



A growing body of evidence suggests that human health is linked to the health of our natural world. The National Park Service (NPS) Health Promotion Initiative, established in September 2010, seeks to develop a strategic roadmap to guide how parks and partners can best contribute to the health of our nation while promoting the health of all species and the planet we share. Human health focus areas of the initiative include physical activity, nutrition, and mental health promotion.

As initial steps, the NPS Health and Wellness Steering Committee commissioned three priority activities:

**1) Develop a baseline inventory and database of Service-wide health promotion programs for the period 2005-1010.** Preliminary data assembled and reviewed to date reveals the following:

- A total of 295 programs have been identified.
- 190 programs were park-based programs representing parks in all 7 NPS regions.
- An additional 105 were community-based programs with the assistance of NPS RTCA project work.
- Almost all programs identified focused on promoting physical activity;
- 11 programs focused on improving nutrition; and,
- none mentioned mental health promotion as a significant program goal.
- Approximately 40% of programs—primarily community-based ones—involved collaboration with state/local health departments or other health organizations

**2) Convene a meeting in April 2011 to draw a vision for a healthier nation.**

The forum will bring together leaders who share a commitment to meeting our nation's health challenges in innovative ways. The two-fold aim of this meeting is to forge new partnerships and strengthen the nexus between public lands and public health. This April event will open the discussion of how our parks and open spaces can become purposefully connected to the health of our people and our planet.

A few of the questions we hope to address at this meeting:

- How can parks combine forces with business innovators, healthcare leaders, scientists and advocacy organizations to promote wellness and drive down healthcare costs?
- How can we influence a cultural shift to value parks for health? What can community leaders and managers learn from experts and visionaries in order to make this a sustainable idea that affects behavior at its core?
- How is human health dependent on the health of all species and the planet we share, and in what ways can parks and open spaces strengthen these connections?

**3) Foster Intra-agency and Interagency Collaborations**

NPS aims to magnify the benefits of parks within ongoing national health promotion initiatives and to illuminate opportunities to partner across sectors. Examples of endeavors planned and underway include:

- DOI One Health Group
- Healthy People 2020 Work Group

NPS pilot projects and demonstrations in collaboration with Commercial Services, RTCA, Interpretation & Education, and DOI Office of Youth