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### **2009 Nation's River Bass Tournament at National Harbor**

Yesterday, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Living Classrooms of the National Capital Region introduced over 300 local students to sustainable catch and release fishing at the National Harbor on the Potomac River, one of the top ten rivers in the United States for bass, during the 2009 Nation's River Bass Tournament.

The Nation's River Bass Tournament is an annual celebration connecting under-served and urban youth from across Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC, to the natural resources of the Potomac through a morning of fishing and learning about the Potomac River. The event also helped generate critical funding for Living Classroom's academic enrichment and career development training programs on the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers.

The event highlighted the Service's emphasis on helping America's youth get outdoors and enjoy America's rich and diverse natural resources.

"Early outdoor learning experiences promote understanding and conservation of natural resources, and help to interest talented, capable young people in careers as natural resource professionals. These activities also build stronger relationships with their families, peers and communities," said Rowan Gould, acting Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Nation's River Bass Tournament offered students a morning of fishing from boats with volunteer bass anglers on the Potomac River. Students also lined up along the National Harbor piers to fish with adult volunteers, and rotated through 15 interactive educational stations devoted to boating, fishing, wildlife and the environment. The Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office also conducted a pollinator planting at the nearby Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center to beautify the National Harbor.

"The annual Nation's River Bass Tournament provides an excellent opportunity to teach children about their environment, and boating, fishing and safety skills. They not only gain knowledge about fishing, but learn to respect wildlife and the outdoors—learning that lasts a lifetime," said Gary Frazer, the Service's Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation.

Last year, Living Classrooms provided educational and workforce development programs to more than 18,000 youth and young adults. Through Living Classroom's unique, hands-on learning programs, students are cleaning up their schoolyards and area streams to improve area waterways. The organization's annual Shad Restoration Program is one of the first documented successful efforts where students are actually helping to save a troubled species.

Living Classrooms' mission is to strengthen communities and inspire young people to achieve their potential through hands-on education and job training, using urban, natural, and maritime resources as "living classrooms". For more information, go to [www.livingclassroomsdc.org](http://www.livingclassroomsdc.org).

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](http://www.fws.gov).

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