

Engaging Youth & Families into the Trail Community

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Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Coordination Committee

Avalonia Land Conservancy

SECT New England Mountain Bike Association

CT Trails Symposium 2018

Goodwin College



Introduction - Kim Bradley

- ▶ Professional Ecologist & Wetland Scientist
 - ▶ UCONN :
 - ▶ BSc - Ecology and Environmental Science
 - ▶ MSc - Biological Oceanography
 - ▶ Previous Environmental/Ecological Consultant ~ 10 yrs
- ▶ Mom of 4.5 and 3 year-old daughters
- ▶ Volunteer for various organizations
 - ▶ Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed Coordination Committee
 - ▶ SECT New England Mountain Bike Association - President
 - ▶ Avalonia Land Conservancy - BOD

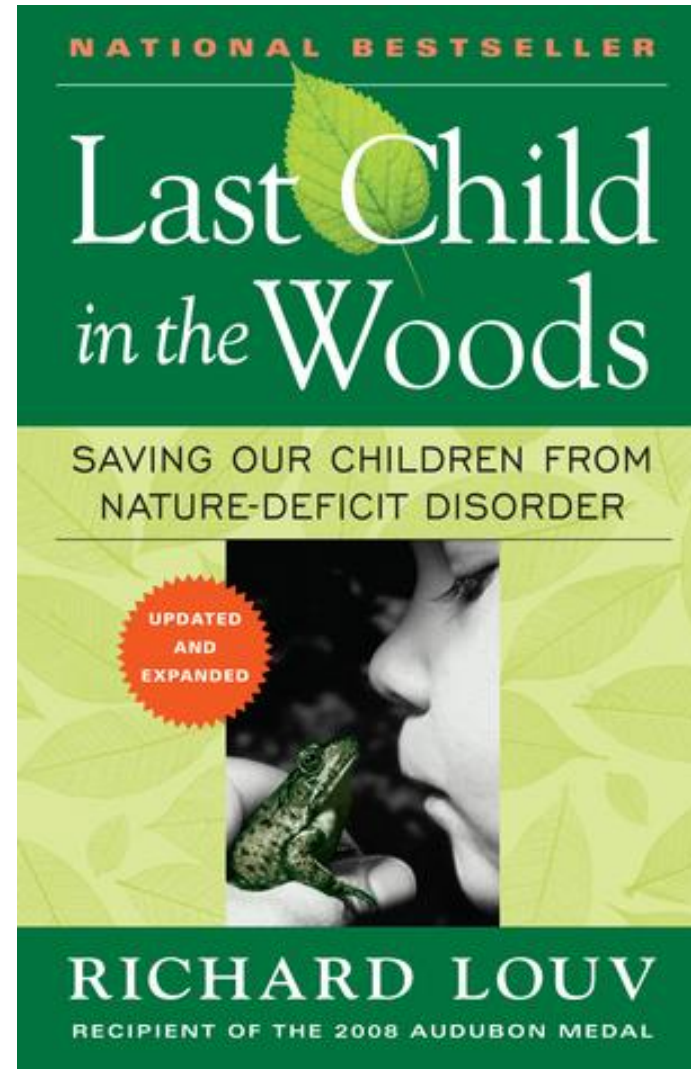
Overview

- ▶ Importance of connecting youth to nature through trails (and connecting trails to youth)
- ▶ Review of strategies and programs of local organizations for range of ages
 - ▶ Young families/Infant to Preschool
 - ▶ School Aged
 - ▶ High School +
- ▶ Open discussion and brainstorming



“Last Child in the Woods” - Richard Louv

- ▶ Nature-deficit disorder
- ▶ Increased dependence on technology resulting in disconnect with the natural world.
- ▶ “Where Will Future Stewards of Nature Come From?”





Trails building a connection....

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”

- Rachel Carlson



Young Families & Infants/Preschoolers: Build a Connection

- ▶ Transition Timeframe
 - ▶ Disconnect with pre-child activities and commitments
 - ▶ Observable opposite disconnect with volunteer-based organizations
 - ▶ Board of Director Membership
 - ▶ Volunteer Opportunities age limitations
- ▶ Important timeframe for outdoor engagement with children
- ▶ SIMPLE forms of engagement
 - ▶ Create a more family-friendly environment

CTDEEP - No Child Left Inside

- ▶ The mission of No Child Left Inside® is to introduce children to the wonder of nature - for their own health and well-being, for the future of environmental conservation, and for the preservation of the beauty, character and communities of the great State of Connecticut.
- ▶ Resources overviewing CT State Parks & Forests
- ▶ The Great Park Pursuit Program





Rhode Island Families in Nature

- ▶ “A free group, open to families of all ages and abilities. We try to connect people with resources and events such as kid-friendly hikes and activities to help you get outside more with your family!”
- ▶ Google Map of hiking trails throughout RI.
- ▶ Links to Local Outdoor Events.
- ▶ The Rhode Island Family Hiking Guide & Journal



Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center

- ▶ Well maintained 10 miles of trails throughout property
 - ▶ Family oriented activities and hiking opportunities
 - ▶ Short loop options
- ▶ Standards-based school programs & field trips
- ▶ In-house programs for schools, scouts, civic groups and other groups
- ▶ Nature-based preschool

Salem Recreation/Salem Land Trust “Find Your Footprint!”



- ▶ Medallions hand crafted by local artists
- ▶ Hidden within the local preserves
- ▶ Keepsakes with Year imprinted
 - ▶ Encourage visiting local open spaces
 - ▶ Builds dense of community

NEMBA - Pot-luck Cookouts & National Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day

- ▶ Simple concepts and example of making organizational activities family friendly
- ▶ “Building the Village” feel
- ▶ Young children are with one parent/grandparent, other children with similar family interests
 - ▶ Age - oriented riding groups/pairs
 - ▶ Family members all get to join in
- ▶ IMBA National Take Kid Mountain Biking Day
 - ▶ GBNEMBA Kids Mountain Bike Festival



Hike it Baby

- ▶ Social media-based organizations, opportunities for engagement and collaboration
- ▶ “Dedicated to building communities that support getting families outside with children from birth to school age.”
- ▶ Grassroot organization, social-media focus, 2016 filed as a 501c3 organization.



AMC Outdoors Rx® program & Family Programs

A Program of the
Appalachian Mountain Club
outdoorsRx.org



- ▶ Outdoors Rx serves families living in vulnerable communities and aims to improve the mental and physical well-being of children from infancy to age 13 by helping them get outdoors.
- ▶ Outdoors Rx services include
 - ▶ Fun and convenient family programs for children from infancy to age 13
 - ▶ Free, public programs year-round
 - ▶ Easy pathways to outdoor exploration
 - ▶ Prize rewards for kids for being active
 - ▶ Leadership training and support for volunteers
 - ▶ Custom family programs for school and family groups in Outdoors Rx communities



School-aged Children: “Seedlings of Stewards”

- ▶ Families are established in routine, children more independent
- ▶ Youth are eager for experiences and growth
- ▶ Higher perception and capabilities
 - ▶ Can be hands on, more direction possible
 - ▶ Can provide volunteer trail stewardship assistance

Connecticut Forest and Parks Association: Project Learning Tree

- ▶ Environmental education program designed for teachers and other educators, parents, and community leaders working with youth from preschool through grade 12.
 - ▶ Provides curriculum to teachers, parents, community organizers.
 - ▶ Family activity guide available.



Scouting Organizations



- ▶ Boy Scouts of America
 - ▶ Cub scouts (Grades K-5); Boy Scouts 11-17 yrs old
 - ▶ Tradition of Outdoor exploration and stewardship
 - ▶ Merritt badges for hiking, Leave No Trace
 - ▶ Nationally Approved Historic Trails

- ▶ Girl Scouts of America
 - ▶ Grades K -12 split between one to two grades
 - ▶ Girl Scout Camping Opportunities
 - ▶ The Girl Scout Ranger Program - Partnership with NPS



Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed - “Programs in the Park”

- ▶ Saturdays throughout July - Devil’s Hopyard State Park, East Haddam, CT.
- ▶ Audubon CT Bird watching hike, family oriented.
 - ▶ Trail use for watershed and nature observation and exploration.
- ▶ Bi-annual “Riverfest” Celebration.



Avalonia Land Conservancy

“Hike & Seek”



- ▶ Scavenger Hunt Format incorporating technology and social media.
- ▶ Get Ready! : Review Avalonia Properties with trails.
- ▶ Get Set! : Download interactive trail map.
- ▶ Go! : Find targets listed on the webpage and collect photos of targets along hike.
- ▶ And Share: Post your images on Instagram or Facebook with #avaloniahikeandseek and/or #avalonialandconservancy

<https://avalonialandconservancy.org/hike-and-seek/>

Berkshire NEMBA Youth Trail Workshop

- ▶ Provided training on sustainable trail planning, design, and building.
 - ▶ Reviewed tools and safety
- ▶ Built new beginner friendly multi-use trail at Springside Park.
- ▶ Two successional Sundays
- ▶ Incorporated trail into the Berkshire Mountain Bike Training Series Tuesday night race series.





High School - Young Adult: Stewards in Training

- ▶ Independent goals and interests
- ▶ Project planning through completion
- ▶ Valuable stewardship potential
- ▶ Experiential opportunities leading to career paths

CT Cycling Advancement Program (CCAP)



- ▶ The Connecticut Cycling Advancement Program's mission is to ensure that Connecticut's youth and their families have access and exposure to an organized state-wide youth cycling league.
 - ▶ Mountain Biking (March - July)
 - ▶ Cyclocross (September - December)

Scouting Organizations

- ▶ Boy Scouts of America : Venturing (Co-ed, Ages 14-18)
- ▶ The Venturing program emphasizes four main areas known as the A-L-P-S model:
 - ▶ Adventure - Mentoring, leading, and participating in crew-led adventures.
 - ▶ Leadership - Ongoing leadership development through training, mentoring, and hands-on leadership.
 - ▶ Personal Growth - Goal-setting in support of personal growth.
 - ▶ Service - Leading and participating in community service.



AMC Youth Teen Programs

- ▶ Youth Opportunities Program (YOP)
 - ▶ Provides outdoor leadership training to urban youth workers and teachers across New York, New Jersey and New England, and by supporting them with the resources they need to independently lead their groups on outdoor adventures
- ▶ Teen Wilderness Adventure (12 -18 yrs)
 - ▶ Backpacking, Climbing, Kayaking, Canoeing, and Multi-sport trips ranging in length from 5-20 days.
- ▶ Teen Trail Crews (14 - 19 yrs)
 - ▶ Base/ Spike Crews 1-4 weeks
 - ▶ MA/NH/ME/NY/NJ



HV NEMBA & Oxford High School Youth Conservation Corps

- ▶ Program run through local high school targeting conservation needs and trail maintenance and development
- ▶ Collaboration between stewardship organizations
 - ▶ HV NEMBA
 - ▶ REI
 - ▶ YCC



Student Conservation Association (SCA)

- ▶ SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of the environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land
 - ▶ Youth (15-19 yrs old)
 - ▶ Community/Regional/National Crews
 - ▶ Single day or 2-5 weeks over summer; Focus on Conservation Work including Trail Maintenance
 - ▶ Young Adult (18-24 yrs old)
 - ▶ Three month to 12-month long programs
 - ▶ Expenses Paid; 40 hr per week position



student
conservation
association

CT Forest and Parks Association - Summer Trail Crew Internship



Photo: CFPA

- ▶ 5-6 member crew, performs trail maintenance, repair and construction projects on the 825-mile Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System in Connecticut
 - ▶ Age: 18-24 yrs.
 - ▶ 10-11 weeks, June - August
 - ▶ 3 week “spike camp”

Americorps - NCCC



Photo: CFPA

- ▶ AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time, residential, team-based program for young adults, age 18-24.
- ▶ 8-10 member teams, 10-month service term, housing & stipend.
- ▶ Projects can include constructing or repairing hiking trails in local and national parks.

Discussion & Questions

- ▶ Additional Organizations based on workshop attendants
 - ▶ What strategies and programs does your organization or those you know about offer to engage youth and families?
- ▶ Opportunities for collaboration?
- ▶ New creative ideas for engagement?



Thank You!

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<http://www.eightmileriver.org/>

<http://www.nemba.org/>

<https://avalonialandconservancy.org/>

