
Nature and Human Health Utah



Annual
Report
2023

Prepared By
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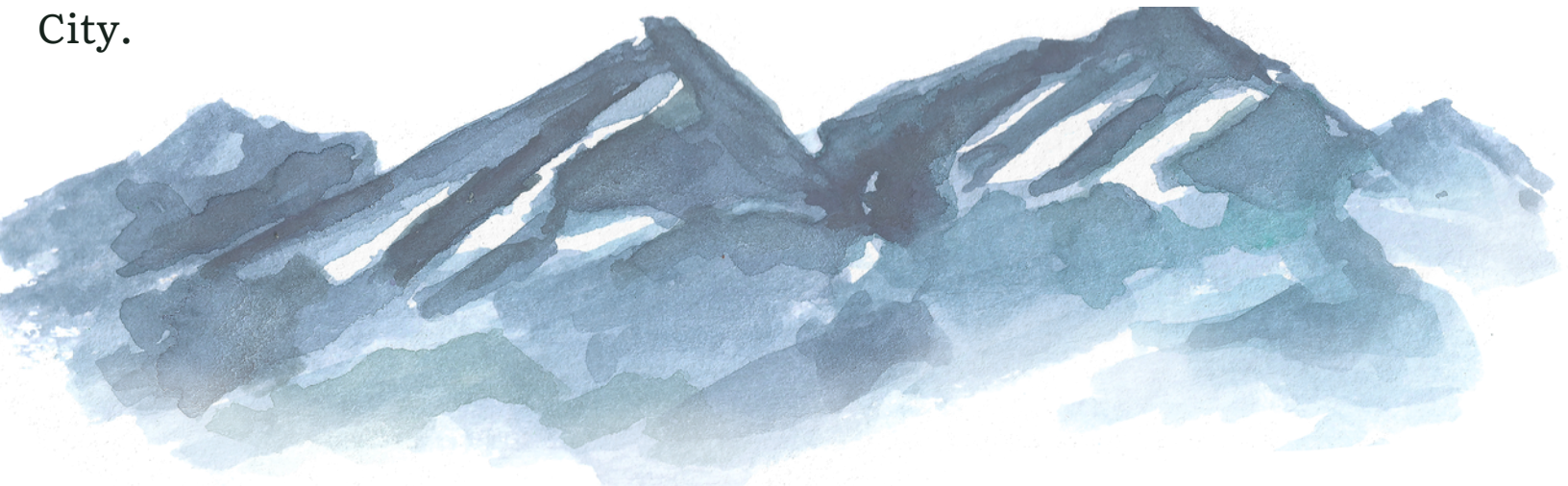


Our History



Nature and Human Health Utah (NHH-UT) was founded in 2019 by Nalini Nadkarni, Professor Emerita at the University of Utah (UU), and a lifelong advocate for trees and the natural world. NHH-UT was inspired by Nature and Health Washington, a group based at the University of Washington, dedicated to understanding how nature improves human health and well-being.

In 2020, with two other co-leaders, Tim Brown (President of the Tracy Aviary) and Dorothy Schmalz (Chair of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism at the UU), we created a draft mission and vision statement, informally recruited members, and established a preliminary organizational structure. Initial funding was provided by an anonymous donor, followed by support from the REI Cooperative Action Fund. Since then, we have grown membership, engaged community group and academic associates, added staff members, and increased our reach and capacity outside of Salt Lake City.



Vision & Mission

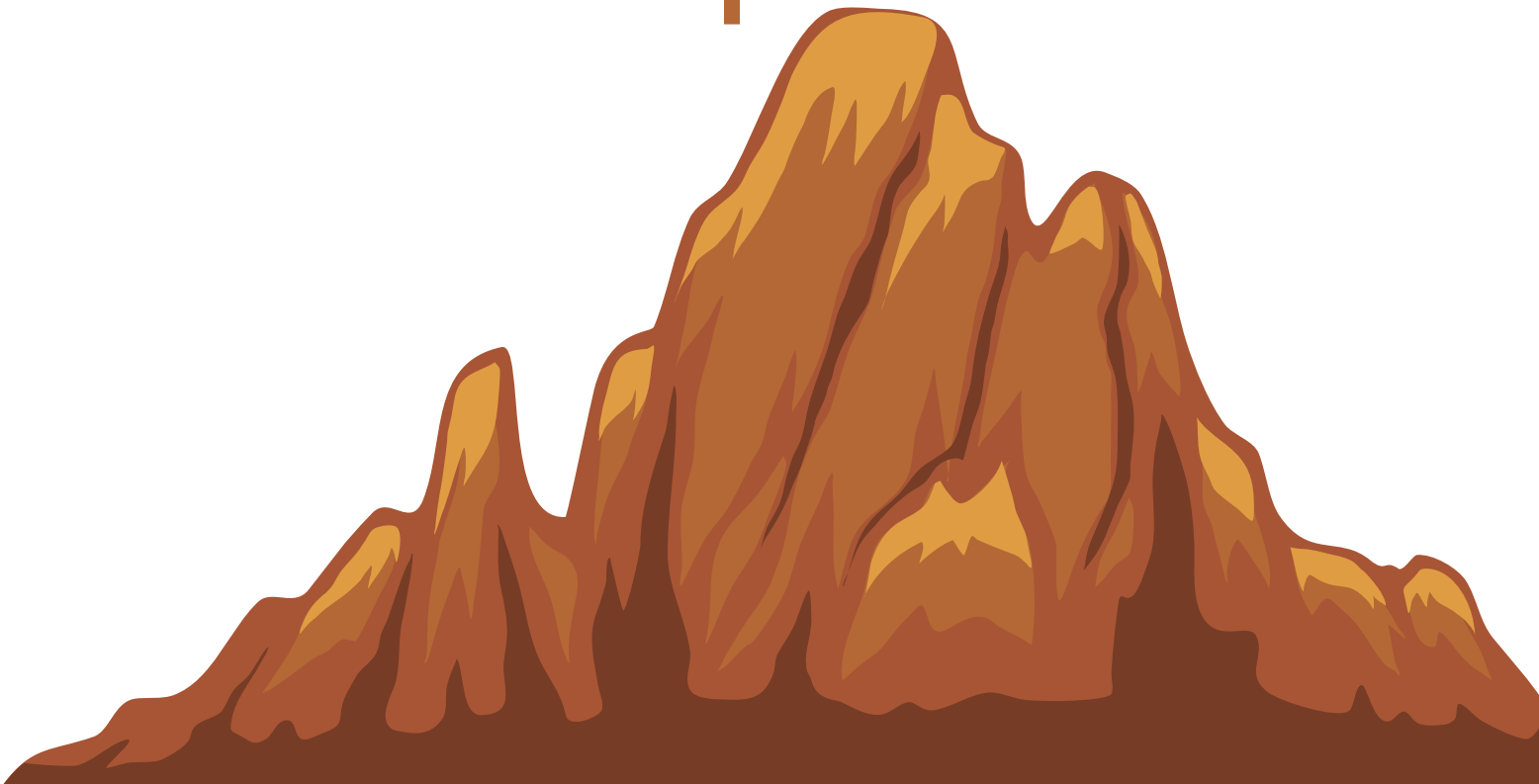


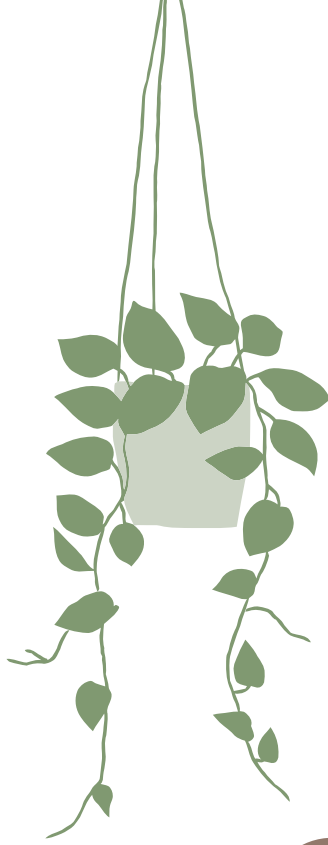
Mission

To understand, articulate, and foster relationships between nature and human health by providing a collaborative arena to engage, formulate actions, and implement solutions for the people and nature in Utah.

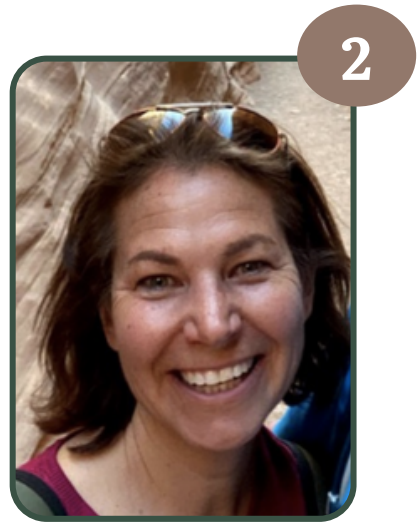
Vision

We envision all Utahns understand the relationships between people and nature and help to ensure those relationships are accessible to and sustained for everyone in our community.





Our Team



- 1. Nalini Nadkarni, Co-Leader
- 2. Dart Schmalz, Co-Leader
- 3. Tim Brown, Co-Leader
- 4. Myra Gerst, Program Manager
- 5. Charlotte Mungovan, Program Assistant

2023 Highlights



Increased membership 3-fold

Membership grew from 84 in 2019 to 265 in 2023, indicating increased interest beyond initial contacts and networks.

Hosted two large-scale events for the public

NHH-UT welcomed two former NPS Directors to Salt Lake City for the Healthy Parks Healthy People event. In October, the first Research and Networking Symposium was held with Legislator Rosemary Lesser as the keynote speaker.

Conducted landscape assessment

The landscape assessment included a member survey and interviews from community leaders, indicating current gaps in the field and suggestions for NHH-UT's scope and activities as we move forward.

Secured additional funding for 2023-2025

NHH-UT was granted an additional two years of funding from our anonymous donor, which will sustain the pilot grant program and other initiatives.

Underwent strategic planning process

After four strategic planning meetings, NHH-UT refined its mission, vision, strategic goals, and completed a strategic plan for the next 1-3 years.



Engagement Activities

Events

NHH-UT hosted 7 membership meetings in 2023, and two public events. These included lectures, opportunities to connect outdoors, happy hour, and an opportunity to showcase work other community organizations are doing. Event participation totaled 200 individuals.

Presentations

NHH-UT presented at 13 events at the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, and Weber State University, and the SHIFT Conference in Bend, Oregon. Presentation participants totaled 450.

Marketing

In April, we implemented a monthly newsletter that focuses on nature and health updates, research, events, and job and funding opportunities. Nearly 60% of 260 recipients opened emails, with a 25% engagement rate. We began Instagram account in August 2023 and post regularly.

Website

Our website at offers information, with monthly updates on community events and partner details [natureandhealthutah.org]. Since August 2023, we have had 1,800 visitors and 3,100 page views.

Partnerships and Collaboration



Academic Organizations

Interest in and partnership with NHH-UT spans eight UU academic entities. In 2023, the Department of Environmental Humanities initiated a Fellowship collaboration in which NHH-UT will host a graduate student for a nature and health-related project.



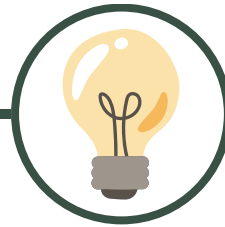
Nature and Health Alliance

NHH-UT played a key role in developing the NHA and hosted the NHA's inaugural Planning Conference in May 2023. NHH-UT's program manager dedicated 50% of her time to NHA.



Community Organizations

NHH-UT established new partnerships to expand our reach and facilitate networking and collaboration opportunities in the sectors of health, environment, academic, recreation, equity and justice, and policy/government.



Campus Visits

NHH-UT conducted campus visits to Weber State University and Brigham Young University in April and October 2023. Visits were facilitated by the Sustainability Practice and Research Center (WSU) and the Kennedy Center (BYU).



Mentorship

NHH-UT mentored NH-NOCO, a group from Colorado State University and are collaborating on a guide for creating a state Nature and Health chapter.

Pilot Grants

In 2021, NHH-UT granted four projects to study health benefits of nature exposure for underserved populations. Outcomes included peer-reviewed publications and presentations at academic and health-related meetings.

Homelessness, health, and nature

by Jeff Rose

Nature Rx Pilot: Identifying barriers and facilitators to implementing nature-based mental health interventions for older adults

by Andy Hong

The effects of nature-immersive experiences on social, mental, and physical health in adults with mental illness or symptoms of mental illness

by Joanna Bettmann-Schaefer

A randomized control pilot study of nature immersion for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder

by Tracy Herrmann

NHH-UT as announced the released an RFP for the next pilot grant cycle. The RFP was posted to the newsletter, and Instagram, and was sent through direct engagement with partners. NHH-UT hosted two information sessions and received 15 proposals. Proposals will be reviewed in January 2024.



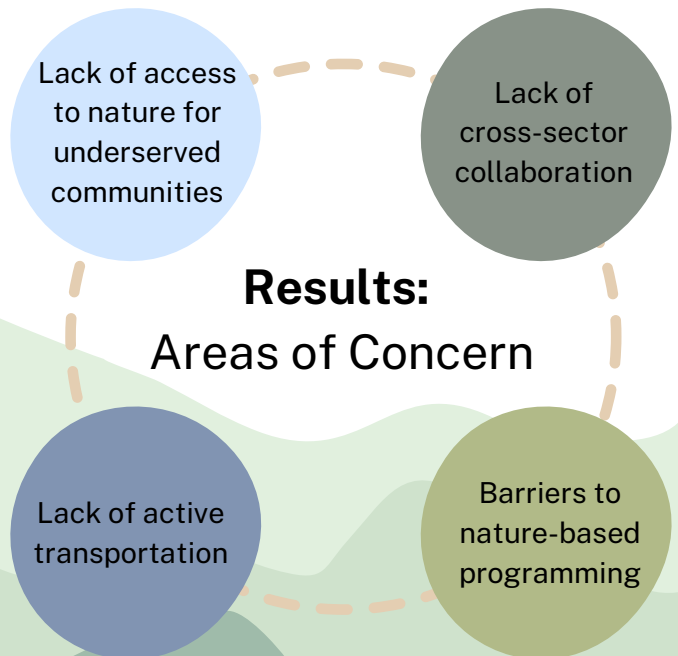
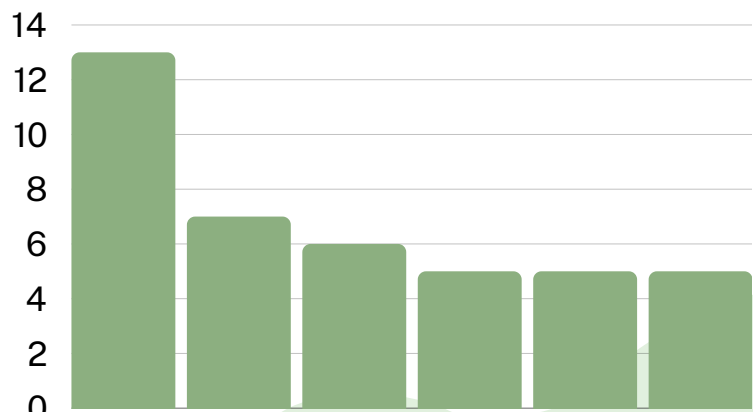
Landscape Assessment

A central precept of NHH-UT is to avoid being redundant or competitive with efforts of existing groups working in nature and human health. We conducted a landscape assessment of individuals, organizations, and institutions in the Salt Lake Valley, which included a member survey and 27 interviews with community organizations.

The assessment refined the mission and vision of NHH-UT and helped establish strategic goals. The priorities that emerged are to: 1) provide collaboration and networking opportunities for members and partners; 2) disseminate research and information to the lay public, healthcare professionals and community leaders; and 3) generate new research projects.

We shared the landscape assessment with partners and members of NHH-UT. The report of its findings are on our website. Below are highlights of our results:

Interview Results: Suggested Directions for NHH-UT



Strategic Planning

Co-leaders and staff conducted strategic planning sessions based on landscape assessment results. Leadership guidelines include:

Strategic Goals:

1. NHH-UT become a networking hub in the field of nature and health.
2. Disseminate NHH information and opportunities.
3. Engage research, directly and indirectly.
4. Develop and sustain organizational capacity.



Values:

- Acknowledge the reciprocal effects of nature on humans.
- Enhance access to nature for all.
- Promote engagement with nature.
- Encourage respectful interaction with nature.



Action Plans:

- Conduct four membership meetings per year
- Implement at least one nature-based program for improved access.
- Write one regional media op-ed.
- Establish a monthly blog.
- Engage policymakers in a face-to-face encounter.
- Develop an introductory-level nature and health curriculum.

NHH-UT recognizes the need for a membership structure, fostering accountability and reciprocity. Membership meetings, crucial for community engagement, will be sustained. The new membership structure, acknowledging and valuing regular attendees, will be announced in early 2024.

Acknowledgments

NHH-UT acknowledges an anonymous funder, whose support was critical in initiating NHH-UT and our pilot grant projects. The REI Cooperative Action Fund provided support for organizational and administrative work. We thank the organizations represented in the landscape assessment for their time and insights. We acknowledge the University of Utah Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, and Tammy Sheffield, for administrative support. The Tracy Aviary is the fiscal sponsor.

Thank You,

Tim Brown, Myra Gerst, Charlotte Mungovan,
Nalini Nadkarni, and Dart Schmalz

