

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Launches New Initiative

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service â€“ March 14, 2008

- [\[>\] Let's Go Outside](#)



In an effort to promote a healthy lifestyle among the American public, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is encouraging kids and adults to get outdoors and connect with nature. The Serviceâ€™s new initiative, â€œConnecting People with Nature,â€ incorporates natural resource conservation, environmental quality and human health. With a simple, yet catchy slogan, â€œLetâ€™s Go Outside!â€ the Service will encourage urban dwellers and non-traditional conservation audiences to explore the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System and the nationâ€™s many other natural resources.

The Midwest Region of the Service echoes the call to go outside. â€œAcross the 8 states of the upper Midwest we have 13 million acres of national wildlife refuge lands for the public to experience, explore and enjoy the outdoors,â€ says Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson. "Strolling with family or friends through forest, prairie, shoreline, or other natural areas provides everyone a chance to connect with our environment and with each other. The result is a healthier public with a better appreciation for the wonderful resources all around us.â€

The Midwest launched its â€œConnecting People with Natureâ€ initiative with a number of projects throughout the region. Among those activities, the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is partnering with Project Get Outdoors (Project GO) out of Plainview and St. Charles, Minnesota, to connect youth with nature in their communities. The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refugeâ€™s Partner Schools program provides teachers and students with standard-based curriculum that includes hands-on experiences with plants and wildlife, as well as recreational opportunities. Also in the Twin Cities, the Service hosted an exhibit and book-signing event for Dudley Edmondson, wildlife photographer and author of the book â€œBlack and Brown Faces in Americaâ€™s Wild Places.â€

JUST ESCAPE, a Minneapolis Television Network (MTN) community television show, is designed to encourage people to just escape from their hectic lifestylesâ€”to the outdoors. Other programs and activities designed to bring nature to children include hunting, fishing, observing and photographing wildlife, creating schoolyard habitats, or simply exploring and discovering nature on refuges.

In Missouri, the SEEDS program (Students, the Environment, and Endangered Species), developed by the Serviceâ€™s Missouri Ecological Services Field Office, enhances environmental awareness among Missouri children through interactive learning, outdoor activities, and hands-on interaction. In Illinois, the Service has joined with partners through Chicago Wilderness to support the â€œLeave No Child Insideâ€ initiative.

The â€œConnecting People with Natureâ€ initiative stems from a summit with Richard Louv,

author of "Last Child in the Woods - Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder." Research shows the American people, especially children, are spending less time involved in outdoor recreational activities than any previous generation. Nature is important to children's development - intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and physically; and research indicates as children's connection to and time spent with nature has diminished, childhood ailments and medical problems have vastly increased. Even the simple activity of playing outside helps children develop better motor skills, physical fitness, general health, and can create a life-long appreciation of healthy, outdoor activities and the environment.

The Region's campaign will maximize the use of existing programs throughout the eight states it oversees, and will look for new, creative opportunities to capitalize on widespread availability and open access of our natural resources for the enjoyment of the American public.

For more information on the Let's Go Outside! campaign and for ideas on how to connect with nature, please visit the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/children/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

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