

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USFWS SOUTHEAST REGION LAUNCHES UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Southeast Region Fisheries Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has launched an exciting new program that offers children the opportunity to have meaningful interactions with fish and aquatic habitats. The Biologist-in-Training program is an experiential environmental education curriculum that utilizes National Fish Hatcheries and streams, lakes, ponds and rivers as outdoor classrooms.

An engaging 20-page activity booklet guides children through five interactive explorations of fish and aquatic environments. Each of the activities promotes stewardship and the intrinsic value of aquatic habitats, builds skills of observation, and teaches different methods of acquiring, organizing and assessing biological information. In the final activity, children will link with a mentor in the field of biology. Upon completion of the activities, students will receive an official certificate of accomplishment and a sticker or patch. This incentive provides a sense of pride, ownership, and empowerment to act to help conserve and protect our local aquatic resources.

The BiT program may be accomplished in a day at any National Fish Hatchery in the southeast, but also anywhere that water flows. The activities are aligned with national education standards for upper elementary age students; however, the program is designed to be open-ended and adaptable for lower elementary and middle school students. It is ideal for school groups, home school groups, Scout groups, 4-H groups and all children with a sense of wonder.

The BiT program also includes extension activities based on nationally recognized environmental education curricula. The extension activities come ready-to-use in BiT bins that contain all the necessary props and materials. They may be used during a visit to the hatchery, or borrowed for use in a classroom or another off-site location.

All of the materials listed above, including BiT activity guides, BiT bins and achievement awards are available at 21 Fisheries field stations across the Southeast. There is no charge for any of the program materials.

For more information on the new Biologist-in-Training program, visit www.fws.gov/southeast/fisheries/BiT or contact Judy Toppins, program coordinator, at 404/ 679 7108.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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