

Chugach Children's Forest : : FLT Meeting NOTES
October 28, 2009 – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m
3rd Floor Conference Room

22 people attended the strategic planning meeting held at the US Forest Service Conference Room in Anchorage. The workshop was facilitated by Shelly Wade of Agnew::Beck Consulting, LLC, as part of the Chugach Children's Forest Project. A full list of meeting participants is attached.

Agenda Topic:

Welcome + Introductions + Why Are We Here?

Setting the stage for future action on the Chugach Children's Forest:

- Sharing history
- Reviewing what folks are up to
- Developing a vision
- Setting some broad goals

History of the CCF Initiative + NICE Plan + Opportunities + Challenges

USFS Staff, Sara Boario and Annette Heckert, presented a brief overview and provided context for both the Chugach Children's Forest initiative and the NICE (Nature watch, interpretation, conservation education) strategic planning effort. The group shared opportunities, challenges and concerns.

Opportunities

- We're all on the same page with what we care about
- A lot of similar national efforts – riding the wave of enthusiasm for connecting youth with the outdoors
- Changes happening in education sector; schools are looking for new partners
- NICE plan is a good starting point for the broader initiative
- We have strong existing strategic alliances, e.g. ASD, State Historic Preservation Office, etc.

Concerns + Challenges

- Change is in the air: Children's Forest, NICE and USFS transformation/reorganization.
- Make certain to coordinate and synchronize efforts as we change
- Honor the work that has been done and engage staff enthusiasm in new efforts. Focus for Children's Forest should be enriching, expanding, building from a strong base
- Stay focused given all it could be

What is the CCF? What might it be?

As a group the meeting participants answered these questions.

What is the Chugach Children's Forest?

- A process, an attitude, ethic, culture
- Sustained commitment
- Connecting youth to outdoors
- Youth employment opportunities, mentoring and shadowing
- Connecting community to public lands
- Emotionally resonant term that hooks people into the rest of the story
- Connecting at risk youth to public lands
- Partnership opportunities galore!
- Intentionally linking schools, community, government, non-government public land
- Difference in climate change solutions
- Legacy of the children's forest and their children, and their children (stewardship through the ages)

- Forests are for the future!
- Cross program, interconnected

Five years from now, success will be – the Children’s Forest will be...?

- Local economies
- Connections and resources for teachers, school districts
- A life of it’s own – durable inter connections – a web
- Agent for youth to be involved in continuous learning
- Infectious success in Alaska & beyond
- Viral CF! FUN!
- Inter community, nation wide exchange between and amongst children’s forest
- Instilling conservation ethics in youth
- Being relevant to our youth
- Growing the next leadership
- Empowering youth
- Diverse workforce
- Diverse engagement in public lands
- Inheritance – prepare youth to inherit
- Financial sustainability
- A sense of purpose and pride for USFS staff and others (comes from connection to youth and communities)
- Success of CCF initiative could demonstrate value of partnerships in public land management
- Culture / ethic
- Public lands and local youth are both valued resources
- Youth are motivated to continue with education; creates focus and engagement
- Health – connections to activities, to different life style choices
- Connections internationally, e.g. Bird migration
- It is a sustained commitment to changing hearts and minds
- Greater family cohesiveness and resilience

What the CCF isn’t...?

- intimidating or off putting because of name – it’s for everyone
- a “one-time” event
- isolated, stand alone programs e.g. just recreation, just career development
- Programs just for kids
- everything to everyone
- unsustainable
- An unguided missile (change hearts and minds)
- a single product;
- just one person’s visionary program

This discussion raised the questions: How do we determine which programs fit? Do they all fit? The strategic planning process over the next 6+ months should answer these questions.

What have we done? What are we doing?

At this point in the meeting participants were asked to indicate on large poster-sized maps what they’re working on or existing programs they’re aware of that fit within the Children’s Forest. The full listing generated by the group is attached.

Chris Beck from Agnew::Beck presented a draft Case Statement for the Chugach Children’s Forest. The case statement outlines the rationale for the CCF and defines the objectives and intended outcomes of the effort. The group was asked to consider the case statement as the meeting moved into visioning.

What is the core vision of the CCF?

Working in four groups, then two groups, and finally as one group, meeting participants developed the following vision. Vision was defined as: Desired future state.

CCF Vision: **Connected, engaged, healthy youth, communities, schools and public lands.**

What are the broad goals and tangible outcomes of the CCF?

The group was presented a listing of broad categories to describe the Children's Forest collection of programs and efforts. Working all together, meeting participants edited and refined the categories to achieve consensus on the following list of four:

1. Climate Change Understanding and Local Solutions
2. Healthy Youth, Families, and Communities
3. New Pathways for Education and Careers
4. Shared Stewardship and Civic Participation

Within these broad categories, meeting participants worked in groups to develop the following goals.

Climate Change Understanding and Local Solutions

- Youth, families and communities will apply their understanding of climate change to create and implement home town solutions
- USFS, Universities, and local schools will partner to monitor climate change effects
- Alaska schools will be connected through the Children's Forest web of sharing information, knowledge and leading community education on climate change effects
- Alaska's youth will connect through scientific research on climate change and information sharing across the globe
- Increased public awareness because youth (on the individual level) will educate people on the implications of climate change
- Public has an understanding of the Forest Service's management, research, and monitoring activities dealing with climate change
- Children will turn the lights out when they leave the room
- People will actually think globally – act locally

Healthy Youth, Families, and Communities

- Alaska youth will have active lifestyles (unstructured outdoor activities)
- The FS will sponsor outdoor community events
- People will have improved physical, emotional and mental health
- Kids having fun in the forest (forests mean fun) – outcome, more people are in the forest
- Trails and campgrounds are full of fun loving families every weekend
- Every school will have a program to involve students in outdoor activities
- Active healthy generations engaged in living in and loving nature
- Leading their forests
- Caring for the land and serving the people
- CCF will identify and overcome barriers (perceived and real) to outdoor recreation and play
- CCF engages youth in designing and implementing more enticing recreation
- CCF reaches into local communities to connect kids and families with local outdoor wild play

New Pathways for Education and Careers

- Clear sequence, continuance of relevant educational programs from pre-school to university in career path (“classroom to career”)
- Diverse youth crews engaged in multi-discipline, all FS mission, stewardship opportunities and skill development (practical experience)

- Youth will be engaged in education through the use of current technology
- Youth will be engaged in developing relevant educational tools that utilize cutting edge technologies
- Youth will serve as mentors for other youth
- CCF programs will provide internships for credit projects, job shadowing and other expanded opportunities for high school and college students to work directly with the agency
- FS identifies and promotes stepping stone opportunities for higher education and careers
- Diverse professions and mentors are integrated into education and employment programs
- Challenging outdoor activities will promote new career and educational pathways
- Create powerful, stimulating connections to career opportunities through the outdoors
- Youth from urban and rural communities will learn together and build connections and understanding

Shared Stewardship and Civic Participation

- There will be self sustaining volunteer programs throughout the forest
- Youth will be involved in meaningful decision making about the forest
- Youth stewardship will encourage increased diversity
- New media (enhanced communications) to connect... (cool stuff kids like)
- CNF will be a integral part of placed based service learning
- Youth, families and communities will value and be actively engaged in on the ground stewardship and decision making for public lands
- Service learning and voluntary programs are an integral and valued component of all CNF + school district programs
- Grow young adults into future mentors - leaders for tomorrow's youth "youth mentoring youth"
- Public lands will be more relevant, valued and cared for by Alaska's youth and communities
- Develop multigenerational approaches to stewardship and programming

Next Steps

Before adjourning for the day the group was asked the following questions (and provided the following answers.)

What did we like?

- Consensus on vision statement
- Staying on task
- Fun, we were laughing
- Sure and confident facilitation
- Engagement with each other, process interacting

What would we change?

- Cozy, toasty room
- Four laptops, projection screens
- Some chocolate

Agnew::Beck will engage in the next steps.

- Share synthesis of Strategic Planning Session with participants
- Complete Background Research
- Conduct Interviews + Focus Groups
 - Agnew::Beck will get in touch with many of the folks who participated in the day's meeting.
- Workshop One – Dec 7th/8th
 - Agnew::Beck will work with USFS Project Managers to determine who needs to attend this workshop.