THIS LAND IS OUR LAND
Making a Stronger Case for Conservation

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Bold Bison Communications and Consulting

Land Trust Alliance Rally, October 19, 2019
STORY: Picture it, a northside Chicago neighborhood, late on a Saturday afternoon in July. My husband and I are walking up to our three-flat and encounter our downstairs neighbor. She and her husband are from New Haven. They have a small son. She sees that we are in hiking gear. (We had just come from Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, 20,000 acres of open space with reintroduced bison an hour from the Chicago Loop.)

Our neighbor observes:

“We love hiking, but we didn’t think there was anywhere to go hiking... ...in the Midwest.”
WHO IS YOUR CURRENT AUDIENCE?

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE REACHING THEM?

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD TO YOUR AUDIENCE?
AMERICANS’ MIXED RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE

- 73% report interests in nature being more enjoyable than other interests
- 55% report interest in nature is growing
- 44% believe other issues are more important than nature
- 23% believe nature is more important than other issues
- 32% are neutral

THE INTEREST-ACTION GAP

- Places where people live, work, and go to school generally discourage contact with the natural world.
- Competing priorities for time, attention, and money prevent contact with nature from becoming routine.
- Declining direct dependence on nature for livelihoods allows Americans to orient their lives towards other things.
- New technologies, especially electronic media, distract and captivate.
- Shifting expectations about what “good” contact to nature ought to be mean adults are generally satisfied with the relatively little time they spend outdoors in nature.
• Access to nature is as much about the **quality** of places as their **quantity**.
• The vast majority of adults agreed that there are **“plenty” of places to enjoy nature**.
• **People of color and urban residents perceived fewer places nearby to enjoy the outdoors.**
• **Fewer than 1/3 of people were “very satisfied”** with places for outdoor and nature recreation where they live.
• The **social safety** of places (traffic, speeding vehicles, dangerous people, etc.) is an important concern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHICAGO</th>
<th>REGION</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.7 million</td>
<td>9.7 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>33% Black</td>
<td>53% White</td>
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<tr>
<td>32% White</td>
<td>22% Latinx</td>
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<tr>
<td>29% Latinx</td>
<td>17% Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5% Asian</td>
<td>6.5% Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.5% Other</td>
<td>1.5% Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
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<td>$52,000</td>
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WHAT ARE THREE WORDS YOU WOULD USE ABOUT YOUR CONSERVATION WORK ON A BILLBOARD IN DOWNTOWN CHICAGO?

RALLY 2019 PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

• Recharge Outside Together
• Your Land Awaits
• Open Space Defense
• Nature and You
• This Is Yours
• Everybody Outside Everyday
• Accessible Safe Green
• You Belong Here
• Rooted Connected Joyful
• Wants Needs Values
• (Not In English)
• It’s Your Backyard
• We Fun
Pursue happiness. Get outside.

There are hundreds of places near you to experience nature in the Chicago region. Find out where with the free interactive Get Outside Map on openlands.org.

#DiscoverYourPlace
STORY: As a successful, multi-year social media campaign, Openlands invites Chicagoans to tag places to get outside in the Chicago region. Openlands shares selected tagged images.

A partner criticized us, “I can’t believe that Openlands posted an image of that invasive grass.” It was a gorgeous image of Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie—a site in the midst of restoration work—at dawn.
Our social media coordinator asked, “Should I take it down?” No. We left it up, and we used the comments to talk about restoration.

What would removing it have said to the person who shared the image? You visited Midewin at dawn and shared a beautiful image of your visit.

But you are doing nature wrong. You did it wrong.

HAVE YOU EVER FELT OUT OF PLACE IN NATURE OR THAT YOU WERE “DOING NATURE WRONG”? 
There is a dominant idea of experiencing nature in the United States that is based on solitude and the rugged individual.

But...

- Many groups say they dislike or feel uncomfortable being alone in the outdoors
- Among certain groups, interest in hiking pales in comparison to interest in taking a walk outdoors, likely due to differences in perceptions about the social and geographic familiarity and safety of the two activities
100 years ago as the first director of the Park Service, Stephen Mather, an advertising man from Chicago, invented the concept and look of the National Park Ranger—trusted, helpful, and manly.

That image informs what being in nature is supposed to look like for millions of people.
WHAT DOES BEING IN NATURE LOOK LIKE IN THE 21ST CENTURY?
RALLY 2019 PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

- Selfies
- Off trail places, exotic places
- Walking with your dog
- Smaller spaces
- More accessible spaces
- Youth service trips
- Yoga or wellness
- Well-documented
- Glamping
- Social action
- Corporate values
- Tick free
- Accessible by public transit
- Craft beers

Across Race and Ethnicity, American Adults See Interests in Nature as Highly Enjoyable

Hispanics are especially likely to rate their interests in nature as their most enjoyable.

*How do your interests in nature compare with your other interests?* Adults 18+. N = 5,459. Source: NatureofAmericans.org
Across Race and Ethnicity, Americans Recognize the Importance of Nature for Their Physical Health

Hispanic American adults are especially likely to say contact with nature is very or extremely important for their physical health.

"How important is getting into nature for your physical health?" Adults 18+. N = 5,459. Source: NatureofAmericans.org
Adults Think Teaching Children about Nature as Important as Teaching Them Reading, Writing, and Math

Across race and ethnicity, over 80% of American adults agree that an understanding of how nature works is as important to a child’s education as reading, writing, and math.

*“To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? … An understanding of how nature works is as important to a child’s education as learning reading, writing, and math.”* Adults 19+, N = 3,459. Source: NatureofAmericans.org
Social media is like a high school dance. Too many conservation organizations and other non-profits act like a kid talking to himself in the corner. He may have amazing stories to tell, but he’s talking to himself.

Better to listen in on the conversations of other groups and see where your organization can participate in the ongoing conversation.

Hashtags are a free and easy way to begin to do this.
“Beautiful language isn’t enough. You have to be very smart about what you are doing when talking about the environment. You have to reach people where they are—not where you are. You must find out what they care about and build relationships with them, involve them in your cause.”

- Lady Bird Johnson
  personal conversation with Terry Tempest Williams, 2000

PROMOTE EXPERIENCES OF NATURE THAT MATCH MULTIDIMENSIONAL VALUES

- Affection for nature, the outdoors, and wildlife
- Appreciation of nature’s beauty
- Enhancement and enrichment of human knowledge
- Appreciation of the ways people materially benefit from nature
- Ability to cope with a variety of dangers of nature
- Realization that any species’ survival depends on people
- Fostering human creativity
- Feelings of peacefulness and spiritual connection to nature
WHICH OF THESE VALUES DO YOU CURRENTLY USE WHEN COMMUNICATING ABOUT YOUR WORK?
STORY: In the closing of his semi-autobiographical novel, *Dancer from the Dance*, Andrew Holleran writes about gay men in New York City who think they know the entire gay community of the city. They attend a 1980 gay pride gathering in Central Park and wonder, “Who are all these people?”

When we only talk to those close to us, we don’t realize that there is far more support for our cause than we think.

“News cycles tend to suggest that change happens in small, sudden bursts or not at all... Social, cultural, or political change does not work in predictable ways or on predictable schedules...

“What lies ahead seems unlikely; when it becomes the past, it seems inevitable. In 1900, the idea that women should have the vote was revolutionary; now the idea that we should not have it would seem cracked. But no one went back to apologize to the suffragists.”

- Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*
Movements are about creating the conditions for change that seems swift and sudden. And afterward, what seemed unimaginable quickly become status quo. No one today supports slavery. But a war was once fought to protect it.

The gay rights movement created conditions that personalized the AIDS crisis, the murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998, and the advancement of marriage rights. Gay marriage felt swift, but it was decades of changing conditions—political, economic, and personal—that led to marriage equality.
WHAT INSPIRES YOU IN MOVEMENTS BEYOND THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT?
STORY: In December 2008, the Bush Administration (on dubiously legal ground) went forward with an auction of oil and gas leases on BLM land near Canyonlands National Park. Tim DeChristopher, a 28-year-old student, attended the auction and artificially bid up the lots, throwing the affair into chaos.

Although DeChristopher served two years in prison for fraud, he successfully delayed the leases until the Obama administration could halt the leasing scheme entirely.

“The Freedom Riders weren’t trying to change any minds in the South. They were using the closed-minded antagonists in the South to escalate the tension until the federal government had to intervene. Those today who try to get the Utah State Legislature to understand climate science are using the tactic of trying to get Bull Connor to really love black people.”

- Activist Tim DeChristopher personal correspondence with Terry Tempest Williams, 2009.
The “Six Americas” survey by Yale University subtly suggests that the split in opinion around climate change is roughly 50/50, but those who are at least cautious about climate change comprise nearly 75% of all Americans. If a national coffee company were planning a marketing campaign, would they care about the percentage of people allergic to caffeine? Of course not.

Why do we as a movement worry so much about climate change deniers when we have science, history, and American public opinion on our side?
The draft version of the fall 2018 issue of Openlander attempted to have a conversation around the reality of climate change that we have moved past.

The final version asserted that the previous conversation is over and reinforced climate change’s impact on people and nature.

The response to the issue was overwhelming.
CLIMATE CHANGE IS HERE.

The warning signs for our region are obviously present, and the predictions and costs of inaction are dire.

December 2018
n=1,114

Highest Belief in Global Warming
Most Concerned
Most Motivated

Lowest Belief in Global Warming
Least Concerned
Least Motivated
Americans’ attitude about climate change has shifted toward alarm.

A personal connection to climate change has increased by ten points as Americans increasingly report that they think climate change will personally affect them.

A personal connection to the issue can shift attitudes quickly, as we saw in the push for marriage equality.
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<tr>
<td>- Fulfill our mission and tell our story</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Information about the land</td>
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<td>- Improving soil health</td>
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<td>- Extreme weather</td>
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<td>- Policy change</td>
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<td>- Global corporate responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Connect opportunities to act on climate</td>
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<td>- Supporting conservation helps maintain our quality of life and well being</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Personal thank-you email</td>
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<td>- Ask people what inspires them</td>
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<td>- Connection to place</td>
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<tr>
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