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News Release



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Launches *Let's Go Outside!*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service held a landmark meeting with the health care industry to discuss the health of our nation's children and opportunities to get kids involved in outside activities. More than 100 health professionals and land managers met at the "Let's Go Outside for Health" – Health Professionals' Roundup Meeting in Arlington, Virginia on February 29 to help the Fish and Wildlife Service develop strategies to create enjoyable and meaningful experiences for Americans in the outdoors, improving their health and well-being and leading to life-long connections to the environment. This issue is important because connecting families and children with nature will help to ensure the future conservation of the natural world.

In 2007, Fish and Wildlife Service Director Hall announced six top priorities for the Fish and Wildlife Service to follow in the coming years. One of these top priorities is to connect people with nature in an effort to ensure the future of conservation. With a land base encompassing more than 97 million acres in the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Fish and Wildlife Service is an excellent resource to provide outdoor experiences combining the values of natural resource conservation, environmental quality and human health. The motto for this initiative is *Let's Go Outside!*

"There may be no greater legacy that the Fish and Wildlife Service can leave for future generations," said Director Hall. "By providing support and encouragement for parents, educators and children to spend time outdoors, we are joining the nationwide movement to invite families to turn off their digital music and video games and spend some quality family time outside."

The *Let's Go Outside!* initiative stems from a summit with Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods – Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Information shows that 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 and general health, and can create a life-long appreciation for healthy outdoor activities and the environment.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, through its National Wildlife Refuge System, already provides many outdoor recreation opportunities. However, under its new initiative, the Fish and Wildlife Service will work with others to refocus current programs and/or design new programs and increase opportunities for all Americans, especially children, to forge a connection with nature. These include programs activities such as hunting, fishing,

observing and photographing wildlife; exploring and discovering nature on refuges and in parks; and creating schoolyard habitats to bring the experience of nature into children's every day lives.

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/>.

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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 www.fws.gov.