

CORP Public Outreach Workshop  
Meeting Notes  
San Diego 11/13/07  
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

These notes were compiled from the San Diego workshop and represent the comments made by the participants. A “-” signifies a participant’s comment and change in speaker.

**Opening Comments**

- You need to look at how categories are broken down in the Public Opinions & Attitude Survey and how they are tallied up. The survey separates out all the activities that require trail facilities, such as walking for pleasure, walking a pet and so on. This dilutes the measurement of the overall popularity of trails. If you grouped some of them, then the ranking would be different. Would like to see all the trail activities lumped together. These combined results could persuade agencies to devote more resources to trails.
- You mean a general question and then one that breaks down uses.
- This could be done during our analysis phase.
- There is a fragmentation of people, trails systems and parks. Overdevelopment is separating people from parks.
- There needs to be a better way to represent the number of people using trails. The current numbers present a skewed picture.
- If you do that with trails then you would need to do it with all outdoor sports, such as grouping all turf sports. A new trails advocacy group could be helpful in this effort.
- That group is currently struggling.
- Planning efforts for multi-trails is an issue. TEA funding is available for cycling and other funding is available for equestrian - multi-use trail planning and development, but it makes more sense to plan for multi-use, even if planning funds regulate otherwise.
- It would be helpful to have the survey information available.
- Survey information would also be useful for other sports.
- You might need more broad-brushed questions and to make the raw data available.
- Instead of one list, maybe three with ranked priority and then back-up information. Such as 1) activity participation and demand by category, 2) a ranked list of all the activities, and 3) the backup data for the analysis.

**How are you currently thinking about and planning connection within systems and partnerships being established?**

- There is a coastal rail trail from Oceanside to Delmar. We just completed our stretch. Even though every city council has agreed to the project, each neighboring community is responsible for their part and each face their own problems to completion.
- Urban areas are looking at rail corridors and flood easements to make those connections. We are also trying to find opportunities through utility corridors and using MTA for bike trail grants. We are currently looking at Prop 84 funding too. New water quality mandates require multi-benefit projects that include water quality and park projects. There will be new jurisdictions to help coordinate these efforts.

- Prop 50 started this. Park development is rising to the top of the grant funding criteria. Public Works is leveraging these partnerships to make the Prop 50 projects more competitive.
- DWR has also been very active funding green, water quality projects; this needs to trickle down to the local levels since it's now working well statewide.
- Some agencies don't have the necessary grant funding information.
- Many smaller agencies don't have grant writers so they pick it up where they can. Agencies that have writers are more keyed into what grant funding is available.
- Being a large city with a full-time grant administrator, we have taken the leadership role and are communicating to others what is available in grants. Smaller agencies don't have that and are dependent on counties for information.
- The free grant writing workshops are very helpful. So is administrative support to manage and write grants. When you are relying on many grants a year, it is hard for smaller agencies to manage.
- A lot of information comes down from our lobbyist and non-profits. Smaller communities need a more direct line for information.
- There are more competitive versus per-capita grants. You have to have the exact right project at the right time to fit into the competitive grant cycle. If you spend the money to do CEQA for an application, you run the risk of not getting a return on your investment. Unlike block grants, which you know you will get. This leads to stalling and puts a big question mark on what type of projects can be funded. Grants frequently don't fall into the criteria of the grant program's requirements.
- It all depends on the legislature. State agencies can work directly with legislature. To smaller agencies it becomes a political debate because they are disconnected.
- CPRS has a legislative piece and Sedrick Mitchell with State Parks did a grants presentation at CPRS workshop. The CPRS webpage tells you what is happening throughout the state. There is a lot of outreach prior to 84. There are many opportunities for workshops; maybe it just needs to be promoted more.
- It is a direct advantage to small community professionals to be involved with CPRS type organizations.
- San Diego got a grant to educate people on the available grants and to provide workshops and assistance on writing grants.
- Trail connectivity in our organization is a priority in our master plan, following the example of the San Diego River Park. It is very huge for us, but we have good partnerships with other organizations like the city of San Diego's Mission Trails. We also have joint use agreements with the Cities of Poway, Santee and the County of San Diego for a single piece of property.
- San Diego River Park has a joint powers authority (JPA) and there is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the county and city for the trail. County gets the easements and acquisitions.
- We are not focused enough on statewide legislation and how it affects our student recreation majors. We are on the CPRS District 12 board along with some student representatives.
- Academic representation on the CPRS Board is important. It would also be good on other board and planning groups.

- A CPRS connection does occur, there is an academia/agency connection, but it could be better developed. We are currently working with Green Visions at USC for their master planning process. Their ability to gather information is valuable. University resources need to be better utilized.
- We are just hitting the tip of the iceberg in getting students interested in our field. Health benefits could also help connect students to the program's number of physical education partnership themes. We need to build better physical and agreement connectivity to link students to the profession. UC's programs are too focused on developing facilities that they don't look into linking with their community.

### **How does the recreation profession react to larger trends?**

- Outdoor adventure was vocalized during a survey for a master plan process. We have partnered with CSU and San Diego County and are trying to create partnerships with many people. We are really trying a little bit of everything. It sounds like a priority but no one is taking advantage of it.
- We had cookie cutter parks with sport facilities and it was not enough. We have gone to off-leash dog parks, adventure lots, skate parks, interactive water features, climbing wall and rope features.
- Extreme sports is gaining popularity and we are not meeting the need. We are looking at redeveloping current properties but it means we have to take away from something else. Off-roading is also growing rapidly in San Diego County. People are moving from their communities to be closer to off-road facilities since local opportunities don't exist.
- Santee and the surrounding communities vacate at this time of year – the off-road season.
- Off-roading is a very family-oriented activity.
- Lots of gas tax money goes to this activity but local San Diego counties can't use these funds because they don't want these facilities. Before, many of the off-road facilities were on private land. They have since been developments built up around them and the new residents no longer want those activities around their homes.
- Off-roaders start at a young age (6). People save their money to buy motorcycles.
- Could regional and local jurisdictions develop brown fields for off-road use?
- We have seen a rise in extreme sports and skateboarding. We are starting to reconsider our municipal codes to reevaluate what areas are illegal or unauthorized. Solano Beach is actively engaged in disseminating information to other agencies like the police. They are taking efforts to make skateboarding more acceptable. There have been discussions between the city and the police and we're doing a better job of lighting, supervision and more patrols to counteract the negative public perception of this activity.
- Skaters and rollerbladers have forced new uses of existing facilities. They have forced cities to give them all tickets or to change the rules. The end-users are more in control. Skateboarders and rollerbladers were the first set of users to do this. Our profession needs to look at and accept what is new. This only benefits the end user.
- You could easily put a 'skate spot' element into an existing park like a ½ pipe or cement area. This has been done using old tennis courts.

### **What are some of your current efforts?**

– We are partnering with public health agencies and foundations to provide outdoor exercise features in our parks - and this is fundable - looking at areas without gyms and to provide exercise elements in parks.

Small community centers are converting to senior centers with senior programming to address senior growth.

Social service providers are partnering with our parks to provide health and community fairs on parklands. We have a range of social service partnerships.

– The county of San Diego relies heavily on partners (many of whom are here today) who have embraced trends like health and wellness and the obesity epidemic resulting in changes in policy, programming and facilities. A coalition that addresses all of these issues is [www.goplayfit.com](http://www.goplayfit.com).

We have the Greater San Diego Recreation and Parks Coalition for Health and Wellness and the Childhood Obesity Action Plan on the Health and Human Services webpage. We are changing community centers to active adult programming to attract Baby Boomers – they don't want to be called seniors. There has to be different programming to prepare for Baby Boomers. We need more changes to youth standards – encouraging youth play, non-competitive play to encourage a healthy lifestyle. Competitive sports are not much fun and don't encourage recreational play. We are establishing nature based programs and getting kids into the outdoors. Collectively we have 14 agencies going after grants through the Land and Water Conservation Fund to provide nature based programs to all the kids in the county. We're also changing the menus at the senior centers.

– Unstructured play and getting kids back to nature is important.

– Senior centers are changing their names and programming to get younger 'seniors' involved, ex. – providing classes. SDSU and Palomar College are providing classes hosted at the senior centers.

– Local school districts will have adult education programs and ESL classes offered at senior centers.

– Old facilities are being used for childcare or tot programs. Community centers are going beyond recreation and offering multi-generational and multi-cultural programming that expands beyond recreation, such as dancing and computer classes.

– There is a trend to get away from the term 'senior'. There are different levels to 'senior'- those that are less mobile, those are just retired and those who are soon to be retired. We are trying to program different levels of activities to accommodate these diverse stages of 'senior'. Multi-generational centers are a big thing. Mobile recreation is also starting up again. They go to parks and provide activities. The 'Rec-n-Roll' in Chula Vista goes to malls and apartment complexes for activities (mobile recreation), bringing the recreation to the client.

– We have cooperation between law enforcement, landowners and recreation agencies. Law enforcement will recommend frequently problematic locations in cities for mobile recreation, areas where youth congregate and do graffiti.

– The San Diego area has a strong partnership with SDSU's mobile recreation programs that bring an outdoor activity to other facilities, like rock climbing at Mission Trails and etc. The municipal water district partners with the recreation agency to provide an outdoor recreation program. At Santee Lakes there is a new activity called 'cable-skiing' – a circle of cable running around the lake; water skiers hold onto the cable and ride

around the lake. Pottery Dam Water District operates the lakes and this is an unusual partnership where a water district operates a recreation facility.

– Students at SDSU have a greater need for structure, where there is more structure to the recreational offerings, more students participate. Students also participate more when they can receive class credit for participating. People can take one-unit classes on activities like rock climbing, wakeboarding, bowling, etc. Getting youth back to nature is a very huge movement. Our college programs introduce many students to the outdoors for the first time. We have a partnership with the Recreation, Tourism & Management program at the University as well as with the Aztec Adventures Outdoor Program, which provides extracurricular student services. We have classes on wilderness appreciation and philosophy and partner with the Outdoor Program to provide an outdoor classroom program as part of the class. We would like to create a new partnership with the Geography Department.

– It is astonishing that we have to introduce college students to the outdoors for the first time. Inner city kids are not going to be exposed to state parks, so access is very important. In LA County we have bridges to nature that connect the city-center people with the beach parks. During the summer, buses are used twice a week to take whole families to the beach, providing some urban/nature connectivity and fostering an appreciation of nature.

– The PTA got involved in doing a family orientation campout on Back-to-School night at Chula Vista Elementary that involves a bonfire, reptile presentation, a storyteller and s'mores. There is exposure to the activity when parents are committed.

– We participated in the 'Great American Backyard Campout'. This is the last Sunday in June and about 40,000 families participate nationwide. People are encouraged to pitch a tent in the backyard. We had an event at one of our county parks and will do it again since it works as a gateway activity. The National Wildlife Federation and the Outdoor Industry Foundation, etc. were all involved in this national movement.

– We have a great Aztec recreation center on the campus. It is a great recruiting tool, with a climbing wall, pool complex and a fitness center. We find that the majority of the students using the center are working out to look good and not for health. Although all the outdoor programs involve groups, the most popular activities involve individual activity, such as yoga and spin classes and the treadmill. People are becoming more comfortable being isolated. Although intramurals are still popular, there is not enough facility space, fields and gyms for the intramurals.

– We need linkages to health and fitness, youth, etc.

### **What about a clearing house for recreation information and research?**

- In regards to Issue #1, Parks and Recreation is touchy-feely, so it is low priority. Law enforcement can quote statistics and there are established standards for officer to citizen ratios and for housing needs. A baseline is important so we need to establish recreation standards for the regions in California. California State Parks needs to take the lead in developing these standards. The standards need to be very comprehensive. California is diverse in its geographic areas and the demographics of its communities. If we can't articulate a need or standard then how are we expected to get the funding? We need to engage local communities, academic and national agencies, universities, cities, counties, etc. to put together a set of recreation standards.
- They should be called 'guidelines' instead of 'standards' and go beyond just acreage. They should include different activity-specific facilities/1000 people, such as parking spaces, restrooms, lighting, as well as ball fields, acres/1000 and trails.
- There would be no teeth to it, but at least it would create a framework to build from and provide some measuring tools.
- We use five acres per 1,000 people as a goal (according to the Quimby Act). We are nowhere near that, but it is a goal.
- It would be very useful to have guidelines. NRPA guidelines were useful but are outdated and don't address regions.
- You could break it down into cities of certain sizes and look at population density too.
- Some cities count cemeteries as open space.
- We count private golf courses but we are completely built-out and although we are affluent, we have only two parks. I am not sure how standards could help us. We are a very small city with few parks. It would still come down to the money and land is just too costly.
- If you have a standard, you need to get creative in trying to reach the goal.
- It cheats the public if you count open-space like schools, golf courses and cemeteries that are not open to the public.
- Agricultural uses as open-space would be important to consider, but they are still a business. You need to be very careful of what would be considered. Would a large state park or national forest be counted as open space? We need definitions of what would be considered open space.
- If we don't have initiatives of where we should be with parks, then who will listen? We also won't know what we are trying to reach. We need to be able to articulate what the need is.
- We need to distinguish between large open space areas versus open-space areas versus recreation areas – these are not the same.
- You would also need to keep habitat areas separated out.
- These standards won't be useful to cities that are completely built out and landlocked.
- Advance planning is important to the equation, transportation planning is considered and parks planning should be considered. Green Visions could be useful to GreenInfo Network for the recreation facilities inventory since Green Visions is doing a park inventory in LA County.
- There are new homes in San Diego but not parks to go with them. There are high-rises with floors that are designated as playgrounds to make use of the only space available.

- Being that we are a small city we have a master plan. We hire a consultant and they tell us what we need. When development is booming you get parks, however, there is no development. We are landlocked and are turning to our school district for open space.
- Many cities in San Diego have park and impact fees. We also use Community Facility District to maintain and operate parks.
- We are leveraging for first right of refusal for land offered by the developers. We have very old parks and some are underdeveloped.
- Developers in LA County have come to realize the value of a completed open park when it comes time to sell model houses. Parks and Recreation can ask for specific park elements too, before the project goes before the planning commission for approval.
- We are hoping to take money from the developer's 'pot' to upgrade older facilities. Not sure if it will work but we are looking at different ways to get funding. The developer wants to build the park and have it up and running before the model houses go up for sale.
- There was an economic study done by NRPA 4-5 years ago on land values and local economies. It would be nice to have one for California with different aspects such as amount of money spent and impacts on land value.

**Closing comment**

- This focus group experience will be valuable if the input collected today is incorporated into the California Outdoor Recreation Plan.