

Metro Denver Nature Alliance

Stakeholder Convening

April 8, 2019 – Denver Botanic Gardens, Mitchell Hall @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
1007 York Street, Denver, CO 80206

Purpose

Metro DNA's semi-annual Stakeholder Convening is an opportunity for partners and friends to get together and network, learn, and co-create collaborative projects. At this gathering we:

- Invite partners to join in the co-creation of a Regional Vision for People + Nature.
- Offer opportunities to engage effectively in the upcoming City Nature Challenge.
- Empower partners to share their work, learn from others, and dream big toward new collaborative projects.

Meeting Summary & Supporting Documents

[Meeting Summary](#)

[Supporting Documents \(Partners Only\)](#)

Notes

We started the day's meeting in collaboration with the **University of Denver's Grand Challenges Environmental Sustainability Cohort** by hosting a [World Cafe](#) style exploration of collaborative projects around the Metro Denver region to ground and expand their understanding of what is being done, what can be done, and how to measure our collective impact and progress toward shared goals.

The **Denver Botanic Gardens'** Director of Research, Dr. Jennifer Neale, shared a summary of their research priorities and projects, including biodiversity work along the High Line Canal. Meeting participants then departed on guided tours of the gardens.

Dana Coelho, Alliance Director, shared a **Metro DNA orientation and overview** with new and returning Metro DNA partners and friends after lunch, and then the meeting turned toward updates and dialog around our primary collaborative projects: Regional Vision for People + Nature and Nature Narratives. Table-based dialog was facilitated by CU Boulder graduate students and members of the Metro DNA Steering Committee and comments were organized around questions, ideas, and opportunities.

Regional Vision

Questions

- Audience & engagement
 - Who is our audience?
 - Who is engaged? Who is missing?
 - How do we engage missing voices?
 - How will the public be engaged?
 - What is the role of each organization?
 - How representative are organizations of the Denver region? How do we quantify that representation? How do we define community?
 - People around the table might be more interested in connecting vs. serving as a resource
 - Whom does the Regional Vision benefit?
 - How do we work across language barriers?
- Data, Information & Analysis
 - How do we prioritize?
 - What data does it contain (e.g., health impacts)?
 - How much information is enough?
 - Mapping exercise/s for Regional Vision - will it have an equity focus and/or layer?
 - How do we make climate change (vulnerability, resilience) more explicit?
- Implementation
 - What are the impacts of the Regional Vision?
 - How do we operationalize the vision?
 - How do we keep it relevant?
 - What are our criteria for success?
 - Does it include collaborative impacts?
 - How do we leverage our work to move toward policy change?
- Project management
 - What is the boundary/project limits?
 - Does the Regional Vision consider connections to other counties and regions of Colorado?
 - Where does it live?
 - How do we not get overwhelmed?
 - What is the plan?
 - What are the deliverables?
- Project leadership
 - What is the focus at the regional scale? Opportunity to better define the value of the vision.
 - How do we navigate conflict? Who resolves conflict? Recommend third party.
 - How do we make it authentic?
 - How do we resource the effort?

Ideas

- Process
 - Focused half-day meetings
 - Resource sharing library
 - Internal vs. external drivers of change within local government
 - Regional ambassadors - connect to local and larger scale efforts
 - Landscape history - talk about the past to set future priorities
 - Sections like “programming” with toolkits to support
 - Connect to and identify/measure impact on other counties
- Goals & outcomes
 - Connect educators to resources and amenities
 - Prepare children for stewardship
 - Go after BIG visions and goals, not so fragmented

Opportunities

- [Reasonable Person Model](#) (Kim)
- For GIS workshop & toolkit - check out [NALCAB equitable development toolkit](#) - great for strategies on using GIS by small/low impact organizations
- [Urban 95](#) - experiencing places from the height of a child (95 cm)
- [iNaturalist](#) and [SEEK](#) (for kids)
- [Cherry Creek Eco Park](#), Arapahoe County Open Spaces
- [17 Mile House Farm Park](#), Arapahoe County Open Spaces
- [Colorado Open Space Alliance \(COSA\)](#) - looking back, looking forward, anniversary
- Connect with [Next 100 Coalition](#) stakeholder assessment focused on DEI and conservation/recreation on public lands
- Use nature narratives interviews to identify new networks, coalitions, and opportunities

Nature Narratives

Questions

- Purpose & framework
 - What is the framework for the podcast?
 - How are stories being told to serve the big picture?
 - Regional and/or place-based stories?
 - How do you capture negative contexts and tell negative stories too, create space for complexity?
 - What’s the “pitch” for the podcast?
 - How does nature become more appreciated, more visited, and more relevant?
 - How do we ensure the project is authentic, inclusive, and representative?
- Project management
 - What does it look like to move from training workshops to conducting interviews?
 - Is there a deadline?

- How do we address capacity limitations?
- How many stories are enough?
- How are we distributing these narratives?
- What are we doing with the narratives?
- Audience & engagement
 - What opportunities for involvement are there for non-partners?
 - Limited to organizations within Metro DNA?
 - How can we benefit partners and be more inclusive?
 - How can we do this in a way that does not feel extractive?
 - How do we make sure that all dimensions are represented?
 - How do you bridge partner and non-partner stories?
 - How do we protect people who can't speak for organizations?
 - How can we elicit responses from overlooked communities?

Ideas

- Purpose & framework
 - Expand perceptions of nature through non-traditional narrative
 - False assumption - people don't have a relationship with nature
 - Make explicit the goals, projects, and processes of each organizations and the challenges they face
 - Understand and enhance (over time) how the project and stories are being used
- Podcast
 - Transcribe episodes
 - Podcast, 15 min, 3 min segments
 - Listening is powerful without visuals, which can create assumptions
 - Collect stories over time - series approach
 - Include varied voices within each story
 - Spotlight topic/theme vs. partner
 - Can be used to reach audiences that wouldn't otherwise be hearing about nature narratives
- Audience & engagement
 - Adapt for different audiences
 - Engage youth
 - Reach out to audiences that aren't yet at the table - Queer Nature, Black Girls Hike, Black Girls Climb
 - Wild, contagious hope - hopeful messaging
 - Media partner/s
- Overall
 - "Client volunteer" > stories provided meaning
 - Subject matter expertise > concept based
 - Create platform, not boxes, no preconceived notions (of nature and the outdoors)
 - ADA best practices
 - Resource sharing library

- Social media - leverage the ability of individuals to share their story
- Structure narratives similar to [Close to Home](#) campaign - beyond narratives
- Funding - tell stories, place within Regional Vision for People + Nature
- Unexpected opportunities, micro-nature
- Videos in sign language
- Translation
- Great photovoice/photo mapping potential
- Words are loaded - be specific about activities and actions
- Collecting stories
 - Rephrase the question about “enjoying the outdoors” to “what are things you do outside?”
 - Build capacity - train the trainer, spread storytelling skills
 - Capture growth in stories, repeated stories
 - Leave room for anonymity
 - Interview in Spanish
 - Ensure interviews are representative

Opportunities

- [SCARPA](#)
- [Outdoor Retailer](#), Elevate Outdoors
- [Open Media Foundation](#)
- [Denver Open Media](#)
- www.storycenter.org - storytelling archive
- Westminster - working with partners on public safety in aerial rescues
- [LURN “Know your City”](#) podcast - good stories, framing
- Government assistance with ADA compliance
- [Colorado Coalition to Enhance Working Lands](#)
- [Working Lands for Wildlife](#)
- [NPR Story Corps](#)
- CU networks for distribution of podcasts
- [The Art of Relevance](#)
- [Of, By, For All](#)

Many of the ideas, questions, and opportunities shared cut across both the Regional Vision and Nature Narratives projects. The conversations also surfaced needs to **better define and communicate** expectations of and benefits (communications, training, etc.) of becoming a Metro DNA partners and serving on committees and project teams.

Parker McMullen-Bushman, co-chair of the Metro DNA Equity Committee, facilitated the next series of dialogs focused around further refining our **Equity Principles & Commitments** and making the move toward action and accountability. Each group focused their conversation around words and concepts that need further definition and existing or desired training opportunities. Providing examples in the definition of concepts will go a long way toward fostering shared understanding.

Define & Refine

- Barriers
- Bias
- Collaborative - huge range
- Community
- Current systems
- DEI
- Disability
- Diversity
- Equitable + access, diversity, inclusion
- Equity - to whom? Geography? Rural landowners?
- Ethical use of data and information
- Forces
- Gender identity
- Inequalities - of power, privilege
- Inequitable access to nature
- Institutional + barriers
- Interdependence
- Marginalized + communities, identities
- Meaningful and substantive
- Nature
- Oppression
- Power
- Privilege
- Range of landscapes
- Regional - metro area, mountain parks, areas where people have been pushed (out) to
- Regular review
- Representative
- Safe
- Under-resourced

Trainings & Resources Needed

- Train the trainer - lean on and learn from each other
- Community organizing - to get together, to improve community
- Asset-based community development
- How to work alongside a community vs. “swooping in” as an expert
- “How to not stick your foot in your mouth”
- What does it mean to be an ally?
- Navigating state resources for disability inclusion
- Best practices re: data collection, use, and dissemination/sharing
- Privilege, power, and racial justice

- Unconscious bias, cultural competency - on a regular basis
- Recruitment and retention (staff, board, volunteer, etc.)
- New staff training on DEI policies within companies/organizations
- Interviewing best practices
- Board & project DEI buy-in
- Promoting DEI to donors, boards, and stakeholders
- Acknowledging dominant paradigms through self awareness
- Building a shared language (definitions and concrete examples)
- Recognizing barriers
- Asking the right questions, using the right questions to get at the issues and answers we seek
- Active bystander best practices
- How to create inclusive and welcoming spaces
- DEI in communications
- Working with diverse youth

Existing & Upcoming Training & Resources

- [Educating Children of Color \(ECOC\) Summit](#)
- ECOC Diversity University
- Diversity of leaders in the natural resources & sustainability realm
- DU Nature Challenge (workshop during, influence outreach and communication, etc.)

Kent Schnacke and Matt Schulz, from Colorado Parks & Wildlife, shared information about the upcoming **City Nature Challenge** and opportunities for Metro DNA partners to continue building on last year's momentum to increase biodiversity observations and public engagement in nature during this two-week international competition.

Closing out the convening, Dana Coelho shared brief updates on **additional collaborative projects** - [Safe Summer Kick Off on Get Outdoors Day](#) and [STEW-MAP](#) - and invited participants to share additional ideas for working together.

Other Collaborative Projects

- TNC/DBG - how to leverage volunteer experts
- Telling stories across and of the urban/rural gradient, WUI
- Boulder farm/agricultural preservation work
- Lowry - large scale restoration opportunity
- How can Metro DNA ensure that community voices are represented?
- Recommended reading list among partners (Jeff)
- Embedding Forest & Nature Therapy into direct public nature connection projects and also those focused on advocacy, mental health, education, family support (Jane)

Thank you ALL for your active participation and continued support!

Meeting Attendees

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