



Parks & Public Lands

Parks, Natural Lands, Urban Forestry & Trails February Newsletter

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Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

House Continuing Resolution 4, adopted by the Utah House and Senate in February, begins with an unpleasant warning: *“Scientific research shows that children ... are increasingly distanced from nature...”* The trend of children's disconnect from the natural world, often referred to as “nature deficit disorder” after the phrase was coined by author Richard Louv in 2005, is hard to argue with. Most adults today recall fondly many childhood hours spent climbing trees, building forts, or finding frogs at the local pond. These simple pastimes have, for our current generation of kids, been replaced by a proliferation of attention-grabbing media on smart phones, video games, and other devices. The outdoor play of yesteryear may seem like a nostalgic fancy, but its disappearance is having a very real, and very dangerous, impact on our children's physical, mental and emotional health.

An increasing body of scientific evidence documents a clear link between “nature deficit” and prevalence of ADHD, depression, low self-esteem, poor academic performance, health problems, and a host of other difficulties that often last into adulthood. As more children grow up disconnected with the natural world and adverse to spending time outdoors, family traditions that encouraged nature connection fade, making nature deficit more prevalent. This in turn creates a dangerous cycle that threatens to alienate large percentages of our population from outdoor experiences that were once considered inseparable from the experience of childhood itself.

To combat this trend, our Trails & Natural Lands Division's Outdoor Activities Coordinator, Kendal Scott, began working to develop a “Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights” for Salt Lake City kids. The idea was to identify those fundamental experiences with the natural world that every kid growing up in Salt Lake City should have an opportunity to experience. Then, work to identify a coalition of partners who could empower local kids to experience things like splashing in a stream, playing in the snow, or catching a bug. It seems simple, but in today's world, there are a surprising number of children who will grow up without ever having these simple experiences with nature.

In 2017, Kendal's work caught the attention of the Governor's Office, and by 2018 Governor Herbert's team was laying the groundwork to support a statewide effort to reconnect Utah children with nature. This February, the Utah House of Representatives introduced House Continuing Resolution 4, the “Utah Kid Outdoors Initiative,” which establishes ten outdoor experiences that every child in Utah should have an opportunity to enjoy.

For her part, Kendal is not waiting for the state to take action. Her calendar is already full of programs she coordinates with her colleagues on the Trails & Natural Lands Outreach Team, including “Family Nature Night,” “Out of School, Into Nature,” and “Fishing at Fairmont”. She is also collaborating with the City's Youth & Family Division to kick off a Children Outdoors Initiative in Salt Lake City in Summer 2019, and is fully committed to making a lasting impact on the lives of local kids.

We hope that you'll join Kendal in combatting “Nature Deficit Disorder” by encouraging all the kids in your life to spend more time outside, in your local parks and green spaces where they can

connect with nature. If you'd like help finding a natural area near you, or want to find out what nature activities are happening around the city, give us a call at (801) 972-7809 – we'd love to hear from you!

Project Highlights

Artesian Well Park

Artesian Well Park is unlike any other park in the City. An artesian well is a natural spring that runs continuously all year round. This historic space has drawn people to the free-flowing water since the earliest settlements in the valley. Today, people travel across the county to collect natural spring water.

The Central City Community Council submitted a funding request to redevelop the park, recognizing it as a key gathering space in their community. Nearby residents wanted to see the site become more inviting and friendly but to also become a place for visitors to seek refuge in an urban oasis. Parks and Public Lands has worked closely with the community on the park design and implementation schedule.

The design will remove existing walls and lawn, soften the street edges and create an informal, garden like gathering space for residents and visitors. The design goals include 1) retain and protect the existing trees and improve permeability of surfacing beneath the trees; 2) improve access to the artesian well by creating 360-degree opening and; 3) improve visibility into and through the park and include seating areas.

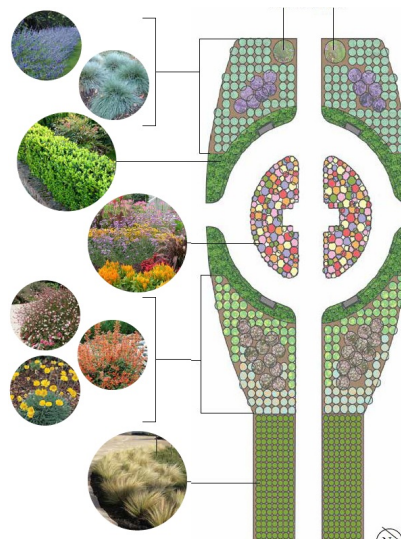
Design for the park is nearly complete with construction anticipated to begin in late spring 2019. Look for a community celebration in this space soon!



Washington Square Water-Wise Garden

This spring Parks and Public Lands will be replanting the Washington Square Water Wise Garden. This garden is located in front of the east side entry to the building between the U-shaped parking area. As the primary entrance garden, this space provides an opportunity to demonstrate the City's commitment to water wise landscapes that are beautiful and well maintained.

Incorporating water wise plant materials not only reduces water and utility costs but enhances the resilience of our landscapes from drought and high summer temperatures. The garden is a collaboration between Salt Lake City Parks Division, Public Utilities and Sustainability. These water wise plantings are a result of a shared commitment to water conservation in Salt Lake City.



Sugar House Pond Dredging

In January, 2019, Salt Lake County began dredging the pond at Sugarhouse Park. Dredging ponds in parks helps reduce algae and the likelihood that botulism will occur in water that is shallow and stagnant. Through this process, approximately 18,000 cubic yards of soil will be removed. Under normal circumstances, the removed soil would be delivered to the landfill for disposal. However, through coordination between Salt Lake County and Salt Lake City, the soil is now being re-used at the City's Model Airport (a park area designated for flying model airplanes and drones). Parks and Public Lands' staff will transport the soil to the Model Airport where it will be used to fill in the area around the park.

Many years ago, long before this park was developed as a model airport, the site was used as a landfill. Nowadays, the model plane runway and standing areas are bordered by land that is mostly uneven and overrun by weeds. The irregular surface makes it impossible for Parks and

Public Lands' staff to mow and maintain the area properly. This leads to frustration for park users when a model airplane lands outside of the paved area, as it can be difficult for pilots to navigate through the weeds and thistle to retrieve their plane. In spring 2019, the soil that is transported from the Sugar House Park Pond will be added to the park, graded, and seeded with native grasses and plants. The seeds and soil will help support a healthy landscape around the Model Airport and provide food and habitat for wildlife. Additionally, upon proper grading, the surface can be mowed and properly maintained which will allow pilots to enjoy the entire area.

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