

## VOREC Steering Committee Meeting Agenda

Friday, March 11, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### Teams meeting

[Join through Teams app](#)

Join by phone: +1 802-828-7667; Conference ID: 315 981 149 #

### Objectives

- Share and discuss updates on Vermont’s Outdoor Recreation Economy.
- Learn about work to build active, healthy and equitable communities in Vermont.
- Review 2018 VOREC Prioritized Action Plan and begin thinking about new challenges and opportunities that should be considered.

### Pre-meeting questions to ask Outdoor Recreation Communities

- What are the biggest changes to Vermont’s outdoor recreation economy you’ve experienced between 2018 to now? Do those changes present new challenges and/or opportunities for business growth, increase in participation among all demographics, quality and extent of outdoor recreation resources, increased stewardship, and/or the health and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation?
- What major efforts do you want to see happen to strengthen the outdoor recreation economy?

### Agenda

Time	Topic	Lead
9:00 a.m.	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	Jackie Dagger, Program Manager
9:10 a.m.	<b>Business meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approve November minutes</li><li>• Updates from chair</li><li>• Other updates<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ ACCD (Josh Hanford)</li><li>○ VTGC (Abby Long)</li><li>○ VOBA (Kelly Ault)</li></ul></li></ul>	Mike Snyder, Chair Jackie
10:00 a.m.	<b>Building Active, Healthy and Equitable Communities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn about work happening between Regional Planning Commissions and the Vermont Department of Health</li><li>• Q&amp;A</li></ul>	Melanie Riddle, Assistant Planner, Lamoille County Planning Commission  Ed Bove, Executive Director, Rutland Regional Planning Commission
10:30 a.m.	<b>Break</b>	ALL

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lead</b>
10:40 a.m.	<b>VOREC 2.0 discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share outcomes from November meeting</li> <li>• Review 2018 Action Plan</li> <li>• Discuss the current landscape of Vermont's Outdoor Recreation Economy by VOREC Pillar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are there new challenges?</li> <li>○ Are there new opportunities?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discuss next steps</li> </ul>	Jackie
11:50 a.m.	<b>Public comment</b>	ALL
11:55 a.m.	<b>Other business</b>	ALL
12:00 p.m.	<b>Adjourn</b>	ALL

## **VOREC Steering Committee Meeting**

March 11, 2022 via Microsoft Teams | 9:00am – 12:00pm

**Steering Committee Attendees:** Michael Snyder, Josh Hanford, Mike Debonis, Hal Ellms, Karrie Thomas, Drew Simmons, Kim Rupe, Abby Long, Marc Sherman, Josh Ryan

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Frank Stanley, Jeanne Gervais, Shelby Semmes

**FPR/ACCD Staff in Attendance:** Jackie Dagger, Caroline Zeilenga, Becca Washburn (joined at 10:00am)

**Public in Attendance:** Melanie Riddle (Lamoille County Planning Commission), Ed Bove (Rutland Regional Planning Commission), Kelly Ault (Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance), Lisa Lafont (Vermont Horse Council), Bryan Rivard (Ski Vermont), Steve Sharp (Mad River Valley Backcountry Coalition)

### **Welcome and Introductions**

#### ***Business Meeting***

**November Minutes:** Mike D. motion to approve, Karrie second. None opposed, no abstentions. Minutes approved.

#### **Chair Updates**

Mike provided an update that in FPR's FY23 budget the Governor's recommendation includes another round of one-time general funds of \$5 million for the VOREC Community Grant Program. This is presently being discussed in the House Appropriations Committee. The committee conversation has included a thought of trimming this amount, but using the "trimmed" funds for other recreational support. The grant program does continue to be well received, and announcements about this year's grants will be coming very soon. He also shared that the House has now passed the reserve forestland bill for Current Use, which has raised questions about the posting of land as part of Current Use.

Mike shared that S.234, the Act 250 bill, has crossed over from the House to the Senate, and includes the language that exempts recreational trails from fragmentation criteria, but currently the Administration does not support the bill. The House may consider adding more to the bill that would possibly allow the Administration to support.

Congressionally directed spending announcements are being made, including recreation funding in Vermont. All three delegations have also reached out about another round of earmarks, and there are many big ideas that will be offered.

Mike provided an update on the Vermont State Parks seasonal workforce: Applications are extremely low. Many people are thinking creatively about recruitment and strategies to help with this. Mike invited the steering committee to share the word about working for Vermont State Parks within their networks. FPR is also working on improving connectivity for staff and visitors in parks, and working to increase wages.

Jackie shared that Frazier Blair of Orvis and Danny Hale of Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association (VASA) have been nominated and Mike is working with the Governor's Office to receive approval. Jackie also shared that she will be sending out a bi-monthly meeting hold for upcoming steering committee meetings.

Jacked provided an update on the grant program: The team is aiming to make announcements of grant recipients early next week. She thanked the steering committee members who served on the grant review committee.

Jackie shared that the Confluence of States has been meeting monthly and is working on hiring a fellow to support the group's administrative functions, and continuing to welcome new states, including Maryland most recently. Drew shared that others in the industry have noticed the decrease in news coming out of the Confluence of States and the business sector hasn't been hearing much about their activity. Jackie noted that the hiring of the fellow will hopefully include more outreach. Mike also noted that turnover in some state offices, leadership changes, and the lack of in-person events owing to COVID have impacted some of the activity and publicity. This year's National Governor's Association meeting will be held in Maine on July 10-13, with the Confluence exploring a signing summit for new states as part of the event.

### **Vice Chair Updates**

Josh shared the workforce challenges experienced in ACCD and for seasonal state historic sites. He noted that there are many open, limited-service positions, and that there are limitations because of professional experience qualifications required in many state government positions. He is also seeing these workforce challenges with the partners ACCD works with. He also spoke to the housing challenges and the many goals and solutions for re-investing in Vermont's housing and building new homes in some places, as well as moving unhoused Vermonters into long-term housing. He noted that most of the budget bills to move this work forward are complicated by additional policy layers within the bills. He invited everyone to speak with their legislators to encourage support of housing bills and initiatives.

Marc agreed with the housing needs and also noted the need for safety and for workers to feel physically safe commuting to and at work, including employees who work in loss prevention.

Josh provided an update on EDA grants, which could bring new money to infrastructure projects supporting out of state visitation and visitor experience, as well as destination marketing activities and strategic planning. He also noted efforts underway on NBRC funds for marketing, a summit, and more. Jackie added that in a recent meeting with NBRC representatives, the Northern Forest Center joined to discuss a summit for Fall 2023; Jackie will serve on the committee for planning the summit, and will be updating steering committee members on the work.

## **Partner Updates**

**VTGC:** Abby shared that the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (VTGC) is creating an outreach pamphlet to educate stakeholders about what VTGC is, the work they do, and their shared values. They also submitted a request for funds for administrative support for VTGC of \$150,000 for a program manager, expecting that funds would flow through FPR. VTGC is also working toward publishing the best management practices and incorporating this into the Vermont Trails System, in partnership with FPR.

Abby also provided a legislative update that the council supports H.581, but understands that many important stakeholders do not support this bill, so they are not pressing to see the recreational trails provisions in the bill pass.

For more information see Abby's summary in the Meeting Minutes Appendix (starts on p.5).

**VOBA:** Kelly provided an update on VOBA's work on outdoor recreation economy policy, expanding workforce, supporting JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) work in outdoor businesses, and marketing to elevate outdoor communities, businesses, and recreation opportunities. VOBA's policy work includes infrastructure and stewardship, economic and workforce development, outdoor recreation marketing, and healthy landscape and climate economy, with a focus on advocating for specific policies including the VOREC grant program and economic development, workforce, and housing bills.

Mike noted that the Administration has been open to expanding career technical education initiatives to include recreation as well as forestry, and Kelly agreed that VOBA is also supporting expansion opportunities like this, as well as overlapping interests with climate policies.

VOBA is also engaging the outdoor community in focus groups and interviews to identify workforce recruitment, education, training, and retention needs. VOBA will summarize the needs and recommendations from this engagement. VOBA is also asking questions about business and technical assistance that outdoor communities need.

VOBA has received support from ACCD to provide a second Basecamp marketing initiative in Vermont Sports magazine this summer featuring VOREC communities.

## ***Building Active, Healthy, and Equitable Communities***

Jackie introduced Melanie Riddle from the Lamoille County Regional Planning Commission and Ed Bove from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission to discuss the work regional planning commissions are doing through a grant from the Vermont Department of Health (VDH).

Ed provided background on Vermont's regional planning commissions. Planning considerations include health and wellness in many other aspects of their work, from recreation to transportation to planning to agriculture to crime. This work has traditionally been more indirect, but now RPCs are partnering with the Department of Health to dedicate work specifically to healthy community design.

Melanie described the healthy community design work RPCs are engaging in through the VDH grant. The support includes health equity and COVID prevention, with funding to focus on increasing health equity and improving access to physical activity and healthy food. This work will include creating a health

equity toolkit that synthesizes health equity work being done in other states and that is applicable to both Vermont's small and large municipalities.

Jackie invited the steering committee to consider ways that VOREC can connect to this work with RPCs. The group discussed ideas to be included in the toolkit, such as tracks or categories for communities to use in their planning and encouraging communities to assess their outdoor recreation opportunities and consider how to improve them and improve access to them. Karrie suggested making sure that communities interested in VOREC grants are aware of this toolkit, and that this could also tie back to communities' readiness to apply for future VOREC grants.

## **VOREC 2.0 Discussion**

Jackie reported out on work she's been implementing as a result of the small group discussions from the last meeting.

- More regular updates – Jackie has been sending weekly legislative updates, as one example
- More tasks related to areas of expertise – Jackie has been pulling out pre-meeting questions to help steering committee members connect with their outdoor recreation communities
- Continue bringing in speakers – We heard from one today and will continue bringing more; Jackie invited suggestions for future speakers

Jackie also invited feedback and ideas or needs that she isn't already addressing. She also shared upcoming work priorities for strengthening the group, including updating the charter and bylaws. She invited steering committee members to serve on a smaller group to improve the VOREC website. Kim and Drew volunteered.

She also encouraged the group to think about how they would like to involve their outdoor communities in the work of updating the action plan.

Jackie facilitated a discussion on VOREC 2.0 planning, building on one-on-one interviews she held with steering committee members in June 2021. She prompted Steering Committee members to think about changes in Vermont's outdoor recreation economy since the 2018 VOREC Action Plan was created and asked them to identify new challenges and opportunities linked to each of VOREC's five principles (aka pillars). She facilitated the conversation using a Miro Board, and began with an overview of the 2018 plan and objectives, and how the strategies align with the VOREC pillars. As an addition to the slides Jackie shared, Drew noted that the growing of outdoor recreation businesses component also included retaining existing businesses.

Jackie invited steering committee members to engage with the Miro Board by adding their own comments to sticky notes or by sharing comments in the chat or raising hands to offer comments.

Related to one challenge noted about access issues that impact communities, including traffic challenges through Stowe, Mike invited help from VOREC and others to bring together a Route 108 corridor transportation dialogue. At the end of the discussion, Jackie encouraged everyone to continue considering opportunities and challenges and adding to the Miro Board.

For notes recorded from the Miro Board see Meeting Minutes Appendix (starts on p.5).

### **Public Comment**

Lisa Lafont: Vermont Horse Council will be spearheading a share the trail, share the road safety campaign beginning May 7, and noted that the 2018 VOREC action plan speaks to an opportunity and challenge they are experiencing allowing users to understand yield rules on trails and roads. VHC is encountering people who don't know yield laws to bypass horse riders, bikers, or others. She has observed this is more of a problem as recreation grows and encouraged VOREC's support of this safety campaign.

### **Other Business**

No other business offered.

**Adjournment:** Jackie motion to approve, Josh second. Meeting adjourned.

## **Appendix**

### **VTGC Updates Summary from Abby Long**

1.) VTGC is working on creating a snazzy looking educational pamphlet to clarify what VTGC is, what we do, and why we do it. We realized, the past few years working on an alternative program for trail oversight, taught us that many stakeholders do not have a good idea of our work and, specifically, the best management practices already deployed by our membership organizations, plus the dedication we collectively have for environmental and community stewardship. So in a nutshell the info brochure will share that The Council directly represents thousands of members, volunteers, and private landowners, and the organizational members of VTGC have considerable 'on the ground' experience stewarding recreational trails, including well-cataloged BMPs. We'll also share that The Council is an important partner in the development of trail-related policy and programs, including our statutory role advising The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources on trail matters, including Recreation Trail Program grant allocations, supporting outdoor recreation education programs, and overseeing the Vermont Trail System, a role we execute through a close collaborative relationship with Vermont Forest, Parks, & Recreation. And we do all this because our Council members are the stewards of the 70+% of public access trails on private land and we are on the front line balancing equitable access with responsible use of our amazing landscape.

2.) We have submitted a request for funds for administration support to Rep Sims and Kimbel. In order to more effectively fulfill the VTGC mission to ensure that people will always have access to the trails and landscape of Vermont, and our commitment to foster trails that are both environmentally sustainable and community supported, the VTGC is requesting \$150,000 in one-time funds for a Program Manager and programmatic improvements. These funds would support a part-time (0.5FTE) staff member employed by the VTGC for three (3) years, along with enhanced member tools, materials, and communications.

3.) A third item, VTGC intends to consolidate, organize, and publish our collective BMPs and are beginning work towards integrating these management practices into the Vermont Trails System (VTS). This is a shared vision with FPR - to elevate and strengthen the VTS such that it is seen as a symbol of stewardship - and one that will take time to realize. Much of our focus this year will be dedicated towards this end.

4.) On the Omnibus bill - I would simply note that while the VTGC supports everything in H581, but we understand that other important stakeholders do not. We are not pressing to see the Recreational Trails provisions in the bill move forward, though we do believe significant portions (Sections 10-12) could pass without any real opposition and would provide helpful clarity on current oversight / Rule 71. Members of the REDWnG are keeping an eye out for other bills to which these non-controversial provisions could be added, though we understand this not to be a high priority.

### **Miro Board Notes**

#### *VOREC Principle: Grow outdoor recreation-related businesses*

- New Challenges
  - Housing
  - Workforce development
  - Worker safety
  - Small business / nonprofit \$\$ support to elevate their wages to be more competitive and encourage hiring
  - Remote workforce – access to better wifi – requires air travel
  - Remote workforce changing population of outdoors towns – how to keep them in VT when get called back to the office
  - Disconnect between marketing and stewardship
  - Safety for employees in Burlington – densifying neighborhoods are creating unsafe environments for staff in customer service facing jobs – employee harassment is heightened
- New Opportunities
  - Creating alternative education programs for teenagers
  - Remote workforce – opportunity to encourage remote workers to come to Vermont

#### *VOREC Principle: Increase participation in outdoor recreation activities among all demographics*

- New Challenges
  - Making sure messages about overcrowding don't exclude people
  - Economic, inflationary, pressure making access to outdoor recreation more challenging to lower income populations
  - Making sure people of all abilities have access and the supporting infrastructure they need (e.g. parking, lodging, etc.)
  - Capacity of NGOs to support diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ)
  - Making the outdoors a more welcoming space for all



- New Opportunities
  - Outdoors are being marketed to wider audiences
  - Can VT work with sister cities from other states to bring more diverse / economically challenged youth groups to our outdoor recreation opportunities
  - Invest in instructors and people who can facilitate development of new users – specifically target diverse leaders – seeing more diverse people with diverse interests

*VOREC Principle: Strengthen the quality and extent of outdoor recreation resources*

- New Challenges
  - Expanding definition and understanding of ability beyond what is required in ADA
  - Building a holistic experience – want to create as soon as people enter the state – to visit but also want people to want to call VT home
  - Modernizing the Vermont Trails system
  - Resources for communities planning trails and outdoor rec. opportunities
  - Range of opportunities available – developing an asset map (massive undertaking)
- New Opportunities
  - Range of opportunities available – showing people the resources that are out their backdoor
  - Good jumping off point with Town Forest Tool Kit for thinking more creatively around how we develop new assets / VT Trails System
  - User fees? Backpack tax? – Are these options for managing use? Ex: Fish and wildlife system, funded by fees / taxes – new funding source to help counter increase in user participation and impact – In NH users need a parking pass to use any trailhead (free or considerably less automatic parking pass for folks in need, on food stamps)
  - Adopt statewide code of conduct like “Ride with Gratitude” – unified messages that encourage stewardship
  - Outdoor recreation infrastructure valued same as traditional transportation infrastructure
  - Range of opportunities available – showing people the resources out their backdoor
  - More appropriate infrastructure to support users with mobility challenges
  - Disperse popular times – expand options for experiences – are there seasons that can be expanded? Locations that are set aside for one use that can be expanded to multi-users? – help reduce overcrowding – looking at how traditionally dedicated use and thinking about how to re-assess those decisions.
  - Developing standards / specifications for accessible trails – increased awareness for all users who are accessing outdoors / desire for experiences – ex: retrofit to get boat in the water for folks who need that help.
  - Inviting more communities to do a recreation assessment – economic love as much as trail resource love – start by looking at what we have and look more at what could be.

*VOREC Principle: Increase stewardship of outdoor recreation resources and environmental quality*

- New Challenges
  - Long term funding sources (think about ways to access resources through funds that could build over time – endowments)
  - Huge increase in users
  - Existential threat of climate change increasing
  - Need to think more strategically about management practices because of climate change and new users
  - Continue to explore way to support / compensate private landowners who generously provide outdoor rec opportunities in our state (current use type tax credit or carbon tax credits)
- New Opportunities
  - Support trail networks in making stewardship plans / policy that takes climate change / impact into consideration
  - Have more users – new residents – was about upkeep but with new users need to communicate about the need to new people
  - New dollars available for infrastructure is welcome and necessary given the incredible increase in need
  - Support trails / outdoor space in accessing Lidar terrain mapping to assess environmental impact / erosion annually to aid in mitigating this impact
    - KT looking at Lidar mapping / terrain to see the annual impact – tech being used in new ways creating new opportunities for management of trails – Carbon tax credits / working with landowners– wave the liability – ex: white out solutions in St. Johnsbury – can fly drones over areas to get better look at the terrain
  - People are noticing spike in participation – that it’s good – brings extra pressures and challenges – opportunity to go after dedicated revenue source – “Vermont Trails Stewardship Trust Fund”
  - Funding for VTGC Admin – help build capacity of stewardship practitioners in the state

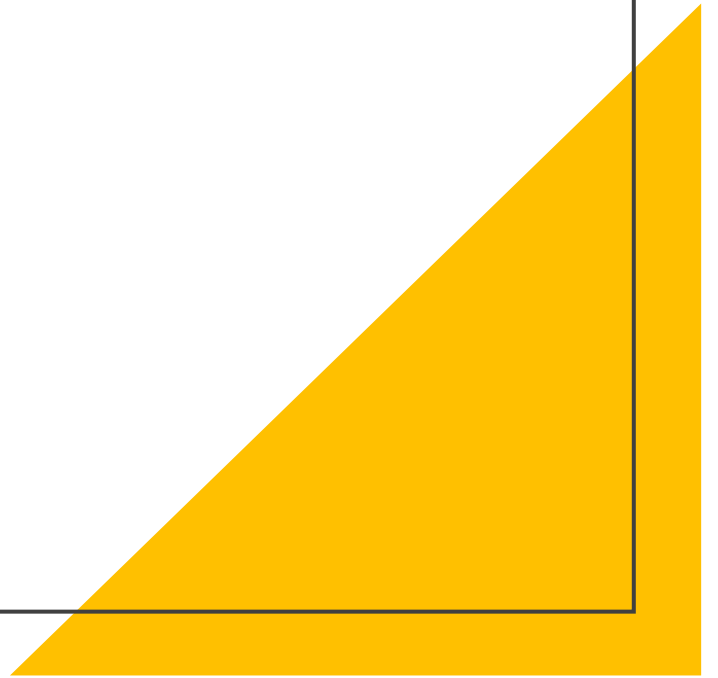
*VOREC Principle: Promote and enjoy the health and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation*

- New Challenges
  - Overcrowding and overuse of the outdoors – challenge in making sure all feel welcome
  - Motorized recreation does not create a healthy environment (Electric motorized OHVs)
  - Access issues with outdoor rec. assets – impacting participation negatively (inclusivity) – ex: vale resorts addressing income needs but it’s also less enjoyable
  - Issue with idling cars at ski resorts
  - Climate change/carbon – transportation solutions: public transportation / electric vehicle incentives
  - Bus rapid transit – increasing transportation potential (public transportation) – ex: Killington system
  - Defining outdoor recreation when we’re talking about VOREC – collect information from new users / continue dialogue around what we mean

- Downside of increasing use of resources
- New Opportunities
  - Mental health benefits – more awareness in the wake of COVID
  - Increase opportunities for participants to learn and hone skills
  - Also reduced air pollution
  - Nationally increased awareness of the outdoors as a welcoming place for people of all races
  - Renewed focus on value of outdoor education learning in the outdoors
  - Route 108 transportation / visioning
  - Reviving community ski hills / xc trails
  - Explore incentives for health and wellness – insurance, employer benefits
  - Data gathering – renewing commitment to gathering data to understand target pops to make recreation more accessible
  - More connector trails / paths to downtowns – mitigate recreation travel off dangerous roads

# VOREC 2.0

Action Plan Overview





# How was it created?

- Two-day Grafton Conference on Outdoor Recreation and Rural Economic Development (August 2017)
  - Community conversations held around the State
    - Arlington
    - East Dummerston
    - Hartford / White River Junction
    - Island Pond
    - Rutland
    - Saint Albans
    - Waterbury
  - Comments collected through email
  - Comments collected through write-in survey
-

# What does it look like?



## VOREC Steering Committee Recommendations and Action Plan February 2018

### INTRODUCTION:

The VOREC Steering Committee offers the following recommendations and action plan intended to enhance business opportunities, improve participation in outdoor recreation, strengthen our recreational infrastructure and stewardship of natural resources, and grow Vermont’s economy in a manner consistent with Vermont’s strong outdoor culture of respect and sustainability. The recommendations are broad, balanced, and inclusive. Through a collaborative process, including considerable public input, we have developed recommendations we think are achievable and impactful, given sufficient public and private commitment and resources. Some key principles have guided our work:

Inclusiveness. Outdoor recreation is defined broadly to be inclusive of all forms of outdoor recreation, including on-road, off-road, non-motorized, motorized, trail-based, open space, and by land, water and air. We have solicited and received feedback from many groups and individuals involved in outdoor recreation. Our motto has been: “If you’re outside, you’re in.”

Balance. We have considered all components of the Governor’s executive order including economic growth, marketing, stewardship, and access. We’ve sought to develop recommendations that balance economic growth with limited resources, balance increased outdoor participation with stewardship and sustainable infrastructure, and balance the varied needs of stakeholders and user groups.

Interconnectedness. We understand there is participation interconnectedness among outdoor recreational enthusiasts with users engaging and appreciating a variety of recreational pursuits. User groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive, i.e.

Objective	Strategy	Action/Initiative	Resources Needed	Impact to State Revenues	Timeframe
	Support other creative efforts to ensure lifelong participation in outdoor activities including beginning activity programs for all ages and families, e.g. loaner program for gear, community bike or kayak programs, etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ID such programs in Vermont and elsewhere</li> <li>2. Replicate and support these programs</li> </ol>			
	Identify and promote access across all types of outdoor recreation and all seasons – including both				



# How is it structured?

- Guided by three key principles
    - Inclusiveness
    - Balance
    - Interconnectedness
  - Organized primarily by objective categories and strategies
-



# How is it structured?

- Objective categories
    - Regional pilot programs
    - Economic development
    - Funding
    - Workforce development
    - Marketing
    - Private / public partnerships
    - Access and participation
    - Stewardship
  - 40 strategies listed under objective categories
-





# How do strategies align with pillars?

VOREC Pillar	# of aligned strategies
Grow outdoor recreation-related business	12
Increase participation in outdoor recreation activities among all demographics	11
Strengthen the quality and extent of outdoor recreation resources	19
Increase stewardship of outdoor recreation resources and environmental quality	9
Promote and enjoy the health and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation	4