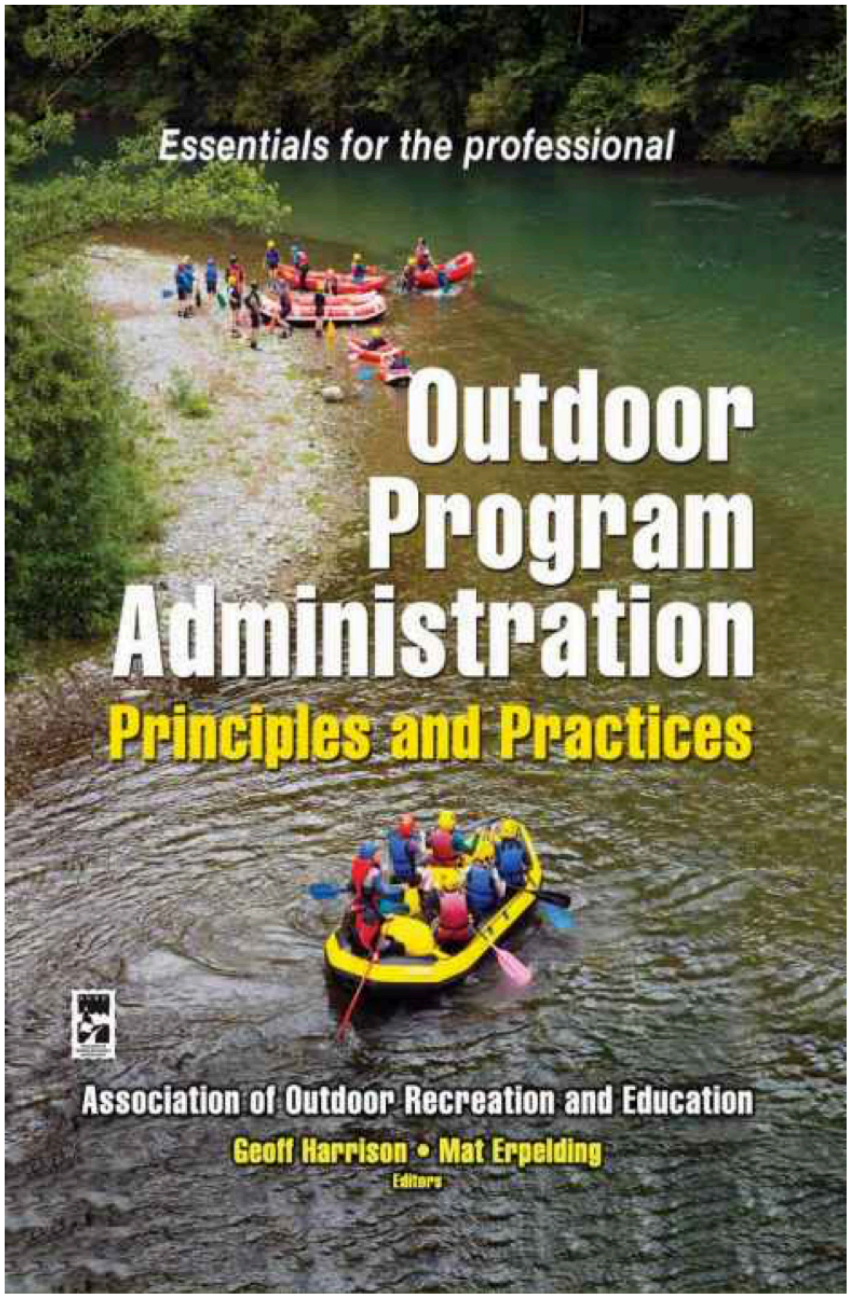
Essentials for the professional
Outdoor Program Administration
Principles and Practices
Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education
Geoff Harrison • Mat Erpelding
Editors

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Outdoor program administration : principles and practices / Geoff Harrison, Mat Erpelding, [editors].

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-7537-4 (hardcover)

ISBN-10: 0-7360-7537-2 (hardcover)

1. Outdoor recreation--Planning. 2. Outdoor recreation--Management. I. Harrison, Geoff, 1970- II. Erpelding, Mat, 1975-GV191.66.O88 2012

790.06'9--dc23

2011037869

ISBN-10: 0-7360-7537-2 (print)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-7537-4 (print)

The web addresses cited in this text were current as of September 2011, unless otherwise noted.

Acquisitions Editor: Gayle Kassing, PhD

Developmental Editor: Melissa Feld

Assistant Editor: Rachel Brito

Copyeditor: John Wentworth

Indexer: Dan Connolly

Permissions Manager: Martha Gullo

Graphic Designer: Joe Buck

Graphic Artist: Keri Evans

Cover Designer: Keith Blomberg

Photographer (cover): Juan Carlos Muñoz / age fotostock

Visual Production Assistant: Jason Allen

Art Manager: Kelly Hendren

Associate Art Manager: Alan L. Wilborn

Illustrations: © Human Kinetics, unless otherwise noted

Printer: Sheridan Books

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The paper in this book is certified under a sustainable forestry program.

Human Kinetics
Website: www.HumanKinetics.com

United States: Human Kinetics
P.O. Box 5076
Champaign, IL 61825-5076
800-747-4457
e-mail: humank@hkusa.com

Canada: Human Kinetics
475 Devonshire Road Unit 100
Windsor, ON N8Y 2L5
800-465-7301 (in Canada only)
e-mail: info@hkcanada.com

Europe: Human Kinetics
107 Bradford Road

Chapter 4

The Future of Outdoor Program Administration

Laurlyn K. Harmon, PhD, and Susan L. Johnson, MS

A plan by Virginia's Department of Conservation states that "Outdoor recreation promotes health and wellness by providing open space and natural areas for public access, and by offering recreational programming that contributes to active lifestyles and vibrant communities. The significance of outdoor recreation in creating healthy lifestyles should not be underestimated" (2007, p. 194). Agreeing with these statements is to acknowledge the

significance of outdoor program administrators and the importance of their roles in the future of outdoor recreation.

The issues we discuss in this chapter include the need to understand changing demographics and generational cohort characteristics of outdoor participants, the impacts of an increasing external emphasis on professionalization, technological effects on outdoor participation and operations, sustainability, staffing, collaboration, outdoor ethics, public land pressures, and outcome assessments. We also present a case study (see p. 48) of one exemplary organization.

Outdoor recreation and the administration of programs and services are continually evolving. Agencies and organizations are being asked, for example, to become increasingly creative in their funding efforts and more sophisticated in their use of technology-related resources. Administrators are responding to increased expectations of professionalism for outdoor leaders, including the accreditation for agencies and multiple certifications for staff. Simultaneously, outdoor program administrators find they must respond to participants' needs for traditional recreation activities—hiking, biking, fishing, picnicking—while addressing new requests for locales in which clients may engage in high-adventure and nontraditional activities, such as zorbing, geocaching, and kite surfing.

Subtle shifts in climate and outdoor recreation participation are having slow but lasting impacts on the venues for outdoor recreation activities (*An Inconvenient Truth,* 2006). Some multiseasonal facilities, for example, are finding it increasingly difficult to provide quality snow-supported activities (e.g., skiing and snowmobiling); other facilities are experiencing temperature extremes such as excess heat, rain, and wind. The number of glaciers in parks such as Glacier National Park has decreased (National Park Service, 2011), and tropical locales such as Florida are experiencing increased bleaching of their coral reefs. Participants, too, are changing, not only in the activities in which they participate but in their motivations for participating. To address the issues associated with such a range of changes, outdoor program administrators must first understand them.

EVOLVING PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

One of the primary drivers of any outdoor recreation agency is the clientele it serves. Thus administering appropriate programming requires an understanding of population demographics as well as individual and group needs.

Changing Demographics

In 2008, the U.S. population reached 300,000,000 and shows no sign of decreasing. In addition, there is a greater diversity in terms of age, race, education, residence, and cultural backgrounds among the people who participate or could be participating in outdoor recreation. Population projections in the United States suggest several key changes to which outdoor program administrators must respond and understand (see table 4.1). According to the National Center for Health Statistics (2011), males and females will continue to be relatively equally represented, although as the population ages there will tend to be more females than males. An important change in ethnic diversity is expected to occur over time as individuals of Hispanic ethnicity are projected to represent approximately 25 percent of the U.S. residents in 2050, and there is projected to be a wider overall range of racial diversity within U.S. society. Age distribution of U.S. residents will also change significantly, with the most dramatic change in the age category of 65 years and older. This category is projected to increase from representing 13 percent of the population in 2010 to representing over 20 percent of the population in 2050.

Cohorts

The first step in understanding our participants is to understand the characteristics of generational cohort. Generational cohorts are groups of individuals identified by the range of years in which they born. To further understand generational cohorts and their expectations, it is necessary to provide the societal frame of reference for each generation. Their descriptive characteristics and behaviors have a connection to significant broad events that occurred during their lifetimes (Schuman and Scott, 1989). In the United States there are four primary cohorts affecting future outdoor recreation program participation: baby boomers, Generation Xers, millennials, and Generation Zers.

Table 4.1 Population Projections by Age, Race, and Ethnicity

Year	Age	%	Race	%	Ethnicity	%
2010	0-19	26.9	White alone	79.3	Hispanic (of any race)	15.5
	20-44	33.8	Black alone	13.1		
	45-64	26.2	Asian alone	4.6		
	65-84	11.0	All other races	3.0		
	85+	2.0				
2030	0-19	26.2	White alone	75.8	Hispanic (of any race)	20.1
	20-44	31.6	Black alone	13.9		
	45-64	22.6	Asian alone	6.2		
	65-84	17.0	All other races	4.1		
	85+	2.6				
2050	0-19	26.0	White alone	72.1	Hispanic (of any race)	24.4
	20-44	31.2	Black alone	14.6		
	45-64	22.2	Asian alone	8.0		
	65-84	15.7	All other races	5.3		
	85+	5.0				

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Baby Boomers

Baby boomers—individuals born between 1945 and 1965—remember a time of political unrest. During their formative years, John F. Kennedy was assassinated, the Vietnam War occurred, and the civil rights movement was just gaining momentum. As the baby boom generation moves into retirement age over the next 20 years, these individuals are increasingly interested in and able to participate in outdoor recreation programs (Cordell, 2004). As this large percentage of the population ages, they influence the overall age distribution of the population (the median age of the U.S. population is expected to increase from 35 to 42 in 2020). Boomers are highly active and tend to participate in a wide range of programs, including Outdoor Adventure Travel (OAT), Elderhostel, Sierra Club, and Outward Bound. As a group, individuals in this cohort are interested in outdoor pursuits that engage their mind as well as their body and spirit.

Generation X

Individuals categorized within the X Generation—those born between 1965 and 1978—are also interested in the outdoors. Generation Xers remember the space shuttle Challenger explosion and the Iran Contra

Scandal, were introduced to mass-produced computer technology, and tended to have working parents during their formative years of development, which meant they often spent significant time after school without supervision. They are, generally, independent, technology literate, adaptable, not intimidated by authority, and creative. When designing outdoor recreation programs for Generation Xers, it is important to remember some of their key motivations (Burmeister, 2008).

1. Mentorship: Generation X individuals tend to appreciate gaining knowledge from skilled colleagues.
2. Coaching: Separate and distinct from mentorship, coaching occurs at a deeper level and helps Generation X individuals understand who they are and what experiences they need to develop. Coaching can come from external or internal sources; coaches should be familiar with generational characteristics of X individuals.
3. Individualized plans: Generation X employees tend to appreciate and desire having personalized plans for learning outdoor recreation activities.
4. Empowerment: Empowering Generation X employees by asking them to participate in creating their plan for learning can increase

their likelihood to participate.

5. Flexibility: Identify and encourage the values of Generation Xers. These individuals will look for programs that allow for flexible participation. They might want to choose nontraditional hours, vary when they participate, and travel extensively to participate in their chosen activities.

Millennials

Sometimes called the Net Generation or Generation Y, Millennials—individuals born between 1978 and the early '90s—are new entries to the outdoor recreation world. Millennials are growing up in an era of social change influenced by events such as the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Towers, high-speed information access in the form of the Internet, and a second environmental revolution. They are better educated and have traveled more than any prior generation. Millennials also believe in inclusiveness, have a strong sense of community, and are connected with social issues of the day (Carlton, 2009). Because they have also grown up during the revitalized green movement, taking care of the environment will be a part of their value system and they will seek outdoor recreation programs exhibiting sustainable values and processes.

Millennials are extremely technology literate

and savvy, and are eager to learn. They can be differentiated from baby boomers and Generation Xers by their combination of seven primary traits (Howe and Strauss, 2000): high confidence, team orientation, sheltered living, conventional behavior, pressured throughout life-development stages, high achievement, and highly specialized. They have never known a time without the Internet and can bring this knowledge and skill to the outdoors. Many enjoy bringing a host of electronic gadgets with them to enhance their outdoor recreation activities. Items such as altimeters, GPS units, cell phones, satellite phones, weather monitors, and other communication devices have been added to their standard list of outdoor items. Many of these items are staple items in the backcountry for Millennials, who also have a heightened sense of fear compared to previous generations. It is intriguing to consider, though, that many of these items can be nonfunctioning in the wilderness and might offer users more of a perceived safety net than actual safety.

Laurlyn Harmon

Individuals in the millennial generation are confident, high achieving, and specialized.

Generation Z

Generation Z individuals—born between 1994 and 2004—are the technology generation; they are sometimes called Generation Net because their lives are spent connecting to friends, families, and the world using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, and Facetime on their computers or handheld devices. Needless to say, they are extremely Internet savvy.

Because both parents were working, Generation Z was often left alone to find their own way (Cross-Bystrom, 2010). They have developed a sense of individualism and independence. That said, they also believe in traditional values, are connected with their families, and value giving back to their communities.

This generation will lead the "go green" movement. These individuals are extremely aware of environmental issues such as global warming, habitat sustainability, and the importance of clean water and air. They have been taught about these issues throughout their lives in school.

It is believed that Generation Z will be a transient workforce, unlike their grandparents who worked the same job from the start of their careers to finish. Some say Gen Z will not be team players, but others believe they will be

because they will be taught by Gen Y teachers, who are known for being obsessed with team and group development.

Research has proven that spending time in nature benefits everyone and that we become healthier individuals in every way—intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically (California State Parks, 2008). That's why what outdoor recreation provides is so important to future generations.

Knowing what we do about Gen Z, outdoor program administrators need to pay attention to the forthcoming research on the trends of this group. Little is yet known about how this generation will affect the outdoor recreation field; they could be a huge benefit or a possible liability—perhaps even a detriment to the workforce.

Age

Beyond understanding generational cohorts, outdoor program administrators will also need to consider general trends in age distribution and longevity. The average life expectancy in the United States increased from 47.3 years in 1900 to 68.2 years in 1950, 75.4 years in 1990, and 77.8 years in 2004. The trend is a steady increase in longevity, which means retirees, who may have additional discretionary income, are increasingly able to participate in traditional

outdoor recreation activities (USDHHS, 2008). Older individuals may also be more physically able to participate in outdoor activities than their counterparts from earlier generations because they smoke less, are increasingly likely to become vaccinated against disease, and are more likely to get basic health care needs met (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-related Statistics, 2008). Though we will continue to see approximately 20 to 25 percent of individuals over 65 participating in leisure activities (FIFAS, 2008), the overall population increase in the United States means more older individuals will be participating in recreation activities.

The overall population increase in the United States means more older individuals will be participating in recreation activities.

Race and Ethnicity

In addition to age, the racial makeup of our citizenry, as well as the cultural framework, will continue to shift. Individuals of Asian American descent are expected to more than double from 2000 to 2050, whereas persons of African American descent will increase by approximately 71 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). In addition, we can expect to see a greater increase in persons of Hispanic ethnicity—an increase of approximately 18 percent. This shift in racial and ethnic background suggests programs and activities will need to be reconsidered to meet evolving cultural needs such as increased family-oriented activities. However, it is necessary to accurately understand the needs of people from varying cultures before making assumptions. To do this, programs will need to rely on needs assessment studies targeted specifically to individuals who may or may not have traditionally frequented outdoor recreation facilities.

As population demographics in the United States continue to change, the diversity of outdoor recreation participants will broaden. Participants will be increasingly multilingual, will include aging adults, will represent a wider range of racial diversity, and will have increasingly diverse activity interests. Although many outdoor recreation activities will continue to rely on wilderness or wilderness-type areas,

many potential participants are interested in both urban and nonurban outdoor experiences; outdoor program administrators will need to offer opportunities providing experiences that meet this emerging market.

STAFFING

"Staffing is perhaps the greatest single challenge for administrators of outdoor programs" (Ford, Blanchard and Blanchard, 1993, p. 219). Part of an administrator's responsibility in outdoor recreation is to build a sense of agency among employees so they may best represent the organization as well as the profession. To do this, it is imperative to understand and consider the driving forces behind current as well as incoming staff. Encouraging personal responsibility and engagement can be as important as compensation, education, professional development, and knowledge levels. Identifying differences between generational cohorts with respect to employment goals can provide a basis for understanding and addressing the dynamic needs of employees.

The current outdoor recreation facility staff is well represented by the generational cohort identified as the baby boomers—individuals born between 1945 and 1965 (Easterlin, Schaeffer and Macunovich, 1993). Boomers are just beginning to reach retirement, particularly since retirement

is often earlier than the traditional 65 years of age. As boomers retire, many positions will be filled with Generation X employees advancing from entry level or similar positions. As the entry level positions become available, the Millennials will enter the workforce. When Boomers entered the workforce, they were looking for career jobs they could hold for a long time. They have been service oriented, driven, willing to go the extra mile by developing professional relationships, eager to please, and strong team players (Burmeister, 2008).

Incoming Millennial employees are seeking employment at organizations where mentorship and professional development is provided. This is where baby boomers can be used to advantage. Boomers can pass on their institutional knowledge and skill by having the Millennial generation employees shadow and observe them in action while providing critical and thoughtful mentorship. Ensuring institutional knowledge is already passed on to individuals who represent Generation X is also critical.

Before the baby boomers cycle out of the workforce, it is prudent for organizations to implement a system for collecting and preserving the institutional knowledge of these seasoned employees. Most boomers in the outdoor recreation profession, or a related field, have been there for over 30 years. They have been an integral part in the developmental stages and

growth of outdoor recreation.

Organizations would benefit by adopting a knowledge management system that ". . . captures and stores the knowledge and experiences of employees and makes this information available to others in the organization" (Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, 2007, p. 185) In particular, information such as historical development of the organization, milestones, strategic plan formation, challenges negotiated, program history, and notable accomplishments are integral in planning for the direction and continued success of any unit.

In his description of how to move an organization from satisfactory to outstanding, Collins (2001) states, "If we get the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats, and the wrong people off the bus, then we'll figure out how to take it someplace great" (p. 12). Outdoor program administrators frequently make personnel decisions. It is just as important to get the wrong people off the "bus" as it is to hire the right people to join. The right combination of staff members is an integral component of any successful organization.

"The most successful companies will be those who can attract [employees], create an environment in which they can thrive, and learn to leverage their differences into assets for the company," (Burmeister, 2008). The relationships

created among administrators and employees by using the strengths of Generation X and Millennials along with the core knowledge of baby boomers will need to be a priority in order to hire and retain the best outdoor recreation professionals in this new generation of employees. Knowledge management will be an important consideration, as will staff development and retention. Acknowledging and embracing these changes will greatly enhance outdoor recreation organizations.

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE FIELD: STANDARDS, CERTIFICATIONS, ACCREDITATION

Another facet of outdoor program administration to be considered in planning for the future is the increased need for meeting standards, providing certified staff and programs, and attaining accreditation. Over the last 25 years, practitioners have been developing and instituting certification and accreditation standards for many outdoor recreation programs, including residential and day camps, adventure programs, and community recreation programs.

Certifications and accreditation standards represent best practices gained over years of experience by leaders in various aspects of outdoor adventure industries. They should be seen as the minimum standards by which an organization operates. When a practitioner (individual or organization) follows the standards and procedures through which it was certified or accredited, little question remains about what was done and why. Our society has become increasingly litigious, and projections suggest no change in this regard. Outdoor recreation agencies, in order to continue providing services, must keep this issue forefront in their considerations. Program safety must be stressed for all participants. Outside agencies, such as insurance companies, often require certifications and accreditations as a condition for service. In the event of an accident or a legal suit, the practitioner will need to have reasonably met industry standards.

Certification standards cannot always be universally applied, however. Accidents occur even in the best designed and safest recreation programs. Incident prevention and response skills learned through certification trainings (e.g., CPR, basic first-aid, and first-responder skills) are essential in preparing for and managing accidents and incidents. All staff must understand the risks and prepare for them. If staff members are not provided with the

opportunity and time to practice, these skills will fade over the course of a typical three-year certification. Every program and situation has its own unique characteristics. Thus each organization should develop its own operating procedures that augment and do not bend the broader standards of certification.

Organizations are responsible to diligently train their staff in operating procedures and to regularly audit the certified skills of their staff so that incidents are handled with practiced consistency and understanding. Incident response is very important, but preparation to avoid incidents is top priority for outdoor recreation agencies. Agency accreditations provide the system and structure to facilitate this preparation. Looking into the future, accrediting bodies will increasingly be the avenue for ensuring organizations are using best and appropriate practices to develop, monitor, and maintain employee skills and certification programs.

YOUTH AND THE OUT-DOORS

The current political climate holds a clear interest in getting people outside. In 2005, several seminal events took place. The Connecticut Department of Environmental

Protection successfully developed the powerful statewide initiative of No Child Left Inside. Almost simultaneously, the first edition of Richard Louv's publication *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* was released. Faced with increasing obesity rates among adults and children, instances of emotional health problems, and reliance on electronic media for entertainment, the nation is responding.

One of the key outcomes of this movement was the legislative effort to introduce environmental education into the core curriculum of the K-12 public school system nationwide. The No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Act (H. R. 3036) was not adopted by Congress in 2008 but was reintroduced in 2011 as a bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 regarding environmental education. NCLI is intended to support direct experiences for environmental education of K-12 students and provide training opportunities to educators to conduct these programs (Chesapeake Bay Foundation, 2010) for the overarching purpose of developing environmental literacy among young people. The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) is one of the key organizations collaborating to advocate for congressional support of the NCLI legislation. However, other organizations, such as the Children and Nature Network (CNN) and the

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) are also providing active support. In addition, multiple agencies have initiated programs designed to get people outdoors (see table 4.2).

The effect of this movement to engage young people in the outdoors is widespread. Many parents are making conscious choices to spend increased time outdoors with their children. As increased instances of systematically collected data are shared showing the benefits of spending time outdoors, and more important, this information is shared with politicians, educators, primary caregivers, and health professionals, we anticipate an increase in time spent outdoors. Outdoor program administrators have an opportunity and obligation to capitalize on this social movement of getting children outdoors.

Table 4.2 Programs Promoting Outdoor Recreation Participation

Agency or organization	Program	Contact information
Children and Nature Network	Multiple programs and research	www.childrenandnature.org
Get Outdoors USA	National Get Outdoors Day	www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org
North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences	Take a Child Outside Week	www.takeachildoutside.org
National Park Service	Junior Park Ranger, Web Rangers	www.nps.gov/learn/juniorranger.cfm
National Wildlife Federation	Great American Backyard Campout	www.nwf.org/BackyardCampout/
Outdoor Recreation Coalition	Multiple events (clearinghouse of information)	www.funoutdoors.com/events
U.S. Department of Interior	Take Pride in America	www.takepride.gov
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	National Wildlife Refuge Week	www.fws.gov
USDA Forest Service	More Kids in the Woods	www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/woods

Laurlyn Harmon

Slacklining is a creative outdoor activity that young people enjoy, partly because of its perceived adventurous quality.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE OUTDOORS

The speed with which technological applications are introduced today is phenomenal by most standards, and the life of electronic technologies

is short. Laptop computers are expected to remain useful for only two years, software is updated annually, and cellular phone technology is upgraded at least every six months. Such trends will continue. Increasingly sophisticated technology is the wave of the future. This being the case, outdoor program administrators should strive to stay on top of current practices and be familiar with the technological tools available to them.

In 2010, the Kaiser Family Foundation (Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts, 2010) reported, ". . . young people have increased the amount of time they spend consuming media by an hour and seventeen minutes daily, from 6:21 to 7:38—almost the amount of time most adults spend at work each day, except that young people use media seven days a week instead of five" (p. 2). In his book, *Last Child in the Woods,* Richard Louv (2008) identified a condition, nature deficit disorder, describing the current state of young people that has resulted from too much time with technology and too little time with nature. Louv's publication, along with reports of increasing media use and rising rates of obesity among young people (CDC, 2010) has brought attention to the nation's lack of connection with the outdoor world. As a result, federal, state, and local agencies, in addition to not-for-profits, private, and public education groups, have come together to promote

participation in outdoor recreation activities as a path toward healthy living. Many programs have been created to engage youth, adults, and families in outdoor activities. In a time when obesity is a critical health issue for Americans, particularly among youth, outdoor program administrators are important providers of opportunities for children and their families to hike local parks, climb mountain trails, canoe rivers, explore wilderness areas, and develop a closer relationship with the outdoors.

Outdoor program administrators should consider technology from two perspectives: facility driven and user driven. Facility-driven technologies include management and design software, environmentally friendly products and actions, and program equipment. For example, as outdoor recreation facilities are seeing an increasing demand for accountability, they can take advantage of sophisticated recreation organization management software such as ReCPro and Rectrac. This software is used for sales tracking, league scheduling, facility rental, on-line registration, and to process payments at recreation facilities.

User-driven technologies refer to items outdoor recreation participants find increasingly useful, interesting, or important and may bring with them on trips. For instance, new materials and designs are allowing outdoor gear distributors to provide lighter and stronger tent

materials, more options for waterproof gear, and clothing with sun protection. In addition, each generation of communication devices provides services not previously available that can affect not only the comfort and enjoyment of outdoor experiences but also user safety. Handheld global positioning satellite (GPS) units are replacing the standard compass units, satellite phones are providing service in areas previously isolated from electronic communication, and handheld weather monitoring units allow outdoor enthusiasts to be prepared for even the subtlest of weather shifts.

Another user-driven technology available is robotics. Available for land or water use, remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) allow individuals to observe wildlife and habitat or collect data as part of an outdoor education program with minimal site disturbance (Harmon and Gleason, 2009). The units can be small (about the size of a football) and are connected to the surface operating system via a tether that transmits power and images. The operator can guide the robot from the deck of a boat or from shore while the unit flies silently in the water, transmitting video to the surface monitor from depths of 2 to 2,000 feet. Sophisticated units can be purchased for $10,000 or more, but make-your-own kits are available for under $500. The assembly of these units can be an integral part of engaging individuals in

discussions regarding the future of the outdoors.

The tendency may be to shy away from technology when thinking of outdoor education. After all, young people are spending almost 50 percent less time outside than they did 10 years ago, opting for video games, computers, and televisions instead (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout, 2005). But the future holds many opportunities for using technology to draw people outdoors, and outdoor program administrators will be increasingly expected to take advantage of these opportunities.

SUSTAINABILITY

Acknowledgment of the effects of climate change is resulting in increased attention to addressing impacts at an organizational level. Lowering carbon footprints, LEED-designed facilities, and sustainable operations are also becoming hallmarks of the outdoor recreation industry. Facilities managers must be cognizant of the impact that upgrading their facility with the latest in eco-friendly products has on the community as well as the profession. Replacing wooden boardwalks with newly designed composite boards manufactured from postconsumer plastics, for instance, or converting energy sources to wind or solar, illustrates a commitment to the future of the planet and demonstrates an organization's

outdoor ethics. Engaging in and advocating for environmentally responsible behaviors, emphasizing outdoor ethics, addressing impacts on public lands, and promoting public participation regarding sustainability are all practices embraced by outdoor program administrators.

CASE STUDY: NORTHBAY ADVENTURE CAMP: LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

One organization successfully using some of the strategies and methods discussed in this chapter is NorthBay Adventure Camp in northeast Maryland. Founded in 2005 by philanthropist John Erickson, NorthBay is an environmental education camp designed to house up to 450 people at a time. Participants spend their days addressing a variety of research questions while hiking, exploring natural areas, and collecting scientific data in the Chesapeake Bay and adjacent areas. The primary purpose of these activities is to help students identify a situation or event, instigate discussion, and generate different investigative approaches. Evenings are spent sharing the approaches students have used to solve that day's research problem. To provide

an educational experience, each program is guided by two overarching questions: "To what extent do your choices affect your future and the people around you?" and "To what extent do your choices affect the environment?" According to Keith Williams, director of education at NorthBay, grappling with these questions teaches students ". . . how to look at environmental and social problems through that lens—they can use this approach when they return to their own communities and be better prepared to handle differences of opinion" (personal communication, June 5, 2008).

The multi-day programs for sixth graders that are conducted during the academic year were designed and are regularly modified in partnership with the Maryland Department of Education (MDOE) to ensure curricula meet the state's current learning standards. In this way, the outdoor environment becomes a platform for learning language, arts, and mathematics, which helps students perform better on the standardized exams required by the state.

Sixth grade girls from the Baltimore Public Schools try their hand at running an underwater robot as part of their bivalve science program in the Chesapeake Bay.

Staff development is a priority at NorthBay. Hiring is based on a love for working with kids and a willingness to learn, coupled with professional credentials. Education staff are encouraged, via personal development and monetary incentives, to attain state teaching certification. They are provided with two weeks of training, paired with a senior educator for mentoring, and participate in peer observation throughout their time at NorthBay. Individuals are allowed to adapt the curriculum based on

context and personal expertise while retaining the core standards. The high-trust, collaborative opportunities among staff have resulted in excellent programming and high retention rates.

Funding for initial programming was provided by Erickson, but the Maryland Department of Natural Resources offered a 30-year lease to NorthBay and maintains a continual partnership by working together to develop courses (e.g., Bay Grasses in Classes), bringing experts to share knowledge with the education staff, and holding regular meetings at the facility.

Partnerships with university researchers have resulted in unique opportunities for students as well as alternative program funding. In summer 2008, 11 groups of sixth graders from inner Baltimore operated underwater robots as part of their bivalve study in the Chesapeake Bay. Funded by George Mason University, the research was designed to assess the perception young people have of new technologies and how they affect learning.

NorthBay has embraced several creative approaches to funding, staff development, and programming—all key components of this successful organization.

» **Outdoor ethics.** The impact of the sustainable movement on the future of employee stewardship and perceptions of visitors or clients

is necessary for any outdoor program administrator to consider. Sustainability and outdoor recreation are inextricably linked, and administrators have an opportunity to lead by example through their advocacy for and engagement in a specific set of outdoor ethics. What does this mean to an agency? In some cases, it can be as straightforward as recycling; in other cases, using nontraditional fuel sources such as wind or solar energy is an example. However, agencies must take the additional step of making their program visible by sharing the sustainable methods they have implemented with their clients, community, and other professionals. Of course doing so takes additional resources. Here is where creative administrators could incorporate sustainable activities into existing programs, distribute stories to the media, and share information at conferences. Outdoor program administrators may also find it useful to partner with existing outdoor ethics programs such as Leave No Trace, which provides small grants to support materials and training to agencies interested in developing new (or expanding existing) outdoor ethics programming.

» **Impacts on public lands.** Accompanying increases in the population has resulted in increased visitation to public recreation lands. At the same time, external pressures are on the rise

from organizations and individuals who want to extract resources from the land or build additional housing. Meanwhile, land managers are seeing a decrease in annual budgets, making it difficult to maintain and improve trail systems and facilities and to minimize impacts from increased usage demands. Activity conflicts are rising in high-density population areas as well as in open areas. For example, new activities such as geocaching, while potentially drawing more people outdoors, can also create a network of unplanned social trails, cause soil compaction near cache areas, and distract users from respecting the natural environment in which the activity takes place. In the western states, an excellent example of user conflict on public lands is the increasing number of encounters between motorized and nonmotorized visitors (e.g., ATVs and hikers). These challenges are leading to implementation of new policies for public lands that often result in limiting overall use.

» **Economics.** A nation's economy plays a huge role in outdoor recreation. Discretionary income levels affect purchases of outdoor-related gear and decisions to engage in outdoor trips and activities. Having less money to spend on activities identified as leisure activities affects purchases of associated equipment, participation in outdoor programs, and willingness to travel to distant locations. What is not clear is how each

generational cohort (baby boomers, Millennials, Generation Xers and Zers, and beyond) will respond to economic trends. Will Millennials prioritize their discretionary income differently from the way that baby boomers have? If so, what impact will this have on participation in outdoor recreation programs and related activities?

» **Public participation.** To address conflicts and engage individuals more directly with management issues affecting outdoor recreation agencies, many organizations are increasing public participation efforts. National Public Lands Day, which occurs on the last Saturday of September each year, offers free access to all federal public land holdings while providing opportunities in invasive species removal, trail maintenance, and other outdoor-management projects. Other programs engaging the public include Take A Child Outside Day (September 25), the National Audubon Society's Project BudBurst (early Spring), U.S. Fish and Wildlife's National Wildlife Refuge Week (second week in October), and National Get Outdoors Day (mid June). Outdoor recreation agencies can coordinate their own events with national events to increase public exposure and positive impact on the environment.

COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

One of the most important concerns for outdoor program administrators is to build relationships and make connections with individuals and organizations outside the field. This is important because doing so allows for a more free-flowing exchange of information, gives outdoor recreation increased opportunities for sharing benefits of programs, and creates partnerships that can allow for additional funding opportunities.

Many outdoor program administrators are feeling increased pressures to be self-sufficient and creative in terms of funding. Though the national economic situation fluctuates, it is unlikely recreation agencies will see a resurgence of support from the federal government because of spending pressure from health care services, the military, education, and the environment among others. Increasing fuel, travel, and equipment costs, especially when coupled with economic downturns, will lead to more local travel for families rather than the traditional long trips. These developments will provide occasions for outdoor professionals to collaborate at a local level and, ideally, will present increased opportunities for individuals to participate in

previously unavailable outdoor recreation programs.

An excellent example of collaboration is the partnership formed among Outward Bound, the Sierra Club, and the U.S. Military. In 2008, Outward Bound received a $3.5 million grant through the Sierra Club as part of the Military Family Outdoor Initiative Project. This money is being used to fund five- to seven-day trips in the backcountry designed specifically for returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. The programs, which include rock climbing, backpacking, and canoeing ". . . help participants gain self-confidence and skills for reintegration into civilian life and non-combat zone redeployment, as well as strengthened communication and relational skills in a supportive environment that builds trust and camaraderie" (Outward Bound, 2008).

How, though, can an outdoor recreation agency get involved with nontraditional partners? Once the desire to pursue partnerships is initiated, getting the staff personally involved is paramount. For example, if an agency wants to work with health professionals and, perhaps, offer recreation as preventive medicine, the outdoor program administrator should meet with staff and ask them to generate their best ideas for initiating contact.

In addition, having a plan to bring to potential collaborations is important. Such a plan could be

a “boxed presentation” to be used in schools or with public groups (e.g., property owner associations) or potential funding partners. Collaborators are interested in what they can do for (and with) potential collaborators as well as how others can help them. Identifying common interests and goals creates a sense of camaraderie, whereas discussion of the outcomes unique to outdoor recreation allows agencies to understand the value of working together.

Outdoor program administrators should attend meetings and conferences outside of the outdoor recreation profession and offer to speak at public engagements. When doing so, they should bring well-documented effects of outdoor recreation program outcomes. Nonprofit groups such as the Children and Nature Network (www.childrenandnature.org) can be excellent sources for this information.

OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

A final consideration, yet one of the most necessary for managing a strong future for outdoor recreation, is assessing user feedback and measuring outcomes. Most administrators, programmers, and facilitators intuitively recognize the value of participating in outdoor programs; however, they have been less than rigorous in measuring the impact of their programs on participants. In the instances where

research has been implemented, results suggest participants exhibit increased creativity, decreased stress, increased attentiveness, and an overall increase in physical and emotional well-being. Assessing these outcomes, as well as education-related outcomes, is imperative if recreation agencies wish to compete for external funding, validate outdoor professions to the public, and increase participation.

SUMMARY

Outdoor program administrators are increasingly pressured to be multitalented, professionally savvy, and creative in the management of their agencies and organizations. The demands of clientele will change in the coming years, and the resources on which programs rely will continue to evolve. Some of the critical facets to address include the increasing reliance and availability of a plethora of technological tools, for operations as well as participation; the need for securing funding in nontraditional ways; meeting the needs of a diverse staff; and engaging in multiple and increasingly sophisticated partnerships.

The need to address these critical concerns while maintaining and developing new, well-designed, and outstanding outdoor recreation programs drives the future of outdoor program administration. By acknowledging these changes and capitalizing on the opportunities

available, administrators will be able to proactively meet or exceed client, community, and employee expectations and exemplify leadership in our profession.