



## NATURE: GOING BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE LIBRARY

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I grew up in the country surrounded by trees, bugs, and weather. When I moved away to college and later to more populated areas, I longed for a space where I could go to be alone or to not see anything man made. Now as a rural library director in an area populated in the summer by people coming to get away from the city, I realized they were coming here to also get back into nature. Library visitors have come in to look for maps, ask about good hiking, swimming, or fishing spots, and find out what is happening in the area. Sharing the outdoors with family, friends, and the community is a joy when the natural world is respected and valued.

In rural communities, connection to nature plays a critical role in many aspects of life, including mental and physical health, as well as a shared sense of place. Many people seek out the natural world to slow down, recharge, and find peace. In today's technology-driven world where we are often pulled to always be connected and plugged in, escaping to the outdoors reinvigorates the pleasures of exploring the world around you, being present in the moment, and giving yourself time to ponder and reflect.

### IN THEIR WORDS

"I am so inspired, like all the time. And I think part of it is because of two things: one, I am surrounded by nature when I go outside; and the other, which is mixed with that, is that the pace is calmer. So it's like I can hear my thoughts, and deal with them, and have ideas. I can see natural things in the world that spark my curiosity, where I didn't have that as much in the city."

-- Jonathan,  
interview #1-3-04

What is in this tool?

This tool will help you reflect on how their library currently supports their community's connections with the natural world and investigate new opportunities for the library to support and engage with the community in natural spaces.

## NATURE

Events: List the available outdoor activities or natural spaces in your community during the following seasons.

Spring	
Summer	
Fall	
Winter	

What annual races, tournaments, fairs, or other events support those outdoor activities or natural spaces?

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Who organizes those events?

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How could the library be a part of those events?

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How does the library's collection support those activities and/or natural spaces?

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What would you like to add to the collection?

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What in-person library programs and resources does your library already do to support those activities or natural spaces?

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What programs and resources would you like to add or adapt?

For adults:

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For youth:

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Any other audience:

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## OUTREACH

Thinking beyond the library walls, how could you bring the library to the outdoor activities or natural spaces?

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Can you envision the library providing a lending library of equipment for outdoor activities? If yes, how would you fund the equipment and what rules would you use for lending it out?

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If no, what are your concerns or issues?

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## ADVOCACY

What are the factors that make it difficult for community members or visitors to take advantage of nature and outdoor activities?

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Is there anything from the library's strategic plan, mission or vision statements, survey data, etc. that provides support for the library to take part in an outdoor activity, event, or natural space?

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