



WILDERNESS RISK MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE



2023 Action Steps

The true value of attending the WRMC is in the resulting action you take upon returning to your organization. The following list is intended to help you know where to start.

Action steps are measurable tasks or ideas you should be able to do or implement in your program within a reasonably short time frame. They are not meant as large sweeping changes, rather as small steps to move you forward in your risk management strategy.

Each presenter has contributed three action steps from their 2023 WRMC workshop. In some cases, the action steps parallel the main take-home points of the workshop; in other cases, the action steps are examples of a multitude of possible follow-up action.

The following action steps are arranged alphabetically and include pre-conference workshops, workshops, posters, and short talks.

Adaptive Climbing Initiative

Sam Sala

1. Disability etiquette and awareness
2. Develop better “human” skills, communication for helping participants discuss their needs, health concerns, etc.
3. Create inclusive programming where participants feel safe disclosing their disabilities, health concerns, and needs

Auditing: Find the Holes in your Liability Fence

Brent Demmit

1. Do not assume you are doing things as well as you could.
2. Work to know how your organization really operates.
3. Use a third-party to find the “holes” in your fence.

Building Them Up, Not Breaking Them Down: Modifying Programatics to Promote Diversity through Student Empowerment

Rob Balloch, Raúl Aguilera

1. Take a critical look at one existing curriculum to identify aspects that might reinforce negative core beliefs common in marginalized communities.
2. Incorporating consent culture in all aspects of the program.
3. Train staff in the cultural and historical background that causes students from historically marginalized groups to often feel unsafe in the woods.

Case Study in Child Protection & Aftermath Lessons of Sexual Misconduct Allegations

Peter Mayfield, Cali Fraser, Ravn Whittington

1. Educate managers concerning how to mitigate the probability and impact of worst case scenarios concerning child discomfort and sexual misconduct including techniques to debrief incidents while honoring quieter voices.
2. Increase understanding concerning how to manage internal and external communications during a critical incident from both the perspective of frontline staff to working with authorities and press.
3. By reviewing the incident from the perspective of an independent reviewer, participants can create a plan in advance for dealing with worse case scenarios.

Community Resiliency Model

Charley Downing

1. Shared non-judgmental language to communicate and manage distress amongst staff and the folks they are serving.
2. Immediately applicable skills to increase sensations of wellbeing
3. Skills to guide teams and individuals through debrief through a resiliency informed practice that helps people maintain orientation and avoid further traumatization.

Complexities of Inter-Cultural Emergency Response: An International Case Study

Dave Haffeman, Christy Sommers

1. Register with the Embassy and partner with international assistance organizations like ISOS.
2. Conduct thorough scouting and risk management assessments
3. Maintain relationships with host communities even when programs are not in the field. Visit often with homestay families, conduct regular trainings and meetings with families
4. Hire local staff
5. Culture of trust and transparency between admin and instructors
6. Identify reliable communication channels and train to a standard of communication

Contemporary Crisis Management Planning and Adaptability

Clare Dallat, Deb Ajango

1. Using the template provided, conduct an assessment of what specific areas to address in developing/enhancing your own critical incident response plan.

2. Using the provided 'scenario test implementation plan', schedule and conduct a scenario (online or in person) in your own organisation.
3. Evaluate the organisation's response performance and where necessary, update your plan.

Crisis Exposed: Intersection of Mental Health Apps, “Therapy” websites, big data, AI, and Their Effects on Experiential Education and Educators

Larisa Castille

1. Student Services (application Ax, targeted questioning focused on technology usage and mental health apps or websites)
2. Establish and maintain critical cross-industry partnerships and information sharing: (licensed mental health professionals, technology partnerships with individuals invested in technology-human risk management, first responder agencies)
3. Education (maintain awareness of cross-functional emerging risks through an appointed organization systems-champion)

Critical Decision Making & De-Escalation Skills in Remote Environments

Katja Hurt, Chris O'Steen

1. Review/Modify/Create decision making models that work best for you/your team
2. Explain the importance of "soft skills" in crisis response and de-escalation
3. Recognize and respond to "upset" behavior
4. Recognize and respond to "angry" behavior
5. Recognize and respond to "out-of-control" behavior

Dealing with Challenging Participant Behaviors: Coaching Individuals Toward Positive Change

Laura Thompson

1. Educate Staff on addressing participant mental health needs
2. Provide Staff with helpful and practical tools for addressing mental health issues
3. Provide Staff with helpful and practical tools for addressing behavioral issues

Designing a Mental Health Care Plan for your Organization

Kurt Eifling

1. How to build a culture of inclusion that serves as the first line against mental health emergencies.
2. How to invite disclosure of mental health conditions and invisible disability without creating undue pressure to disclose.
3. How to write protocols for responding to mental health emergencies.
4. How to teach best practices for psychological first aid within your organization.

Dismantling Racism Through an Understanding of White Dominant Culture in Outdoor Organizations

Lindsay Babbitt

1. Review your organization's risk management practices with a lens towards how they're informed by a White Dominant Cultural framework.
2. With other stakeholders in your organization, create a list of ways you can interrupt or shift these cultural norms.
3. Keep track of times in which you tried a non-white dominant approach in the way you mitigated risk. Was anything different about it? How did it go?

Doing Safety Differently

Steve Smith

1. Understand positive capacities (organizational behaviors) that create safer workplace conditions and identify what those are for your organization
2. Identify ways to de-clutter your risk management systems and processes
3. Implement learning teams as a way to respond (rather than react) when incidents do occur

Don't Let a Crisis Shock You: Sharing our Experience Managing the NOLS Lightning Fatality

Drew Leemon, Katie Baum Mettenbrink, Frances Mock

1. Identify roles for who will do what to manage a crisis. Have professionals (an attorney, media consultant, etc.) identified ahead of time so you can contact them on short notice.
2. Understand the legal issues and what needs to happen immediately after a major incident. (not sure this should be the third bullet—do you have other ideas?)
3. Practice with your crisis plan periodically to stay familiar with how you'll respond
4. Keep your crisis plan up-to-date as staff turnover occurs

Exclusive Spaces: Managing Inherent Risks of Racism in Outdoor Spaces

Meena Fernald, Arii Sylvers

1. Plan a meeting to examine how your organization defines, tracks and responds to inclusion incidents.
2. Design a resource/ training to strengthen staff ability to respond to micro-aggressions or discriminatory behavior.
3. Create a debrief resource that includes guidance for responding to inclusion incidents.

Facilitating Belonging through Counternarratives

Sky Gray, Denise Mitten, Christine Norton

1. Understand and acknowledge the importance of DEIB in outdoor programming, in particular how it relates to risk management.
2. Explore counternarratives and the role they play in expanding worldviews, social empathy, and dismantling oppression outdoors.
3. Creating equity ecosystems through equity listening, owning privilege, and facilitating brave space in outdoor programming.

From Chaos to Competency: Standardizing Your Training and Assessment

Amber Barnett

1. Identifying critical training gaps that are a risk to the organization and standardization for clarity and consistency
2. Have an action plan and the start of a training and assessment model that will help reduce risk in the organization
3. Building assessments into trainings to further reduce the risks associated with staff's ability to run safe programs

Gender Moment: Creating Affirming Environments for All Genders

Emily Quigley, Curry Brinson

1. Recognize how unexamined privilege allows men to perpetuate oppressive behaviors, both in the front country and backcountry, that put gender expansive people in a position of disproportionate risk.
2. Identify gender-affirming practices for the self and be able to support others' gender-affirming practices.
3. Acknowledge the legitimate struggles that gender expansive people face, how they can be exacerbated in outdoor spaces, and that not all genders and not all people within a shared gender experience the same things.

Great Resignation to Great UNcertainty: Responding through Cultural Assessment

AJ Wojtalik, Vic Kerr

1. Implement our scalable 4-layer cultural assessment model
2. Adapt our Employee Valuable to articulate your department/organization values
3. Complete our short, medium and long-term planning structure for organizing your findings.

Hearing People in the Outdoors: This is for You

Sam Bragg

1. Tangible examples of making your organization more inclusive
2. Risk Management Approaches, Technology and communication access
3. Educating themselves and understanding Deaf experience in the outdoors

How Much Longer? Exploring the Journey Toward Racial Equity and Inclusion in Nature

Kriste Peoples

1. Learn more about the racial history of your area and the interconnected nature of engagement or lack thereof, as it can inform the ways you choose to reduce the likelihood of doing harm.
2. Expand your personal and professional conversations and assumptions to include resources for facilitating brave(er) exchanges. What policies or practices need to change regarding how your programs are perceived and offered? Could your organization support your cultural sensitivity support in that area?

3. Review a past professional action, program, conversation, or other experience with an eye toward future improvement. Given new insights on perpetuating risks to social and emotional wellbeing, identify one thing you'd do differently in the future, and create a plan of action.

How to Evaluate and Create a Release Contract

Tracey Knutson

1. Participants should be able to assess whether their basic release covers the fundamentals that should be in ALL releases.
2. Participants should be able to recognize and think through when a release needs to be updated and whether programmatic changes need to be incorporated into the release.
3. Participants should be able to more meaningfully interact with their entity oversight groups (IE - BOD) and legal counsel on the content of and use of releases.

Insurance 101: Have You Got It Covered?

Mike Lucas, Lach Zemp

1. Better understand the spectrum of events that can be covered within a comprehensive insurance program.
2. Evaluate at a high level the adequacy of their insurance program vs. their risk profile.
3. Review and enhance their existing claim reporting and handling policies and procedures.

Legal Fundamentals - How to Protect Your Organization

Frances Mock, Leah Corrigan

1. Pick the three most important issues from our discussion today that you need to address.
2. Chart out how to address those issues, what needs to happen, and who will do the work.
3. Set a timeline for getting that completed in the next 6-9 months.

Lessons from the Field: Case Studies in Wilderness Medicine

Gates Richards

1. Review the experiences in which you have provided medical care, identify at least one thing that was different than you experienced in your training, and share that with your peers.
2. The next time you provide care in a remote setting, ensure you step away from the patient/scene, review your notes/verbalize your notes, and create physical or temporal distance before making key decisions.
3. Add an extended (12 or more hours) scenario into staff training to prepare instructors for long term care responsibilities

Managing Risk - Cultivating Resilience through Narrative Assets (Storytelling)

Eric Boggs, Christine Norton

1. Understand and acknowledge the toll of physical and emotional stress/risk on outdoor program staff and the need for training and development approaches that support resilience.

2. Explore storytelling as a method for framing challenges in outdoor programs that move us from stress to resilience.
3. Build narrative assets among staff to help them more deeply connect with values, meaning, and purpose in their work.

Navigating Resiliency, Bandwidth, and Burnout for Field Staff and Participants

Darren Gruetze

1. Inventory basic expectations for your program(s). What is asked of participants during the first week on program. Are these expectations rooted in an assumption of a high level of bandwidth? How could these be altered to allow for better dosing and spacing?
2. Provide staff with the 4 R's of working with someone who is in a state of co-regulation or dysfunction. Specifically the importance of not jumping to reasoning and taking time to help the person regulate. Stress the importance of time and suggest using a stop watch to ensure that appropriate time is provided for getting back to a state of function. As part of this training have staff take part in a grounding activity that takes a substantial period of time in order to model what it looks like.
3. Have staff and participants proactively take part in somatic body scans and document what sensations they notice when they are exposed to stressors. Encourage them to watch for and listen to these signs in order to proactively mitigate issues. When hiking we stop for hot spots on our feet, we should make it a practice do the same with mental hot spots.

Not All Staff Complaints Are Treated Equal: How to Properly Conduct and Document Employee Misconduct

Lach Zemp, Ann McCollum

1. Essential employee policy provisions
2. How to conduct a proper HR investigation when faced with a legally consequential complaint or misconduct.
3. How to properly prepare and finalize documentation of an HR Investigation.

Oh Yeah, This is Work: Employment Law Basics for Your Business

Ann McCollum

1. Review your policies to ensure your business has the essential policies identified in this session (i.e., do you have them?) and address the requirements of state and federal law (i.e., are your policies adequate?).
2. Draft specific new policies or procedures.
3. Reflect on past implementation of current policies to identify areas of improvement to more effectively communicate and train your staff on your policies.
4. Consider connecting with an attorney familiar with the employment laws of your state to review your employment-related policies.

Online Evaluation of Remote Environmental Hazards to Avoid Incidents: Near-real-time Satellite Imagery and Recent Weather History

Luc Mehl

1. An awareness of remote weather forecasting tools for organizations planning remote work.
2. An awareness of remote weather history tools to evaluate environmental hazards before departure.
3. An awareness of near-real-time satellite imagery and how to evaluate surface conditions before an outing.

Operational Art and the COVID-19 Pandemic - Lessons from the Conservation Corps

Colin Giegerich

1. Assess existing rubrics, matrices, decision trees, etc. - How useful are they for guiding operations? Are they mostly satisfying compliance needs? Was the process of developing the resource more valuable than the resource itself? Who is better able to interpret the resource into context-specific action, those who developed it or those who it was delivered to?
2. Identify where you're comfortable with ambiguity - perfect knowledge is impossible and tools developed that lean too heavily on the idea of it being available are more of a liability than asset. Do you talk about leaving well-enough alone or does it just happen organically?
3. Work through issues as a process of goal-oriented exploration, not the identification of an ideal solution

Preparing for Failure

Jeff Jackson

1. Identify organization level risk factors
2. Initiate pairing, redundancy, oversight
3. Prioritize testing

Risk and Crisis Communications Before and After a Critical Incident

Jon Heshka

1. How to communicate risk, risk controls, and residual risk to participants
2. How to respond to media inquiries following a critical incident
3. How to apologize without jeopardizing you or your organization

Risk and the Human-Nature Connection: The Influence of Risk on Participants' Connection to Nature within Outdoor Education

Dave Erbe, Kayla Scheid

1. Presentation attendees will use this presentation to identify the factors that influence participants' connection to nature.
2. Presentation attendees will use this presentation to help identify the perceived risks that may inhibit participants' connection to nature.

3. Presentation attendees will develop material, experiential, cognitive, emotional, and philosophical solutions to foster participants' connection to nature.

Risk Management for Conservation Corps

Stuart Slay, Elyse Rylander, Jay Satz

1. Identify and connect to other programs/organizations doing similar work so you can share in their experience, success and failure.
2. Develop a partnership plan with your public land management agency articulating roles and goals for responding to a critical incident that is vetted and agreed upon in advance of the project.
3. Build a medical evaluation plan, that balances a commitment to inclusion with realistic benchmarks of abilities/circumstances required to succeed in the field

Risk Management of Wildfire Smoke Exposure

Andrea Stephens, Seth Hawkins

1. Begin monitoring air quality well before your event by knowing the best online sources of wildfire, smoke, and air quality monitoring and forecasting data. Plan for communication systems to share air quality information with field staff. Train for assessing visibility in the field and combine with monitoring station data. Consider whether handheld air quality monitoring devices may be useful in supplementing online information.
2. Consider the role of masks to minimize smoke exposure. for field use. Be prepared with N95 masks for all leaders and participants, and train staff in proper use. Consider activity modification options. Note: Pre-pandemic, it would have been considered radical to recommend N95 masks for field use. Post-pandemic, programs have a level of sophistication in understanding and deploying masks (or deciding not to) never before seen in our lifetimes. As we know, masks make breathing during exertion more difficult and require "fit testing" for highest efficacy. On the other hand, programs already considering mask deployments might consider wildfire smoke exposure among the parameters being addressed with that deployment.
3. Medical screening and daily health check-ins may help identify symptomatic participants (potential or actual). Full disclosure of acute risks of smoke exposure should be made available to participants.
4. Advocate as an outdoor industry for more research and national guidelines.

Risk Pedagogy

Denise Mitten

1. Commit to examining their risk pedagogy.
2. Include an exploration of risk assumptions in adventure and outdoor education held by many practitioners.
3. Integrate the concept of how to determine what risks to take, with whom to take them, and when to take a risk into their curriculum.

Risky Business: A Risk Management Primer for Conference Attendees

José González, Amberleigh Hammond

1. Participants can bring the operational definitions learned in this workshop back to their organization to seek alignment.
2. Participants can use the risk management process in their next program review
3. Participants can use the RAMP for program analysis

Safety Governance and Risk Management Architecture

Jun Ping Lim

1. Develop incident response process
2. Create a risk appetite and tolerance statement
3. Understand the need for Business Continuity Planning

Seeding Collaborative Ways to Address Climate Change Impact Risks the Outdoors from First-hand Disaster Impact - the Australia Story

Loren Miller

1. Improved understanding of common risk and issues for outdoor practitioners from climate change impacts.
2. Lessons of examples of work and programs that can be developed to support outdoor practitioners prepare and adapt to climatic risks.
3. Motivation to collaborate for collective problem solving. Potential models for sector wide initiatives to delivery support and action to address climate change impacts.

Stress Injury Awareness for the Individual: Tools for Early Recognition of Acute and Chronic Stress

Paul Dreyer

1. A shared and effective language to discuss stress injuries.
2. Two tools to support proactive stress injury prevention.
3. An increased sense of resiliency in self.

Subjective Decision-Making Errors: An Update

Kaen (kl) Lapides

1. Consider checklist functions in managing subjective decision-making error influences.
2. Copy the style of the presentation in bringing the topic up in-house at their home agency
3. Broader awareness of expanding subjective decision-making influences updated over classic avalanche education heuristics - such as social media.

Tactical Decision Games for Wilderness Leaders

Katja Hurt, Chris O'Steen

1. Implement decision games into monthly or quarterly leadership development programs.
2. Use decision games to develop understanding of how fellow team members think and make decisions under stress.
3. Practice decision games to develop the ability to provide clear, concise orders under stress.

The Tidal Wave: Running Accessible, Risk-Aware Wilderness Programs in Rising Mental Health Needs

Jillian Zeppa

1. Review your program's admissions/intake processes, assess your metrics for quantifying participant needs in congruence with the planned program, and consider follow up processes for assessing participant success.
2. Review your program's overall design procedure and assess the areas for improvement for accessibility considerations for your participants.
3. Plan and implement a full audit of your program's intake process to assess for an accessible and thorough approach to admissions best practice.

Using Behavioral Competencies to Hire, Train, and Assess for a Culture of Safety

Bix Firer, Tom Cramer

1. Participants will create their own assessable behaviors to observe a culture of safety in their organization
2. Participants will develop mission-aligned competencies that support their definition of a culture of safety
3. Participants will have the opportunity to learn from the experiments of an established organization and current research on organizational risk management

Wildfire Response and Staff Training Considerations: Best Practices for Effective Preparedness and Response

Curt Davidson, Brock Gudeman

1. Enhance staff training programs: Participants will learn how to design and implement effective staff training programs that cover the specific skills and knowledge needed to respond to wildfires. This includes identifying training needs, developing training materials, and delivering training in a way that is accessible and engaging for all staff members.
2. Understand the impact of wildfires on outdoor programs: Participants will gain an understanding of the impact of wildfires on outdoor programs, including the physical, environmental, social, emotional, and economic impacts. By understanding the impact of wildfires on outdoor programs, participants will be better equipped to respond.
3. Gain insight into the factors contributing to the increasing threat of wildfires in the United States: Participants will gain insight into the various factors contributing to the increasing threat of wildfires in the United States, including climate change, forest management practices, and human behavior. They will learn how these factors interact and contribute to the frequency, intensity, and severity of wildfires in different regions.