

PRE-CONFERENCE GUIDE

UNLOCKING THE

Wisdom Within



2020 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE
AND OUTFITTER EXPO

Join Us for the First **America Outdoors** **Virtual Conference**

This year has been difficult for all, but through the uncertainty outfitters and outdoor recreation providers demonstrated they have what it takes to persevere. We learned many lessons together as we adapted to our new reality.

Now we gather to share insights, struggles and lessons learned. This year, more than ever, we are leaning on the knowledge we have within our community. There is an abundance of wisdom in the outdoor industry. Every presenter at AO Virtual is from the industry. They know us; they are our people.

America Outdoors has adapted just as outfitters did to meet the needs of our members to deliver the programming you have come to expect. This virtual event is designed facilitate meaningful connections, even from miles apart; it will provide opportunities for learning to help your team grow.

Many thanks to the members of America Outdoors who helped us craft this conference and to Hilary Wickes, the AO Marketing and Communication Specialist, who has led the development of all aspects of our virtual conference this year.

Join us this December for a memorable online event. We can't wait to see you!

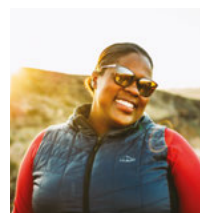
Sincerely,

Aaron Bannon
Executive Director
America Outdoors

Thank you to all members who submitted photos

Front cover photo submitted by Arizona River Runners
Back cover photo submitted by Glacier Guides and Montana Raft

Meet the 2020 **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**



Mirna Valerio, Author, Ultra Runner, Adventurer
The Gift of Awe

Mirna Valerio is a native of Brooklyn, NY, a former educator, cross-country coach, ultramarathoner, and author of the bestselling memoir, *A Beautiful Work in Progress*. Although she began running in high school, she recommitted to the sport after a health scare in 2008 and started her blog *Fat Girl Running*—about her experiences as a larger woman in a world of thinner endurance athletes—while training for her first marathon. Mirna's athletic story has been featured in the *WSJ*, *Runner's World*, on *NBC Nightly News*, *CNN*, and in the viral REI-produced documentary short, *The Mirnavator*. Her writing has been featured in *Women's Running Magazine*, *Self Magazine Online*, *Outside Online*, and *Runner's World Magazine*. In 2018 she was chosen as a National Geographic Adventurer of the Year.



Chris Adams, Miles Partnership
Recovery Tourism Tool Kit

Chris Adams is Head of Research & Insights at Miles Partnership, one of the world's largest marketing agencies focused 100% on travel and tourism. In his insightful session, Chris will present the latest research on how COVID-19 is impacting travel in the US – and specifically outdoor activities. Learn 5 practical steps you should be doing right now to help your business navigate the recovery. Don't miss this information-packed session that links critical insights to practical action.



Brendan Leonard, Semi-Rad
Resilience, Endurance, and Humor in Uncertain Times

Brendan Leonard is an adventure writer, illustrator, award-winning filmmaker, and creator of *Semi-Rad.com*. His stories and illustrations have appeared in *Outside*, *Adventure Journal*, *Alpinist*, *Climbing*, *Backpacker*, *Sierra*, *Men's Journal*, *CNN.com*, and his films have toured internationally with the Banff Mountain Film Festival and Mountainfilm. He is the author of 10 books, including *Surviving the Great Outdoors*, *Bears Don't Care About Your Problems*, and *Sixty Meters to Anywhere*. He has bicycled across America, run dozens of marathons and mountain ultramarathons, spent a cumulative two months of days below the rim of the Grand Canyon, and climbed and skied peaks around the American West and Europe.

SCHEDULE

Times shown in Eastern Standard Time

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

5:30-7:00 pm Welcome Reception with Video Networking

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

10:00-11:00 am AO Women Connect

11:00 am-12:15 pm **Opening Keynote:** The Gift of Awe

12:30-1:30 pm Learning Sessions

- Create a Marketing Roadmap to Guide Your 2021 Success
- Strategies & Tactics to Drive a Financially Profitable Outfitting Business
- Buying & Selling an Outfitting Business
- Risk Management Leadership

1:30-2:30 pm Lunch Break & Meet with Exhibitors

2:45-3:45 pm America Outdoors Annual Meeting

4:00-5:00 pm Learning Sessions

- Understanding your Business KPIs
- Diversity & Inclusion in the Outdoor Recreation Industry
- America Outdoors Legislative Update
- The Legal and Operational Landscape: COVID-19 and Beyond

5:00-6:00 pm Happy Hour

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

11:00 am-12:00 pm Learning Sessions

- SEO Website Audit
- Self-Awareness, Vulnerability, and Trust- Foundations of High Performing Teams
- Strategic Issues and Opportunities in Economic Recovery
- Risk Management in 2020: Looking Back, Looking Forward

12:15-1:15 pm **General Session:** Recovery Tourism Tool Kit

1:15-2:30 pm Lunch Break & Meet with Exhibitors

2:30-3:30 pm

Learning Sessions

- Managing Your Sales Funnel
- Workers Compensation: How to Control this Insurance Cost
- Strategies & Resources to Shift the Culture of Sexual Harassment

3:45-4:45 pm

■ Roundtable (Cracker Barrel) Sessions

5:00-6:00 pm

Happy Hour

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

10:00-10:45 am ■ Federal Agency Panel

11:00 am-12:00 pm Learning Sessions

- Audience Targeting in Social Media Advertising
- How to Care Less
- Retail Trade Secrets for Outfitters

12:15-1:15 pm

Closing Keynote: Resilience, Endurance, and Humor in Uncertain Times

1:15- 1:30 pm

Closing Remarks from America Outdoors

MANAGERS TRACK

This year bring your managers to the America Outdoors conference. Brand new in 2020, we have created an exclusive track for front line managers. Managers will develop their personal leadership styles, understand risk management in the field, and gain practical managerial skills through a collaborative approach.

We encourage managers who participate in this programming to stay in the designated track for the best experience. Within the Managers Track, participants will also have access to the keynote presentations, the diversity and inclusion panel, and the sexual harassment seminar. This track will allow managers to gain an understanding of some of the most important topics of conversation in the industry while also focusing on the skills necessary for successful field management, all while networking with other managers in the industry.

Manager Agenda:

Wednesday, December 2

11:00-12:15 pm	Opening Keynote: The Gift of Awe
12:30- 1:30 pm	Managing in the Time of COVID-19
1:30-3:45 pm	Lunch Break & Meet with Exhibitors
4:00-5:00 pm	Diversity & Inclusion in the Outdoor Recreation Industry

Thursday, December 3

11:00 am -12:00 pm	Strategies & Resources to Shift the Culture of Sexual Harassment
12:15- 1:15 pm	General Session: Recovery Tourism Tool Kit
1:15- 2:30 pm	Lunch Break & Meet with Exhibitors
2:30-3:30 pm	Leading Through Conflict
3:45-4:45 pm	Liability and Lawsuit Avoidance 101 for Core Staff and Managers

Friday, December 4

11:00 am-12:00 pm	Paint the Boundaries of the Path to Success
12:15-1:15 pm	Closing Keynote: Resilience, Endurance, and Humor in Uncertain Times
1:15- 1:30 pm	Closing Remarks from America Outdoors

Managers Track Sessions

Managing in the Time of COVID-19

In this session we will discuss the skills necessary for successful front-line management in an outdoor recreation business, including communication, self-evaluation, flexibility, and conflict-resolution. Then, we will examine how the rule book was adapted for the 2020 season and what lessons we can take away for the coming years.

Liability and Lawsuit Avoidance 101 for Core Staff and Managers

Managers and core staff are on the front lines of mitigating an organization's liability. This session is geared towards introducing fundamental risk management and legal concepts to front-line managers and core staff or refreshing those concepts and best practices for more experienced staff. The discussion will be practical and applicable - core staff should leave with a solid foundation for identifying and actively mitigating the legal risks outdoor adventure companies face daily. We will discuss negligence, liability waivers, critical incident response planning, and employment law issues such as sexual harassment and OSHA.

Leading Through Conflict

No two individuals have the exact same expectations, desires, and worldview. Consequently, conflict is a natural part of human interactions and relationships. This workshop offers a practical way to initiate dialogue around conflict and increases awareness around your personal leadership style and conflict tendencies to find situationally appropriate conflict approaches.

Paint the Boundaries of the Path to Success

Get the most out of your staff through pertinent policies, clear expectations, efficient record keeping, and a multi-step approach to discipline and termination. We will finish with open discussion of unique management challenges not already addressed earlier in the track.

VIRTUAL OUTFITTER EXPO HOURS

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3

11:00 am- 6:00 pm Virtual Exhibit Hall Open

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4

11:00 am- 6:00 pm Virtual Exhibit Hall Open

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

10:00 am- 1:00 pm Virtual Exhibit Hall Open

The Virtual Exhibit Hall will be available for attendees to browse for the entire month of December, following the conference.

For a list of exhibiting companies, please visit
www.americaoutdoors.org/conference-info/



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TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Marketing Sessions

Create a Marketing Roadmap to Guide Your 2021 Success

Speaker: **Julie Thorner, Liquid Spark**

Level: **Foundational**

Have great marketing ideas, but not sure how to align them to achieve your business goals? Not sure how to prioritize marketing channels and tactics into an annual plan that is cohesive and easy to implement? This workshop offers a proven process to map your business goals to quarterly strategies and tactics across each marketing channel and create an easy-to-follow roadmap for your initiatives.

Understanding your Business KPIs

Speaker: **Peter Ross, 829 Studios**

Level: **Intermediate**

There are myriad different ways to market your business and all of them require time and money. In this session, we will review data from dozens of mid-sized companies to determine where exactly you should be aligning your resources. Using these successful businesses as our guide, we'll analyze their approach to marketing online and identify a few of the most effective marketing strategies. Perhaps most importantly, we'll have this discussion within the context of a marketing plan so you'll be able to take home a comprehensive framework for use with your business.

SEO Website Audit

Speaker: **Klint Rudolf & Michael Klabon, XCITE Media**

Level: **Intermediate**

An SEO audit is a comprehensive analysis of a site to assess the performance of on-page and off-page activities, identify site architecture-related problems, analyze backlinks & social-media engagement, scan keyword density and examine duplicate content-related issues. In simplest terms, SEO audit is important for identifying strengths, weaknesses and potentials of your website for long-term success. In this one-hour session, we will get our hands dirty in an actual technical SEO audit and how to prioritize what you should look for and where to start with fixes.

Understanding your Sales Funnel

Speaker: **Peter Ross, 829 Studios**

Level: **Intermediate & Advanced**

Today's buyers want hyper-personalized and engaging content from companies they interact with at every touchpoint. Nurturing is led from the moment they initiate interest to when they make a purchase, as decision is imperative to increase top-line growth. Although this is a shared sentiment in marketing, how does one effectively put this in place? When prioritizing marketing channels to elevate your company's identity and facilitating a thoughtful lead to customer experience, understanding your sales funnel is key.

Audience Targeting in Social Media Advertising

Speaker: **Klint Rudolf & Michael Klabon, XCITE Media**

Level: **Intermediate**

It's essential not only to know who your people are, but to also know how to target them in social advertising - who wants to waste marketing dollars reaching people who aren't interested in their product? Have you ever stopped to really think about this? Who is interested in your product? What do they like? What are their circumstances? As business owners, you spend so much time and money thinking about marketing to the 'right people,' but are you even sure who they are? And not just age, gender, outdoor tourism, or other specific interest layers, etc. Your competition is already targeting those same people. What can you do differently? In this one hour session we will take a deep dive into audience targeting in social media advertising across multiple platforms like Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Risk Management Sessions

Risk Management Leadership

Speaker: **Drew Leemon & Katie Baum Mettenbrink, NOLS**

Level: **Foundational**

Outdoor leaders for wilderness education schools, guide services, and adventure travel companies share one thing in common: a reliance on the leader's judgement, decision-making, and risk assessment. Successful companies and organizations support their leaders with sound administrative procedures, leader training, and field practices. In this workshop Drew and Katie will provide an overview of the elements of successful field risk management.

The Legal and Operational Landscape: COVID-19 and Beyond

Speaker: **Leah Corrigan, Recreation Law Center**

Level: **Intermediate & Advanced**

Are you sick of thinking about COVID? While everyone is ready for business to return to normal, it is likely that this operational challenge will remain into the 2021 season. During this session, Leah will update members on the evolving legal landscape presented by Covid-19, including discussion about how pending litigation and enacted statutes may impact your continued operational planning. We will also discuss lessons learned within the outfitting and guiding community and provide a roadmap for updating your operational planning for 2021.

Risk Management in 2020: Looking Back, Looking Forward

Speaker: **Panel**

Level: **Intermediate and Advanced**

The impacts of 2020 on outfitters span the spectrum. Some were never able to open. Others had banner years. All had to adapt to a rapidly changing landscape and function with strained teams. Closures, lockdowns, two-week quarantines, mask requirements, and social distancing all became familiar concepts. In some parts of the Americas outfitters had to adapt to drought, wildfires, floods, and landslides. Join us for a panel discussion from member outfitters to discuss their experiences, their responses, their successes, and failures, and what happened when their systems were tested. And, looking forward, how are members preparing for 2021?

Workers Compensation: How to Control this Insurance Cost

Speaker: **Cameron Annas, Granite Insurance**

Level: **Intermediate**

During this session we will explore how to control your Workers Compensation cost. Most people think this cost is not controllable, however it is the MOST controllable cost in your insurance program. Let's figure out how you can reduce your annual Workers Compensation cost!

Operations Sessions

Strategies & Tactics to Drive Financially Profitable Outfitting Business

Speaker: **Zeb Smith, CPA, Ascent Business Financial Strategies**

Level: **Foundational**

During this session, Zeb will cover key financial strategies and systems to improve your outfit's profitability and use the right tools & systems to make managing cash a breeze. This presentation includes step-by-step exercises you can tackle during the shoulder seasons, easy to adopt tools & systems that will simplify your finances, and case studies by outfitters just like you demonstrating how you too can adopt these strategies and realize better profits within your outfit.

Issues and Opportunities in an Economic Recovery

Speaker: **Pat Tabor, Swan Mountain Consulting Group**

Level: **Advanced**

In this session, Pat will explore how to gauge where you are in the cycle of economic recovery and focus on identifying tactics for either survival or aggressive growth depending on your financial and market position.

Retail Trade Secrets for Outfitters

Speaker: **Carrie Watson, Outside Looks**

Level: **Intermediate**

When retailing, experience speaks volumes. A panel of seasoned outfitters share their best practices, insights, & perspectives of what it takes to run successful retail, from the camp store to the independent retail shop, in today's complex shopping environment.

Roundtable (Cracker Barrel) Sessions

These meetings are an opportunity to gather with other operators in your line of service to discuss challenges and successes in an informal format. This year, each attendee will join a virtual table of 8 with their peers to discuss current issues in the areas of rafting, kayak and canoe, horseback and ranch, hunting and fishing, snowsports, aerial adventures, and more. If you have a service area you would like to ensure is included, please reach out to America Outdoors.

Leadership Sessions

Self-Awareness, Vulnerability, and Trust – Foundations of High Performing Teams

Speaker: **Allison Bergh and Kat Smithhammer, Leadership at Play**

Level: **Intermediate & Advanced**

Teams drive organizational success yet forming and sustaining high performing teams is one of the more complex challenges facing any leader and team member. How do you build trust so that your team members are willing to engaging in robust dialogue and ensure all ideas are on the table? How committed is your team to the direction you are headed? Explore leadership through the capacity and capability of self-awareness, vulnerability, and trust.

Diversity & Inclusion in the Outdoor Recreation Industry

Speaker: **Panel**

Level: **ALL**

To foster diversity and a culture of inclusion in your workforce and your clientele requires intentionality, difficult conversations, and a firm commitment. In this session, our panelists will discuss the current state of the outdoor recreation industry to gain a better understanding of why these initiatives matters and to begin to create a roadmap for the future.

Strategies & Resources to Shift the Culture of Sexual Harassment

Speaker: **Maria Blevins, Ph.D., Utah Valley University, Emily Ambrose, Engage Consulting, & Risa Shimoda, River Management Society**

Level: **Intermediate**

As conversations about sexual harassment and sexism continue in society and the outdoor industry, it can be hard to know where to start to make changes in your organizational policies and culture. This course is designed for individuals interested in changing the culture and conversation around sexual harassment in the outdoor spaces where employees and customers live, work, and play.

This session offers an opportunity to discover findings from research focused on sexual harassment in the outdoor industry. This course will be useful for managers, owners, and human resources professionals ready to add effective diversity and sexual harassment workplace practices to their personnel policy.

How to Care Less

Speaker: **Paul Dreyer, Avid4Adventure**

Level: **ALL**

This workshop aims to provide a deeper look at impermanence and how it relates to being a leader in the outdoor industry. Guides, educators, and administrators are passionate, loving, and caring people. That includes YOU. Your caring provides incredible programming and builds lasting connections, AND... sometimes caring too much can negatively affect you and your group. Sometimes you need to care less. This workshop will help you provide a deeper element of stress management into your training for staff and help you develop ideas about how to best take care of yourself and feel more empowered.

Buying and Selling an Outfitting Business

Speaker: **Pat Tabor, Swan Mountain Consulting Group**

Level: **Advanced**

Pat will cover the key issues for consideration when contemplating the buying or selling of an outfitting business. Additionally, Pat will cover succession planning, including handing the business down to family members, employee buy-out strategies, and trends observed in the pricing and deal structure in the last 12 months.

Advocacy and Legislation Sessions

America Outdoors 2020 Legislative Update

Speaker: **Aaron Bannon, America Outdoors, David Brown, The Bennet Group, Jon Simon, Van Ness Feldman**

Level: **ALL**

Join the America Outdoors government affairs team to learn what was gained over the course of the last year both legislatively and administratively. What came to pass and who were the champions of the industry? What should we anticipate heading into 2021? There will be more opportunities for local initiatives on public lands. Learn how to leverage your own priorities into the national agenda.

Public Land Agency Recreation Leaders Panel Discussion

Level: **ALL**

A panel-style discussion with representatives from the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. Rulemaking has evolved, funds are available for maintenance, and public lands are busier than ever. Learn what leaders in permitting and recreation at U.S. public land agencies see on the horizon that is consequential to outfitters, guides, and outdoor experience providers.

Register by October 30 to SAVE

Online: **americaoutdoors.org/conference-info/**

Phone: **865-558-3595, option 2 or 3**

Monday-Friday 8:30 am- 5:00 pm EST

	Early Bird by October 30		October 31-December 4	
	Member	Non Member	Member	Non Member
Individual Registration	\$199	\$349	\$299	\$449
Team Rate (4+ attendees)	\$750	\$950	\$850	\$1,050

To receive the Team Rate Discount, please call the America Outdoors office, 865-558-3595.

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