



CONFLUENCE OF STATES EDUCATION SERIES SUMMARY

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDING FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

Hosted by:

APRIL 13, 2023



Overview

Gary Vernon of the Walton Family Foundation, Dr. Jordan Smith, and Utah Representative Jeff Stenquist joined Jason Curry of Utah and Suzanne Grobmyer of Arkansas to discuss public and private funding for recreation infrastructure. Topics included establishing recreation funding sources in state budgets, creative revenue sources for recreation grant programs, and strategies to build partnerships with private philanthropies to fill state-level gaps.

Take-Home Advice

"We need to get more of our colleagues out of committee rooms and in the outdoors, experiencing what's happening, to really understand what the issues are. That was the genesis for the outdoor recreation caucus. We are going to be doing field trips throughout the year to help legislators understand the issues, and to learn from the state office about all the things they manage." - Representative Jeff Stenquist

"Two years ago, we created the earmark of sales tax revenue to be dedicated toward outdoor recreation and this year, I ran a bill to put processes and procedures around how that money would be spent. The Outdoor Adventure Commission reviews proposals for organizations to receive money from that fund. The policy, organization, and funding sources are coming together." - Representative Jeff Stenquist

"The trail system became a recruiting tool to attract and retain talent for businesses in Bentonville, AR. Bentonville became a proof of concept that had other communities think about building trails. Trails unlock the beauty of each community. It started with the Walton Family Foundation funding these pilot projects, but now communities across Arkansas are getting federal and state funds, adding a tourism tax, doing bonds, building trails, and trying to replicate what's going on in Bentonville." - Gary Vernon

"To create a destination that's stronger than just a town, the idea of branding a region came about. That's where the "Oz Trails" comes from. We also came up with a statewide network of destination trails ("Monument Trails") around the state. The state parks with Monument Trails have seen a considerable uptick in visitors and revenue, and it's impacting the communities around those state parks because of the visitors coming to ride the trails." - Gary Vernon

"The outdoor recreation economy can be supported by state legislatures and agencies in many ways, but little thought or policy has been focused on developing formal avenues for coordination, collaboration, and resource-sharing between state agencies and programs, counties, municipalities, and federal land management agencies." - Dr. Jordan Smith

Panel Speakers



Jason Curry
Director of the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation



Suzanne Grobmyer
Chief of Staff for the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism



Gary Vernon
Program Officer for the Walton Family Foundation



Dr. Jordan Smith
Director for the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism at Utah State University



Representative Jeff Stenquist
Representative at the Utah House of Representatives



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