April–September 2023**

Develop a “Five-Year National Recreation Action Plan” that sets clear priorities for our work.

### IMPLEMENTATION

**Fall 2023 and beyond**

Work with local communities, States, Tribes, other governments and nongovernmental partners to implement the shared strategy and action plan

### References

USDA Forest Service. 2021. National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey Results National Summary Report: Data Collected FY 2016 through FY 2020. Washington, DC: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2020-National-Visitor-Use-Monitoring-Summary-Report.pdf>.

Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2021. Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2020. Suitland, MD: <https://www.bea.gov/news/2021/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2020>.

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