



A guide to planning your own National Park Rx Day celebration on April 24th, 2016



Basics

What is National Park Rx Day?

National Park Rx Day is a day celebrated across the United States to promote the growing movement of prescribing parks and nature to patients to improve human health. Additionally, National Park Rx Day encourages everyone to start seeing visits to parks and public lands as very important parts of their health. Last fall, the U.S. Surgeon General released a call to action to promote walking and walkable communities. National Park Rx Day builds on this call to action and provides citizens with parks and green spaces to promote public health.

The four main goals of National Park Rx Day are:

- **To amplify** the visibility and viability of the nation-wide Park Rx movement in parks and communities across the nation.
- **To celebrate** existing Park Rx programs and practitioners across the country.
- **To serve** as a catalyst to bring together local health providers, park agencies, community leaders, and nonprofits to begin dialogue and momentum to develop their own Park Rx programs for improvement of their communities.
- **To increase** the relevance of parks for all people; how people can connect with parks daily for their improved physical, mental, and spiritual health and create a new generation of park stewards.

When is National Park Rx Day?

In 2016, National Park Rx Day will be held on Sunday, April 24th. National Park Rx Day will take place on the last day of National Park Week, which runs from April 16th to April 24th. All national park units will have free admission during this week, and people are encouraged to find their parks no matter where they are, whether they are local, regional, state, or national parks.

Who is organizing National Park Rx Day? Can my agency join?

The National Park Service's Office of Public Health is organizing National Park Rx Day with input from the National Park Rx Initiative, which is a coalition of health providers, public land agencies, national nonprofits, and community organizations offering park prescriptions programs across the nation. The National Park Rx Initiative is co-led by the National Park Service, National Recreation and Park Association, and the Institute at the Golden Gate.

National Park Rx Day events happening both in-person and over the internet can be organized by health providers, any park agency (see "Appendix" for broad definition of park), local leaders, and other local environmental and community nonprofits. The organizers do not need to be affiliated with the National Park Service, as there are many Park Rx programs based in local and regional parks and health agencies. At the minimum, in-person events should involve health-related activities and connecting with existing and new health providers. For programming ideas, see the "Suggested Activities" section. **The only requirement is that National Park Rx Day host lets Anne O'Neill know about the event. Anne is the NPS National Park Rx Coordinator and can be reached at anne_o'neill@nps.gov.**

Where is National Park Rx Day being celebrated?

Park Rx Day is a national celebration with and activities taking place in parks and green spaces around the country. Park managers, community leaders and health care organizations are encouraged to highlight the work they are doing currently to deliver park experiences as a healing tool and to promote understanding and excitement for future efforts. Some planned events include a signature event at Meridian Hill Park (part of Rock Creek Park) in Washington, DC, with VADM Vivek Murthy, US Surgeon General. There will be other events happening around the nation in conjunction.

Why celebrate National Park Rx Day?

Every agency involved or interested in being involved in a park prescription program is encouraged to celebrate National Park Rx Day to:

- **Inspire individual action:** Host an event in a park to promote visitation and renewed awareness of local green space and gives the visitors a dose of the health benefits of nature.
- **Educate the community:** Celebrate National Park Rx Day to raise awareness and understanding.
- **Connect our health care system:** Have a health care provider highlight the health benefits of nature to show the importance of integrating nature-based medicine into practice.
- **Start culture change:** The link between human health and ecological health is not new knowledge, but the burgeoning movement of the health care sector prescribing parks to highlight this link is. This growing movement shows that park prescriptions have the potential to shift human health care to include nature-based interventions.



Hosting your own celebration

Register your National Park Rx Day celebration

Please let Anne O'Neill know that you are hosting an event. Anne is the National Park Service's Park Rx Coordinator and is leading the planning of National Park Rx Day and will coordinate messaging and communications. Anne can be reached at anne_o'neill@nps.gov.

Suggested activities

Involvement in National Park Rx Day can span the gamut from virtual celebrations to large, public celebrations. Agencies are also encouraged to celebrate National Park Rx Day by starting the conversations to create a park prescription program in their own communities. See examples of what can be created on

Virtual Celebrations

- Share the prewritten social media messages (see section below) through your channels, or write your own.
- Write a blog post or article that describes the effects you've seen from park prescriptions programs on human or ecological health.

Public Celebrations

For public celebrations, remember to keep the levels introductory and account for participants with differences in mobility.

- Organize guided group walks from clinic to parks or on walking paths
- Organize mini fitness classes that empower people with simple exercises that they can do on their own (e.g. low impact [yoga, tai-chi, meditation] or age-specific [older adults, children]).
- Seek support from local health providers to organize health screenings (e.g. blood pressure tests, BMI measurements)
- Coordinate volunteer stewardship projects such as trash pick up, clearing trails, beautifying the park.
- Organize speakers to talk about the importance of visiting parks and public lands as a part of taking care of one's health.

Agency Celebrations

Start a dialogue with your community partners to create a park prescription program in your own community. Refer to the appendix for information to get started.

Social media

Whether you are using social media to promote your public celebration, or as your main way to celebrate National Park Rx Day, online engagement is an easy way to spread the dialogue. Use #ParkRx across all channels. For the day, please use the phrase "National #ParkRx Day" because #ParkRx is an evergreen tag. Also include #FindYourPark and #NPS100 if possible.

For Twitter:

- Celebrate National #ParkRx Day on April 24th by taking a walk in the park. Doctor's orders! #FindYourPark
- #Stepitup on National #ParkRx Day. #PhysicalActivity improves your physical health and your #emotionalwellbeing #EncuentraTuParque
- #FindYourPark and a healthy you on National #ParkRx Day this April 24th. We're hosting a program at xxx am/pm #NPS100 #EncuentraTuParque
- [DC specific] We're celebrating National #ParkRx Day by prescribing you a walk in the park. #FindYourPark by visiting DCParkRx.org
- [Bay Area specific] National #ParkRx Day is the perfect excuse spend time being active outdoors! Find a program near you hphpbayarea.org
- #DYK: Free admission to all #nationalparks to celebrate National #ParkRx Day on 4/24. #FindYourPark at findyourpark.com #EncuentraTuParque

For Facebook:

- On National #ParkRx Day Sunday, April 24th, join the Surgeon General in building a healthier nation by creating a strong connection between the American people and parks and open spaces. #FindYourPark
- A big part of celebrating National Park Week is celebrating your health! Attend a National #ParkRx Day program near you. #NPS100 #FindYourPark



Planning process

Planning

If you are planning to host a public, in-person event, follow these steps for a successful day:

- Hold your event on Sunday, April 24, 2016 *during National Park Week*. Your event can be in a national park and any other type of park.
 - Choose the ideal park location for your event. Think about locations with easy access to communities and public transportation nodes (i.e. bus, train, bike share, etc.).
 - Contact and involve the managing park agency as a part of this process. If you do not know who owns the park, call your local county government offices or parks and recreation department.
 - You may need to complete and submit a park permit for your event. Depending on the managing public land agency, permits may be submitted up to a year in advance. This may impact your desired park location.
 - Consult ADA.gov for proper accessibility guidance.
- Include an existing health provider with a Park Rx program and involve them in the planning. Invite a new health provider as basis for event (BMI measurements, etc).
- Consider what activities would be relevant to your target audience and whether the park you've identified allows these types of activities.
- Invite and engage community organizations to players in the planning process and to provide feedback in regards to what will work with the community. Have multiple community organization lead activities if possible. Make sure that there is alignment with their work with Park Rx (i.e. connections with nature/parks and the improvement of human health).

Establishing visions and objectives

What do you want participants to get out of this event in relation to the Park Rx movement in general?

- Examples: Knowledge of how the Park Rx program works and health benefits of prescribing parks.

What do you want participants to walk away thinking/feeling/knowing about the Park Rx movement?

- Examples: Walk away from event feeling confident that Park Rx can help the health of their communities at large.

How do you plan to empower people to actually participate in the Park Rx program?

- Examples: Educate physicians, health care providers, etc. about how to prescribe parks as legitimate treatment/preventative care methods. If they're well informed, they'll be more likely to implement Park Rx into their practice.

Logistics

There are four main questions to ask in order to host a successful Park Rx Day:

1. Where will you host the event?
2. Who are your partners?
3. What resources do you need?
4. Who will help promote the event?

To help you answer the questions, more detailed guidance is provided below:

- **Planning/Logistics Team:** If you are planning a large event, consider collaborating with others to divide the following amongst the team:
 - Secure park permit.
 - Invitations to dignitaries.
 - Set event schedule for day.
 - Coordination of partner organizations with activities
 - Coordinate with event crew
 - Plan for visible first aid station, security, etc.,
 - Set up and clean up
- **Budget**
- **Promotional materials** (e.g. save the date email invitations, flyers in English, Spanish, and other languages relating to the community, briefings for dignitaries, park and health agency directors).
- **Schedule for the day:** It will be wise to also include a rain plan.
- **Concessions**
 - Offer healthy foods for the public



- Consider not selling plastic bottled water, and instead working with a local entity to provide potable water so participants can refill their reusable water bottles.
- **First aid area**
- **Event crew support**
 - Tables, chairs, and tents (check if permitted)
 - Rental of a stage/riser, sound system and speakers, podium
- **City street permits** if there are large street closures or mobile vans during the event.
- **Volunteer support**
- **Local police security** if determined by the anticipated number of people
- **Clean up materials**
 - Have separate receptacles for recycling and trash.

Partnerships

If you are planning an event with more than 50 people, include your core partners in the planning and implementation process. Try reaching out to:

- Local health providers
- Local public land agencies
- Community leaders
- National and local environmental, recreational, and community nonprofit organizations
- YMCA chapters, Boys and Girls Clubs
- Local businesses (to donate: food, beverages, tools and equipment, raffle giveaways, etc.)
- Outdoor retailers
- Schools and colleges
- Transportation planners
- Educators
- Senior citizen groups
- Fire and police departments
- Interfaith community - churches representing multi denominations

Impact and follow-up

Celebrations for National Park Rx Day will catalyze more discussions and dialogue regarding both park prescriptions programs and the connection between human health and nature. To help show the impact of National Park Rx Day across the country, please:

- **Document** your event with photos. Be sure to get photo release approval. Email your photos to Anne O'Neill for national reach or upload it onto the shared National Park Rx Day Flickr account.
- **Evaluate** your event for improvement and lessons learned from the celebrations.
- **Thank partners** for their commitment to the day and also for their sustained partnerships with park prescriptions.
- **Ramp up** your park prescriptions program, since there is now national recognition of this concept from the National Park Service, the US Surgeon General, and the Department of the Interior.



Appendix

What is the concept of Park Rx?

Park Rx (park prescriptions) are programs designed in collaboration with healthcare providers and community partners that utilize parks, trails, and open space for the purpose of improving individual and community health. Other community and environmental nonprofits and local businesses may support free programming for patients and communities as it connects with a patient's park prescriptions.

The National Park Rx Day was created with input from the National Park Rx Initiative, which is a movement to strengthen the connection between health care and parks and public lands to improve the physical and mental health among individuals and communities. The Initiative involves a collaboration of national partners and subject-matter experts to advance the movement and create awareness among various audiences, including park and health professionals, to address the operational hurdles present in parks and health collaborations, and hone and measure the best delivery models currently in practice. The park prescriptions concept has grown out of a conceptual phase into a period of rapid implementation. There is ripe opportunity to communicate and build on early successes and lessons learned that can contribute to building a community of practice to support broader park and community-based application nationally.

Definition of parks and open space

"Parks" is a broad term to include many types of parks with green space/open space where people can participate in active and/or passive recreation. Parks may include; city/local parks (cityparksalliance.org), county parks, regional parks, state parks, and all types of national park units, including national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, preserves, seashores, and recreation areas.

Parks also encompass national forests, national grasslands, agricultural areas; national wildlife refuges; recreation trails, landmarks, historic sites; state forests and nurseries.

Active and passive recreation

The health benefits of nature go beyond just physical health. There are well-documented benefits of nature that improve mental health, spiritual health, and social health.

Having both active and passive recreation opportunities in parks allow for people with different abilities and preferences to reap the health benefits of nature.

Active recreation includes any individual or group activity such as walking, hiking, running, biking, skateboarding, rock climbing, horseback riding, dancing, organized sports, and playground activities. These active recreation activities may improve physical and mental health of individuals.

Passive recreation includes more low impact activities such as yoga, tai chi, meditation, Pilates, stretching, reading, art (painting, photography, sketching, nature journaling, poetry, song, etc.) fishing, wildlife observation, stargazing, attending an outdoor music/performance/play, picnicking, etc. These passive recreation activities may improve mental/emotional and spiritual health of individuals.