

ACES 2014 Wednesday Lunch Town Hall

December 10, 2014 | 12:15pm-1:20pm | Grand Ballroom Salons D-E

Title: *Linking Health and Nature: Making Sure People Are Really Part of Ecosystem Services*

Description: There is an emerging body of research documenting the health benefits of access to nature. Access to parks, increases in urban tree canopy, and trails are showing how they can combat chronic disease, reduce respiratory ailments, and improve mental health. What would it take for Kaiser Permanente to write prescriptions for walks in the woods instead of Ritalin? Could Medicare reimburse city parks departments for park maintenance costs? Could we design greenways to improve air quality in low income neighborhoods? Could states provide access to in-home health services to keep forest landowners and ranchers on their lands longer and managing more sustainably? Are the urban planners of the future part conservation planner and part public health planner with ecosystem service metrics being a common tool they use for both aspects of their job?

Answers to these questions are closer than they've ever been. This session will explore the conversations, state of knowledge, actions on the ground, and needed next steps to link health and nature more deeply.

Too often, we forget about how the frame of ecosystem services was developed to connect nature to human well-being. We have also not done enough to seriously address equity in our work. Concentrating on linking health and nature helps us address some fundamental challenges facing the world today:

- Median age for landowners is often in the late 60s, and we're not keeping their kids on the land;
- Rural communities are facing the same demographic challenges, undermining institutions like schools, hospitals, and the economy that depend on a diversified workforce;
- Your zip code is a better determinant of health than your genetic code according to a study completed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, especially for low income and minority communities;
- Health care has never been a good solution for low income and minority communities, where social and environmental factors drive a much greater proportion of health outcomes;
- Conservation funding has never competed well with health and education spending;
- Conservation needs a broader constituency of support, and when asked about the most important environmental issues, people say clean air, clean water, and natural places to play (i.e., they care about their health).

Proposed Session Agenda:

- 1st 20 minutes: Inspiration
 - Robert Zarr- health/conservation leader will lead the panel discussing the DC parks prescriptions program.
 - Brad Gentry will discuss emerging research and trends within health and environment.
 - Brian Kittler and Sam Baraso will discuss the links between rural health, healthcare, and the environment.

- Bobby Cochran will wrap up the discussion with the Wingspread declaration.
- 2nd 20 minutes: Getting Feedback from the Audience
- 3rd 20 minutes: Research to Action

The agenda will kick off with 20 minutes to set the context—examples of health and nature links, what the research tells us, and what people are doing to further the links. The second 20 minutes will be open discussion and feedback from the audience, and the third 20 minutes will be a panel discussion about moving from Research to Action.

Audience for Session

This session will be of interest to federal agencies exploring how to link policy areas, researchers looking for ideas to explore, and participants interested in the equity and human aspects of ecosystem services. The session can also help draw in audiences ACES has not been able to pull in to date (e.g., NIH, HHS, etc.).

Organizers of Session

Primary Contact:

Bobby Cochran

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Qualifications of the Organizer: Bobby has organized and participated in several ACES sessions over the last years. Willamette Partnership has been involved in several discussions in the Northwest and nationally over the last 18 months on the links between health and nature.

Contact Information for Participants

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