Author's response to reviews

Title: A systematic review of the evidence for direct health benefits of natural environments

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to Reviewer’s comments

I appreciate the consideration given to the comments made in the initial review. The authors have satisfactorily addressed my major concerns.

- Discretionary Revisions
p. 6, lines 1-6: The authors seem to suggest that the evidence covered from the review comes from environmental management. It actually comes from multiple disciplines, including but not limited to exercise psychology, environmental psychology, landscape architecture.

Our response: Thanks for pointing this out. We have reworded this section. (P.6)

p. 13, lines 3-4: “Eight studies investigated effects on attention/concentration (tests such as Backward digit span test but included ratings of ADD/ADHD symptoms).” Something seems wrong here ….

Our response: We have reduced the section in brackets. (P.13) Details on methods used to assess attention are already explained in more detail in the methodology section. (P.14)

p. 20, lines 6-7: The authors write, “The clinical significance of any such short-lived effect is however, uncertain.” It seems strange to me that the authors make such a statement, as a similar statement could be made about most if not all of the effects considered in the meta-analysis. I would guess that few if any of the authors of the studies reviewed would argue that one brief instance of improved emotion, reduced physiological activation, or enhanced cognition has clinical significance. Rather, researchers in the field have assumed that such short-lived effects cumulatively can have significant implications for health. I think the authors adequately deal with this issue on p. 21 when they write, “The longer-term implications of repeated exposure to different environments cannot be fully assessed.” They might reinforce that statement by mentioning that it is assumed that repeated exposure will cumulatively prove beneficial.

Our response: To keep things simple we have removed the sentences on p.20 lines 6-7 and have added in a sentence on p.21 as suggested. Thank you.

Table 2. I didn’t catch this in the first review, but it looks like the authors have included only one of the two attention measures used in Hartig et al. (2003). Have the authors averaged across these measures? If so, they might indicate this in a note to the table or clarify it in the text.

Our response: Yes, the standard approach we took was any study that measured the same concept (i.e. attention) with more than one measure, an average across measures was calculated. We now explain this in the methods. (P.10)