

Bridging Nature & Climate

rethink
outside

Rethink Outside partnered with Grist to explore whether stories and messages about nature and the outdoors can serve as effective entry points to climate conversations, especially among audiences outside the traditional climate-support base.

As funders and advocates look for ways to broaden public engagement with climate solutions, nature offers a shared starting point grounded in everyday experience, identity, and culture. This message-testing effort explored how different narratives connecting nature and climate resonate with audiences who may not identify as “climate-first,” but are deeply affected by climate impacts.

Exploring how nature and climate connect

At Blue Sky Funders Forum, we see nature as common ground— a unifying force across sectors. Nature and outdoor experiences offer a powerful bridge, reaching beyond the climate choir to build broader understanding and support for climate solutions.

How we tested the messages

To learn what language truly resonates, we ran a paid Meta (Facebook/Instagram) campaign in partnership with Grist, reaching audiences in key states outside of the climate-support base. We reached the following audiences:

- **Climate impacted and climate disinterested:** Meta users who are more likely to experience extreme weather events AND have shown indifference towards climate change as an issue.
- **Apolitical:** Meta users with low voter propensity (less likely to vote.)

We tested four narrative themes by boosting Grist articles that explored climate impacts through different lenses:



Climate impacts to
outdoor athletes
and sports



Parks as
climate
resilience



Kids and
education



Cultural
connection

Each ad repurposed climate-focused Grist content using nature and outdoor-focused ad copy to test whether it can entice climate-disinterested audiences, particularly in politically moderate states, to click through to learn more.

Insights that bridge nature and climate

The campaign reached over **168,000 individuals**, generating **4,621 clicks** across the four articles.

The **top performing narrative themes** were “**impacts on outdoor athletes and sports**” and “**cultural connection**” with the highest click engagement.

Audience nuances:

- Audiences identified as “climate impacted + climate disinterested” showed stronger engagement overall, particularly with messages focused on outdoor athletes and sports.
- Apolitical audiences responded most strongly to cultural connection messaging.

This suggests that people who may not identify as climate supporters are still open to engagement when climate is framed through familiar, non-ideological entry points.

Reach and engagement overview

- 168,000+ individuals reached.
- 470,000+ impressions.
- 4,621 clicks.
- Up-to-par click engagement with a click-through rate of 1%.
- Cost-effective with a cost-per-click of \$0.69, under the averages (~\$2).

Meta (Facebook/Instagram) proved to be an effective platform for reaching the more day-to-day regular folks and exposing them to messages they wouldn't otherwise see as they're not part of the climate-support base, building up climate and outdoor access support and narrative. It was also a highly cost-effective strategy being able to reach thousands of folks and generating thousands of clicks to Grist articles.

What these findings mean

These findings reinforce that **relatability** beats urgency or societal benefit when engaging audiences outside the climate-support base. These audiences are more likely to engage with climate content when it shows up through things they already care about, rather than being asked to care about climate first.

Messages grounded in **culture, identity, and everyday outdoor experiences** are more likely to spark interest and action. Nature can serve as a powerful bridge, inviting people into climate conversations without requiring prior alignment or issue identity. People who are already experiencing climate impacts don't necessarily reject climate issues, they may reject **how climate is usually talked about**. When climate is framed through familiar activities and shared experiences, it feels relevant rather than political.