



A guide to planning your own National ParkRx Day celebration on April 25, 2020

Basics

What is National ParkRx Day?

National ParkRx 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 ParkRx Day encourages everyone to start viewing parks and public lands as important resources for their health.

The four main goals of National ParkRx Day are:

- **To amplify** the visibility and viability of the nation-wide ParkRx movement in parks and communities across the nation.
- **To celebrate** existing ParkRx 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 ParkRx 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 ParkRx Day?

In 2020, National ParkRx Day is Saturday, April 25. This is the last Saturday of National Park Week, which runs from April 18 to April 26. To kick off National Park Week, all national park units will have free admission on Saturday, April 18, 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 ParkRx Day? Can my agency join?

The National Park Service's Office of Public Health is organizing National ParkRx Day as a way to celebrate the health benefits of parks. ParkRx Day events 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 ParkRx programs based in local and regional parks, state park systems, forests, other public lands, and health agencies. The only requirement is that you sign up your National ParkRx Day event using our [online registry](#), and plan your event to include health-related activities.

Where is National ParkRx Day being celebrated?

ParkRx Day is a national celebration with 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.

Why celebrate National ParkRx Day?

Every agency involved or interested in being involved in a park prescription program is encouraged to celebrate National ParkRx 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 ParkRx 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 ParkRx Day celebration

Please [register](#) online and look for communication guidance and free communication tools on the [National ParkRx website](#).

Suggested activities

Involvement in National ParkRx Day can vary from virtual celebrations to public events with the community. Agencies and organizations are also encouraged to celebrate National ParkRx Day by starting the conversations to create a park prescription program in their own communities. For programming ideas and ways to engage local health providers, see the “Partnerships” section below. You can find more tips and tools for your ParkRx Day event in this new [Health and Wellness in Nature Guide](#) written by the National Environmental Education Foundation, the National Park Service, and the US Forest Service.

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.
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Public Celebrations

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

- Organize guided group walks from clinics 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 pickup, 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.

Sustaining Parks and Health Connections in your Community

Consider using ParkRx Day as a springboard for creating new partnerships and working groups in your community to help sustain programs that connect people to parks, public lands to improve their health. See examples and case studies of park prescription programs on the [National ParkRx website](#).

Social media

Social media outreach and engagement is an easy way to spread the good news that parks promote healthy living.

Use #ParkRx in captions and posts.

Also include #FindYourPark #EncuetraTuParque #HealthyParks #ActivePeople #NationalParkWeek #PositivelyWell.

- **Create Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook for each event:** Each application has a different audience and unique reach.
- **Engage with your audience:** Mention and tag partners and participants. Have interesting captions, e.g. How did you get your nature fix today? Reply back to comments.
- **Keep hashtags consistent and relevant!** It is much easier to track social media activity and engage if all organizations and events use the same hashtags

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 Saturday, April 25, 2020 *during National Park Week*. Your event can be in a national park or any other type of park, forest, or greenspace.
 - Choose the ideal setting 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](https://www.ada.gov/) for proper accessibility guidance.
- Invite health practitioners (pediatricians, primary care physicians, nurses, physical therapists, art therapists, wellness coaches, etc.) to bring their patients to the event. Include an existing health provider with a ParkRx program and involve them in the planning. Invite a new health practitioner to provide health screening as part of the event (BMI measurements, etc).
- Consider what activities would be relevant to your target audience and whether the park allows these types of activities.
- Invite and engage community organizations to players in the planning process and to provide feedback in regard 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 ParkRx (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 ParkRx movement in general?

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

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

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

How do you plan to empower people to actually participate in the ParkRx 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 ParkRx into their practice.

Logistics

There are four main questions to ask in order to host a successful ParkRx 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:
 - Securing park permits
 - Invitations to dignitaries
 - Setting event schedule for day
 - Coordination of partner organizations with activities
 - Coordination with event crew
 - Planning 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 special guests, local dignitaries, park and health agency directors).
- **Schedule for the day:** It will be wise to also include a rain plan.
- **Concessions**
 - Offer healthy foods and beverages 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
- Have separate receptacles for recycling and trash.

Partnerships

Try to involve at least one health partner in your planning team, in order to put the spotlight on health benefits of parks and public lands. Partners to consider including in your event:

Local health care providers, including:

- Primary care physicians, pediatricians, physical therapists, art therapists, music therapists, nurses
- College students studying public health, medicine, physical therapy
- Local and state health departments
- Health insurance companies
- Health educators
- Health related NGOs
- Hospitals and Clinics
- US Public Health Service Officers

Community members from various sectors and interests with shared goals to promote the role of parks to promote people's health:

- Local and state 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 ParkRx 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 ParkRx Day across the country, please:

- **Document** your event with photos and share on social media channels.
- **Encourage** event participants to share their experiences on social media too.
- **Document** how many people participated in your event.
- **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 by joining the National ParkRx movement. You can share and learn from other groups all across the nation on the [ParkRx website](#).

Appendix

What is the concept of ParkRx?

ParkRx (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 ParkRx Day was created with input from the National ParkRx 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, 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.