

**NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE:  
RECONNECTING KIDS  
WITH THE OUTDOORS**

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**JOINT OVERSIGHT HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE  
AND OCEANS

JOINT WITH THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS  
AND PUBLIC LANDS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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Thursday, May 24, 2007

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**Serial No. 110-26**

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Printed for the use of the Committee on Natural Resources



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/index.html>

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Committee address: <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov>

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

35-982 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2007

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## CONTENTS

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	Page
Hearing held on Thursday, May 24, 2007 .....	1
Statement of Members:	
Bishop, Hon. Rob, a Representative in Congress from the State of Utah ...	2
Gilcrest, Hon. Wayne T., a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland .....	3
Grijalva, Hon. Raúl M., a Representative in Congress from the State of Arizona .....	1
Statement of Witnesses:	
Calengor, Jerry, Chairman, Normark Corporation, on behalf of the American Sportfishing Association .....	46
Prepared statement of .....	48
Cason, James E., Associate Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior .....	4
Prepared statement of .....	5
Dolesh, Richard J., Director of Public Policy, National Recreation and Park Association .....	56
Prepared statement of .....	58
Ginsburg, Dr. Kenneth R., M.D., on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics .....	34
Prepared statement of .....	37
Kimbell, Gail, Chief, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture .....	9
Prepared statement of .....	10
Lambert, Alan F., Scout Executive, National Capital Area Council, Boy Scouts of America .....	69
Prepared statement of .....	71
McCarthy, Gina, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection .....	13
Prepared statement of .....	16
Penny, Dale, President, Student Conservation Association .....	65
Prepared statement of .....	66
Pertschuk, Amy, Managing Director, Children & Nature Network .....	40
Prepared statement of .....	42
Additional materials supplied:	
Byler, Jeremy, Senior, Schools Without Walls Senior High School, accompanying Dale Penny, Statement for the record .....	68



**OVERSIGHT HEARING ENTITLED “NO CHILD  
LEFT INSIDE: RECONNECTING KIDS WITH  
THE OUTDOORS.”**

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**Thursday, May 24, 2007  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife & Oceans, joint with the  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests & Public Lands  
Committee on Natural Resources  
Washington, D.C.**

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The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:01 a.m. in Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Raúl M. Grijalva, [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Grijalva, Bishop, Sarbanes, Inslee, Herseth Sandlin, Shuler, Brown, and Gilchrest.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA**

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me call to order the joint oversight hearing of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands and the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans. The subject of the oversight hearing is “No Child Left Inside: Reconnecting Children with Nature.”

Thank you very much, and I want to welcome everyone to this joint oversight hearing on the importance of nature in children’s lives. Our witnesses have worked hard to prepare testimony and to be with us today, and we thank them for their efforts. It is also my pleasure to welcome colleagues from the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans. The issues we will discuss today affect both agencies and programs within the jurisdiction of both Subcommittees, and we look forward to a good discussion.

What our children will become as adults depends on genetic makeup and some will be the result of life experience. We will likely never declare a winner in this nature versus nurture debate. One thing for certain is that for human beings, and children in particular, nature is nurture and America’s youth need more of it.

Time spent outdoors during childhood, whether it is hiking Yosemite or fishing in the creek behind your house, fosters creativity, self-confidence, family bonding, better health, not to mention the beginnings of scientific and environmental curiosity. It also fosters a conservation ethic that will be so critical to ensuring the long-term stewardship of our natural world.

Competition for young peoples' time and attention is tougher now than it has ever been before, and there is mounting evidence that the kind of unstructured outdoor exploration many of us remember as children is losing out to indoor electronic entertainment. In too many instances, adventure games are replacing actual adventure in children's lives.

We face the possibility that a child who might have grown up to be the next Teddy Roosevelt or Rachel Carson is inside right now playing Grand Theft Auto instead. Today's panelists will discuss current efforts to document and address this trend as well as the impacts these developments are having on America's young people.

In addition, we welcome our witnesses' thoughts on what it might mean for the future of our parks, forests, oceans, refuges and other public lands if the next generation of Americans has little or no interest in visiting or protecting them. More important, we look to them for recommendations on how our Federal resource agencies can play a role in reversing this trend.

Once again, we thank our witnesses for their energy and effort, and I would like to turn to our Ranking Member, Mr. Bishop, for any opening comments that he may have. Sir?

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROB BISHOP, A  
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF UTAH**

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that.

I am intrigued by the title of today's hearing and hope it brings better results than the fatally flawed No Child Left Behind education program of the Federal Government. Witnesses will point out the obvious, that children today need more exercise and time outdoors. Although there may be a consensus on this fact, the role of the Federal Government solving this challenge is entirely another question.

Some witnesses will testify the Federal Government should provide even more money to buy private land so the kids have more outdoor recreation opportunities. I am a living case study of how people coming from states with vast public land ownership can indeed be overweight. I will also challenge all those who will be talking. Be careful what you say about obesity today. I am very sensitive about it.

The Federal Government already owns one-third of the lands in the United States and as Congress appropriates more money for land acquisitions, kids are becoming more obese. So let us not overlook the role the private sector can play in providing vast outdoor recreation opportunities in this country. Today we will hear from Alan Lambert with the Boy Scouts of America, which owns thousands of acres of its own land, which has been used to train millions of kids to appreciate the great outdoors.

The Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico alone has over 120,000 acres or roughly three times the land area of Washington, D.C., and if many of the largest and the loudest national environmental groups would spend less money focusing on politics they, too, could follow the sterling example of the Boy Scouts and use their tax-free largesse to buy lands for kids to reconnect with nature.

Boy Scouts' example of private conservation is being replicated throughout this nation by electric utilities, timber companies, ranches, campgrounds and other private enterprises that are providing outdoor recreation under the free enterprise system. At a time when our existing national parks, forests and refuges face a vast backlog of maintenance and rehabilitation projects, it is vital that we encourage the policies that allow the private sector to continue its outstanding work in this regard. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Would anyone else wish to make an opening statement?

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. WAYNE GILCHREST, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MARYLAND**

Mr. GILCHREST. A quick one, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

I think this is a wonderful hearing. I think just the conversations, just the discussion about America's future, which is our children, and how are they nurtured, and how are they raised, and how are they exposed to this fascinating, majestic, dangerous world. The Chairman used the word unstructured, which is I think so vital here.

When many of us in this room grew up in the 1940s and the 1950s, there was virtually no structure for children other than the parents, and the grandparents and the community, but you were outside and with even a sandlot, the universe was at your fingertips through your imagination. There was baseball, and there was horseshoes, and there was hiking, and there was canoeing and the exploring.

You could climb an apple tree and you would end up on the other side of the universe. All of these unstructured, vast, important things that kids could figure out in their small, small, tiny world without the structure, without the cell phones, without the computers, without the games, without all those things, even without organized baseball, little league, or all those things and even, and I was a Boy Scout leader, even without the Boy Scouts because you always had an adult telling you what to do.

The kids could go on their own star trek to the Amazon Jungle, to the Rocky Mountains, to the other side of Pluto. In doing that herein lies the idea that can regenerate a generation and for generations to come, and that is brain development. We all know about neurons, and their connections, and how it works and evolves. You make up a new cell every time you think a new thought.

So the confidence, the independent thinking, the initiative, the ingenuity, the intellect that arises in an enormous fashion just by a child, children, on their own figuring things out with their brains, with their fingers, with their motions, with their laughter, and all of that happens outside. It is really a responsibility of adults to figure out how we can regenerate that lost art.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir.

Let me welcome the first panel. I appreciate your presence and am looking forward to your comments. At the outset, let me just indicate that all your testimony will be accepted in its entirety,

your written testimony into the record, and if at all possible we would like the oral presentation to be five minutes.

With that, let me begin with Mr. James Cason, Associate Deputy Secretary, the Department of the Interior. Welcome, sir.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES CASON, ASSOCIATE DEPUTY  
SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

Mr. CASON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your subcommittees today to discuss efforts to reconnect children with the outdoors. Secretary Kempthorne has highlighted the significance of this issue and its relevance to the Department of the Interior's mission. Connecting children with the outdoors can affect their health, enhance their knowledge of our environment and strengthen their commitment to environmental stewardship.

We affirm these goals and the role the Department plays in advancing them. In September 2006 the Secretary invited more than 300 educators, health professionals, business leaders and conservationists to participate in a national dialogue on children and nature.

The inaugural conference focused on the positive impact nature can have on the health, conservation awareness and the character development of children, the positive and negative impacts of technology, media and the built environment on children's connection to nature and what can be done to restore the connection between children and the outdoors.

At the conference the Secretary stated, "We are here today to light a fire of passion that opens the doors to the great outdoors so that children can see, and hear, and smell, and taste and touch nature." Government can be a catalyst, an encourager, a motivator and a provider of great places for children to have fun, to exercise and to love the outdoors.

The Department is uniquely positioned to be such a catalyst. Our agencies manage 501 million acres of the nation's special places. One in every five acres in the nation. The Bureau of Land Management manages 3,500 recreation sites under its multiple use mission. The National Park Service cares for 391 units of the Park Service, some of which include our nation's most unique, natural and cultural historical places.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services manages 547 refuges including 2,500 miles of land and water trails with an emphasis on six activities consistent with its mission of protecting wildlife and its habitat. Hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, natural photography, environmental education and interpretation. Each agency has a distinct mission. Together the agencies offer children an endless array of recreational educational opportunities in myriad of natural settings.

We have two formidable tools at our disposal, a land base and a set of passionate professionals with interest and expertise of the natural world. The Department participates in thousands of programs that encourage kids to reconnect with nature from inter-agency nationwide year-round programs that can impact large numbers of children to special local events that target a limited population of youth.

Some programs focus on introducing children to an outdoor experience while other programs seek to provide a more immersive educational experience for our children. Our agencies are creative making the ways that we can engage children and appeal to different interests and backgrounds of children limitless.

An example of some of the programs that we either participate in or sponsor ourselves is Hands on the Lands Program; the Wonderful Outdoor World Program referred to as WOW; VIEWS Conservation Corps; Student Conservation Association; President Bush's Healthier U.S. Initiative; Take It To the Outside, a BLM program to connect with your public lands; Junior Explorers Program; Student Education Employment Program; An Urban Treehouse Program; Kids Fishing Day; the Great Background Bird Count; Catch a Special Thrill of Fishing, a program set up by BOR, the Bureau of Reclamation; Little Marine Explorers Program.

We have a host of them within the Department of the Interior that we have sponsored for years and had millions of children go through our programs. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, together we can help families and children become healthier and live fuller lives by reigniting America's passion for the outdoors. We can offer children opportunities by providing parks, trails, camping sites and nature programs for children.

We can work together to conserve and restore our land and make it accessible to urban and under served children and others who would not normally venture outdoors. We can raise the next generation of conservationists, inspire the children of today to grow up to be the land stewards of tomorrow and to ensure that they will care about and care for our nation's special places. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer questions when we get there.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cason follows:]

**Statement of James E. Cason, Associate Deputy Secretary,  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

Madam Chairwoman and Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your subcommittees today to discuss efforts to reconnect children with the outdoors. Secretary Kempthorne has highlighted the significance of this issue and its relevance to the Department of the Interior's mission. Connecting children with the outdoors can affect their health, enhance their knowledge of our environment, and strengthen their commitment to environmental stewardship. We affirm these goals—and the role the Department plays in advancing them.

In the mid-1800s, there was a young boy who lived in New York City. He was smart and inquisitive but was always sick and suffered terribly from asthma. Few medicines were available to ease his discomfort. He would treat his condition by spending time outdoors. He learned to ride a horse, to fish, to hunt, to take long hikes, and his health improved dramatically. As a young man, he went to live on a ranch in North Dakota, where he saw elk, bison, and deer for the first time. That boy was Theodore Roosevelt; he became our 26th President. He later remarked, "I never would have been President if it had not been for my experiences in North Dakota." His passion for experiencing the outdoors continued throughout his life, and during his Presidency, he established 5 National Parks, 18 National Monuments, and 150 National Forests as well as 51 Federal Bird Reservations and 4 National Game Preserves, which together served as the foundation for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In 1956, in an article entitled, November 5, 2007 *Help Your Child To Wonder*, a woman shares her efforts to give her nephew first-hand experiences with nature. She wrote, "[a] child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement....I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to *know* as to *feel* .—That woman was Rachel

Carson, a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and notable author. The 100th Anniversary of her birth is just three days from today.

In 2005, in an influential book entitled, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv writes, “[t]he postmodern notion that reality is only a construct...that we are what we program...suggests limitless human possibilities; but as the young spend less and less of their lives in natural surroundings, their senses narrow, physiologically and psychologically, and this reduces the richness of human experience...[r]educing that deficit...healing the broken bond between our young and nature...is in our self-interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demands it, but also because our mental, physical, and spiritual health depends upon it.”

Many people, especially young people, have become separated from the power of the great outdoors to renew and revive the human spirit. Children are spending more and more of their time inside on the computer, playing video games, or watching television. Studies have shown that the incidences of obesity in children have risen markedly in the last decade. With a click of a mouse, children can use the internet to access the content of libraries and the resources of the universities around the world. They can read all there is to know about a buffalo. They can see a picture of a giant redwood. They can even listen to recordings of the humpback whale. While this knowledge is important and can enrich a child’s life, it is no substitute for feeling and experiencing and immersing oneself in nature—touching a pinecone, watching ants march into an anthill, listening to a river cascade down the rocks, or smelling a forest after it has rained.

In September 2006, the Secretary invited more than 300 educators, health professionals, business leaders, and conservationists to participate in a National Dialogue on Children and Nature. The inaugural conference focused on the positive impact nature can have on the health, conservation awareness, and character development of children, the positive and negative impact of technology, media, and the built environment on children’s connection to nature, and what can be done to restore the connection between children and the outdoors. At the conference, the Secretary stated, “We are here today to light a fire of passion that opens the doors to the great outdoors so that children can see, hear, smell, taste and touch nature. Government can be a catalyst, an encourager, a motivator and a provider of great places for children to have fun, to exercise, and to love the outdoors.”

The Department is uniquely positioned to be such a catalyst. Our agencies manage 501 million acres of our nation’s special places—one in every five acres of the Nation. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 3,500 recreation sites under its multiple use mission. The National Park Service (NPS) cares for 391 units, some of which include our nation’s most unique natural, cultural, and historical places. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) manages 547 refuges, including 2,500 miles of land and water trails, with an emphasis on six activities consistent with its mission of protecting wildlife and its habitat: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, nature photography, environmental education and interpretation. Each agency has a distinct mission; together, the agencies offer children an endless array of recreational and educational opportunities in a myriad of natural settings.

We have two formidable tools: a land base and passionate professionals with interest and expertise about the natural world. The Department participates in thousands of programs that encourage kids to reconnect with nature, from interagency nation-wide year-round programs that can impact large numbers of children to special local events that target a limited population of youth. Some programs focus on introducing children to an outdoor experience, while other programs seek to provide a more immersive educational experience for the children. Our agencies are creative—making the ways that we can engage children and appeal to the different interests and backgrounds of children limitless. Together, we can discover, rediscover, and get lost in our America. We have made a great start, but much more can and should be done.

### **Interagency Efforts**

The agencies participate in a number of interagency programs and public-private partnerships that seek to connect children and youth to the natural world. For example:

*The Hands on the Land (HOL) Program* is a national network of field classrooms designed to connect students, teachers, and parents to their public lands and waterways. HOL programs involve students in hands-on activities designed to support the teaching of the required curricula. Programs at HOL sites range from sensory-awareness hikes to long-term monitoring projects. For example, in Oregon, the Cascade Streamwatch program at BLM’s Wildwood Recreation Site provides students

from underserved schools with an opportunity to experience nature firsthand by donning waders and life vests to monitor the Salmon River.

*The Wonderful Outdoor World (WOW) Program*, currently operates in six states, including right here in our Nation's Capital, introduces urban youth, ages 8-12, to the great outdoors through overnight camping trips, typically at sites right in their community. WOW helps the children learn about basic camping skills, investigate an urban ecosystem, and participate in a community service activity all while getting needed outdoor physical activity and having fun.

*The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) and the Student Conservation Association (SCA)* provide high school teens and college-age young adults with opportunities to work on resource management and education projects. The programs expose them to natural settings, teach them the values of service, stewardship, and conservation of natural resources, and potentially inspire a future generation of land stewards. Over the past 50 years, our partnership with SCA has allowed us to work with approximately 40,000 young people. For example, FWS and BLM each worked with about 100 SCA students in 2006.

*President Bush's HealthierUS Initiative* is aimed at increasing personal fitness. In 2002, a number of Federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the purpose of promoting the uses and benefits of the nation's public lands and waters to enhance the mental and physical well-being of Americans of all ages.

#### **The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

FWS is connecting children with nature through activities that are consistent with its mission. The National Dialogue on Children in Nature resulted in a service-wide focus on engaging children called, *Children and Nature—Better Together*. This effort refocuses existing activities and initiates new activities that encourage the direct interaction of children with nature. FWS will expand youth fishing and hunting programs, develop junior naturalist and junior birder programs, and make special efforts to improve access to natural areas in urban settings. FWS will create programs that appeal to today's youth, such as incorporating technology into an outdoor experience.

FWS will continue to create *Schoolyard Habitats* across the country. Each region will initiate at least one school yard habitat program in 2007. FWS will work with the schools and provide the expertise on native plantings and creation of habitats that attract wildlife. Since virtually all children congregate and spend a significant time at school, these efforts will bring outdoor experiences right to the children's front door.

FWS also will continue to cultivate existing programs. For example, *the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program*, a dynamic, active, art and science program, teaches students in kindergarten through high school about wetlands habitat and waterfowl conservation, scientific and wildlife observation principles, and how to communicate what they learned through the Junior Duck Stamp art contest. Another program, *the Nature of Learning*, is a community conservation education program that emphasizes field experiences and student stewardship projects. One example is the Prairie Science Class at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. This class is the result of a partnership between FWS and the local school district to use real world, field-based learning experiences in the prairie wetlands ecosystem to engage fifth-grade students in science, math, and writing. The FWS is exploring similar place-based, experiential programs across the country. FWS estimates that, since 2003, nearly 60,000 students and about 2,300 teachers have benefited from the *Nature of Learning* program.

#### **The National Park Service**

One of the Secretary's highest priorities is *the National Parks Centennial Initiative*. The Centennial Initiative, included in the President's FY 2008 Budget, proposes up to \$3 billion in new funds for the national park system over the next ten years. An increase of \$100 million plus another \$100 million in mandatory funds that will match philanthropic contributions up to a \$100 million will help engage all Americans in preserving our heritage, history and natural resources through philanthropy and partnerships, with a special emphasis on linking children to nature. The 2008 increase includes \$13 million to be used to hire one thousand additional seasonal naturalist and education rangers.

Through the Centennial Initiative, NPS proposes to expand the *Junior Ranger Program*, which will receive an addition \$1 million in funding under the Centennial Initiative, which gives young people meaningful experience in their national parks. It drew approximately 401,115 participants at 290 park units in 2006. The *Parks as Classrooms Programs* provide resource-based activities for people of all ages in

park units as well as offsite, at schools and community centers. In 2006, this program was offered in nearly every one of NPS's park units and attracted 1.8 million children and youth, ages 5 to 18 years old. NPS also has Research Institutes and Field Schools that allow more in-depth educational opportunities for small groups in natural and historic settings.

#### **The Bureau of Land Management**

Consistent with its multiple use mission, BLM lands offer traditional dispersed recreation uses, such as hunting, camping, fishing, hiking, boating, and horseback riding, as well as non-traditional activities such as rock crawling, base-jumping, hang-gliding, and geo-caching. With many of the cities in the West growing toward its borders, BLM lands are increasingly becoming the backyards of urban children.

An estimated 3 million children participate in BLM programs that seek to reconnect families and children with nature. BLM recently established a campaign, *Take It Outside: Connect with Your Public Lands*, which proposes to expand existing programs under an overarching initiative. *Take it Outside: Connect with Your Public Lands* seeks to increase the number of children who participate in the programs in three key ways:

1. Through their families, because outdoor recreation and volunteer activities can help families realize significant health benefits through improved physical conditioning and strengthening of family bonds;
2. Through their schools, because educating children in outdoor settings is a proven technique for improving student test scores and motivation, enhancing understanding of natural processes, and promoting attitudes of respect and responsibilities; and
3. Through their youth groups, or organizations, because engaging children in nature through structured youth activities helps to foster a stewardship ethic, promotes good physical and mental health, and prompts interest in natural and cultural resource careers.

This campaign includes *the Junior Explorers program*, outdoor environmental education programs, interpretive programs, *the Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP)*, *Urban Tree House (UTH)*, *Kids Fishing Day*, and *the Great Backyard Bird Count*, and outdoor classroom programs, as well as other environmental education and interpretive programs.

#### **Other Efforts**

Other agencies, including the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Minerals Management Service, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, also provide opportunities to link children to nature:

- BOR sponsors over 20 *Catch a Special Thrill* or C.A.S.T. events each year. C.A.S.T. for Kids Foundation, formed in 1991, joins volunteers who love to fish with disabled and disadvantaged children for a day of fishing outdoors.
- In St. Petersburg, Florida, USGS participates in *the Little Marine Explorers Program*, which teaches children ages 5 to 7 about science through activities that include catching and identifying fish, looking at sediment cores, and learning about animal habitats.

#### **Conclusion**

Together, we can help families and children become healthier and live fuller lives by reigniting America's passion for the outdoors. We can offer children opportunities by providing parks, trails, camping sites, and nature programs for children. We can work together to conserve and restore our land and make it accessible to urban and under-served children and others who would not normally venture outdoors. We can raise the next generation of conservationists—inspire the children of today to grow up to be the land stewards of tomorrow and to ensure that they will care about and care for our nation's special places.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this compelling issue, and I will be happy to answer any questions that the subcommittees may have.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir, and let me now turn to Chief Gail Kimbell of the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture. Chief?

**STATEMENT OF GAIL KIMBELL, CHIEF,  
FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Ms. KIMBELL. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you for the opportunity today to provide the Department's views on how we are reconnecting kids with the outdoors. I am Gail Kimbell, Chief of the United States Forest Service.

We understand the significance and benefit of connecting our citizens and youth to the natural environment. We are stewards of over 193 million acres of national forest system lands. For over 100 years we have been providing interpretive services, ranger talks, challenging summer outdoor work opportunities and educational programs for youths and adults from the time that rangers were first assigned to protect and conserve the forest reserves.

Today we have a world-class research organization devoting resources to examining the connections between our natural environment and the people that use our forests and grasslands, a technical assistance program that assists urban and rural communities in connecting with nature and a myriad of programs and projects developed by Forest Service personnel to engage children in the outdoors.

The national forests and grasslands are the natural backyards for many communities throughout the 46 states that have national forest system lands. These lands and our infrastructure of trails, roads and recreation facilities provide opportunities for solace and solitude, challenge and risk, hunting and fishing, outlets for keeping physically fit and represent an important conduit for society's connection to nature.

Yet even with the resources we devote to this part of our mission environmental illiteracy is one of the most significant challenges facing America's wildlands. As our country becomes increasingly urban most of America's children grow up with little connection to the natural world. Recent media attention has highlighted downward trends in visitation to national parks.

Visitation numbers are more difficult for national forests and grasslands given the ready access to such lands. Still, our data shows a reduction in use by youth. We must examine approaches to connect children with the outdoors if we want that generation to care about clean water, clean air, wild places and where forest products come from.

The Forest Service has many strong programs across the agency to address this phenomenon including programs such as Nature Watch, Project Learning Tree, A Forest for Every Classroom, Natural Enquirer, and Chicago Wilderness, which have accomplished a great deal.

Building off this solid foundation programs such as the new More Kids in the Woods Initiative, connecting schools to the Forest Service, and the Woodsy Owl Head Start Program will help to foster the next generation of conservation leaders and more active outdoor participants.

We are reinvigorating our conservation education programs to focus on pre-K through 12th grade and their educators. Every year tens of thousands of desk bound students become connected to nature through Forest Service Science. The Natural Enquirer, a middle school science journal written directly from published

Forest Service research, taps into and stimulates students' natural curiosity about nature.

We have copies available for each of you. One area of increasing focus for us is to address the need to engage urban and minority youth in nature-based activities. The Forest Service has broad authorities that allow our programs to work across the landscape including inner-city neighborhoods all the way to rural, remote communities.

We work with community volunteers, state forestry agencies, other Federal agencies, tribes, not-for-profit organizations and other associations to plant trees and turn abandoned lots and brownfields into neighborhood parks that are a magnet for kids. Surveys conducted by the Centers for Disease Control document the rapid increase in childhood obesity.

Being overweight or obese increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions including the early onset of chronic diseases such as Type II diabetes and heart disease. Physical inactivity is a contributing factor to this issue. The national forests and grasslands offer a wide array of outdoor settings and opportunities for healthy, physical activities.

We provide important opportunities for meeting the needs for outdoor experiences which can lead to healthier lifestyles. We are developing an increasing emphasis on programs that engage children in outdoor recreation activities to combat inactivity and sedentary lifestyles. Forest Service supported research is examining connections between people and nature and links being identified that could bring important and beneficial changes to communities and individuals.

In summary, the Forest Service provides a diverse spectrum of programs, projects, research and a spectacular land base to help meet the concerns raised by a number of committees on reconnecting children to nature. I am proud of the efforts of Forest Service employees and partners. We have more work to do to address these issues, and we will continue to support these efforts within the resources we have.

I believe our work with children is critical to the long-term health of the lands under our stewardship and to the Forest Service. This concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions the Committee members may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Kimbell follows:]

**Statement of Gail Kimbell, Chief, Forest Service,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Thank you for the opportunity today to provide the Department's view on how we are reconnecting kids with the Outdoors. I am Gail Kimbell, Chief of the United States Forest Service.

We understand the significance and benefit of connecting our citizens and youth to the natural environment. We are stewards of over 193 million acres of National Forest System lands. For over 100 years, we have been providing interpretive services, ranger talks, challenging summer outdoor work opportunities and educational programs for youth and adults, from the time that Gifford Pinchot our first Chief, assigned "Rangers" to protect and conserve our National Forests. Today we have a world class research organization that is devoting resources to examining the connections between our natural environment and the people that use our forests and grasslands, and a technical assistance program that assists urban and rural communities in connecting with nature.

The National Forests and Grasslands are the natural backyards for many communities throughout the 46 States that have National Forest System lands. These lands and our infrastructure of trails, roads and recreation facilities provide opportunities for solace and solitude, challenge and risk, hunting and fishing opportunities, outlets for keeping physically fit, and represent an important conduit for society's connection to nature.

Yet, even with the resources that we are devoting to this issue we still see perhaps one of the biggest threats to our nation's forests and grasslands is environmental illiteracy. As our country becomes increasingly diverse and urban, most of America's children grow up with little connection to the natural world. We are beginning to see trends in visitation to our National Forests, Grasslands that are revealing a downturn in the numbers of children and adults that are participating in outdoor activities. Research showing us the benefits of connecting our children with nature and the health benefits of outdoor activities, requires us to examine approaches that will encourage greater participation in outdoor activities.

The Forest Service has many strong programs across the agency to address this situation and they reflect a growing recognition of the Forest Service's role and responsibility to foster the next generation of conservation leaders in conjunction with our partners. Our efforts not only strive to connect children with nature, they also emphasize building environmental literacy—the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions and become active citizens. There are far too many excellent efforts to reconnect our children with the outdoors that we are currently involved in to share during this brief testimony, but I would like to highlight a handful of projects and programs that illustrate the strengths of the Forest Service and describe how we are refocusing our efforts to reconnect our children to nature.

#### **Connecting Children to Nature Through School Based Programs**

A 2005 study conducted by the State Education and Environment Roundtable offers evidence to support the positive benefits on school achievement from environment-based study in schools. We are reinvigorating our conservation education program to focus on pre-K through 12th grade and their educators. We have developed in cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services' Head Start Program, efforts that start with early childhood to instill the spirit of outdoor play through the use programs and materials related to Woodsy Owl and using Woodsy's ABC's as part of the Head Start program.

Every year, tens of thousands of desk-bound students become connected to nature through Forest Service science. The *Natural Inquirer*, a middle school science journal written directly from published Forest Service research, taps into and stimulates students' natural curiosity about nature. We are assisting educators through the "Forest for Every Classroom" program which is a year-long professional development program for educators focused on place based education. The teacher-developed curricula integrate hands-on natural and cultural explorations that address concepts in ecology, sense of place, stewardship, and civics. The program is currently operating in New Hampshire, Vermont and Texas and we are replicating the concept to other States.

Deep in the heart of the Hiawatha National Forest in Michigan is the Clear Lake Education Center. This center is a place for people of all ages to come and connect with their natural world through educational and recreational programs. Because of its realized contribution to the achievements of students, the program is largely funded from nearby school districts.

#### **Connecting Children to Nature Through Non-School Based Programs**

One area of increasing focus for us is to address the need to engage urban and minority youth in nature based activities. Opportunities to explore nature can begin once a student walks out their door. The Forest Service has broad authorities that allow our programs to work across the landscape from inner city neighborhoods to federally designated wilderness areas. Through our Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCF) we help to connect young people to nature on municipal, county and state public lands. We work with community volunteers, state forestry agencies, not-for-profit organizations and other associations to plant trees and turn abandoned lots and brownfields into neighborhood parks that are a magnet for kids.

One of the more successful urban connections is the Chicago Wilderness consortium. With over 200 partners, including the Forest Service, Chicago Wilderness is positioned to coordinate programs connecting urban children to nature. Chicago Wilderness consists of 225,000 acres of protected natural areas stretching from southeastern Wisconsin, through northwestern Illinois and into northwestern Indiana. These lands contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity, and enrich local residents' quality of life. Chicago Wilderness is also a place for people to explore,

relax, learn, restore and appreciate the wonders of the natural world. Volunteers of all ages help to protect and restore wildlife habitat in preserves, inform others about nature and collect scientific data on the health of local ecosystems. These woodlands, wetlands, and prairies are as much a part of the region's identity as its art, music and architecture. Chicago Wilderness makes the area a great place to live and work, and it provides solace, inspiration, and education to diverse ethnic groups.

The Forest Service NatureWatch Program has been in existence for over 20 years. National programs include Kids Fishing Days, Migratory Bird Day, Every Species Counts and Animal Inn as well as several partnership initiatives. These and other initiatives have garnered awards for their excellence and cooperative spirit as we partner with national and local conservation organizations such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Audubon, and Boone & Crockett Club, local communities and governments, youth organizations, and volunteers.

### **The Health Connection**

National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at the Department of Health and Human Services document the rapid increase in childhood obesity. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions, including the early onset of chronic diseases such as type II diabetes and heart disease. Physical inactivity is a contributing critical factor to this issue. In 2002, President Bush launched his HealthierUS Initiative aimed at increased personal fitness.

The National Forests and Grasslands offer a wide array of outdoor settings and opportunities to provide avenues for healthy physical activities. We boast over 140,000 miles of a system of trails and routes, which provide diverse opportunities to get outside to exercise and experience the outdoors. Our recreational service providers operating under special use authorizations provide opportunities for such activities as downhill skiing, river rafting, hunting and fishing, horseback riding, rock climbing, outdoor experiential education and much more. We fill an important role in meeting the needs for outdoor experiences which can lead to healthier lifestyles.

We have several community efforts aimed at promoting outdoor recreation as a natural way to combat inactivity and sedentary lifestyles that can contribute to obesity.

"Be Active Bitterroot" is an offshoot of the HealthierUS Initiative. The Bitterroot National Forest, the Bitter Root Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Area and many other local partners including the health sector, recognized the potential benefits that could be generated by combining interests in children's health issues with the hopes and concerns we share regarding the health of natural resources surrounding our communities.

"Get Fit Great Falls" is working with our Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Lewis and Clark National Forest in Montana. Together they have several events, such as "Fit for the Trail" which commemorated and re-created the games and outdoor activities that Captain William Clark used to keep his men in shape while waiting for the snows to melt. Over 1,000 children and adults spent the day outdoors learning traditional Indian games and some European games like quoits. This June, "Get Fit Great Falls" will host a National Trails Day event to provide educational information about outdoor opportunities on national and state lands, as well as blood pressure screenings, free healthy food and juice donated by local vendors and local distributors

### **Researching the Value of Connecting Children with Nature**

The Forest Service Research and Development program has supported the development of the academic field of environmental psychology. Through this research, connections between people and nature are being identified that could bring important and beneficial changes to communities and individuals. Forest Service supported scientific research studies conducted by the Landscape and Human Health Laboratory of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign suggests symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children are relieved after contact with nature. Kids are better able to complete tasks and follow directions after playing in natural settings. Other Forest Service supported studies at the Urbana-Champaign campus have found that higher self-discipline in girls results from increased exposure to nature and that green views and access to green spaces in urban areas may, in fact, help strengthen community relations, relieve the everyday pressures of living in poverty and reduce crime.

It is important to determine the effectiveness of tools to enhance the connection of youth to the outdoors. A one-day pilot study was conducted, during which diverse youth from the Los Angeles basin participated in two technology dependent (camera safaris and geo-caching) and two non-technology dependent (etchings and nature

scavenger hunt) activities at the Boys Camp at Griffith Park. The goals of the project were twofold: to determine whether technology matters in youth outdoor participation, and to develop a process by which other entities can replicate youth days across the country. Pilot study results indicate the youth participants liked all four activities, with the youth casting the most votes for the technology-dependent activities (camera safaris and geo-caching). Replication guidelines are being developed for use across the U.S.

The Forest Service has taken the lessons learned from work in the inner city neighborhoods and broadened them to cities and suburbs around the country. Eight out of ten Americans live in cities or suburbs and need easy access to parks and forests to fulfill daily needs for exercise, recreation, community building and spiritual renewal with nature. Research shows that two in three do not have access to nearby parks, playgrounds or open space. Most children and adults don't have daily access to national forests, so many rely on everyday parks to keep them healthy. We believe that all children need safe, accessible and engaging places to play and explore nature. With that in mind the Forest Service has helped to fund research to examine the value that a park system brings to a city.

#### **Connecting More Children to Nature**

Based on what we have learned through research and experience, we are taking additional steps beyond those I have described to you to addressing the issues of reconnecting our youth with nature. On Tuesday May 22, 2007 we participated in a special event hosted by the National Forest Foundation, the American Recreation Coalition and ReserveAmerica. At the event we announced the national recipients of the Forest Service More Kids in the Woods challenge cost share program. This program is designed to engage children in recreation activities and nature-based learning to establish meaningful and lasting connections with nature.

For the first year of this effort, we are able to award \$510,000 in matching funds to leverage over \$1.0 million in partner contributions for projects that reconnect children with nature. Examples of the recipient projects include: The Harlem Link Charter School in New York City, to introduce students to nearby forest and wetlands, thereby, bringing real world experiences to complement the school's academic subject areas. The Poudre School District North of Denver, Colorado, hosts a three-day "Eco-week" experiential residential camp where underserved students can learn about ecological and stewardship principles, teambuilding and begin to develop a connection with the natural world. The Salish-Kootenai College in Polson, Montana, where an American Indian Math and Science Camp will engage the interest of tribal children in math and science in the context of their traditional culture. The camp annually serves about 70 6th graders from the Flathead Indian Reservation.

In summary, the Forest Service provides a diverse spectrum of programs, projects, research and a unique land base to help meet the concerns brought up by your committees on reconnecting children to nature. I am proud of the efforts put forth by our employees and partners. We have more work to do to address these issues and we continue to support these efforts within the resources we have. I believe our work with children is critical to the long-term health of the lands under our stewardship, and to the Forest Service. This concludes my testimony, I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee members may have.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, Chief. Let me turn now to the Commissioner, Gina McCarthy, from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. Commissioner?

#### **STATEMENT OF GINA McCARTHY, COMMISSIONER, CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Ms. MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for inviting me here today to offer my testimony. I know you have heard and you will hear from many experts who will speak eloquently and many have written eloquently about the need and the importance of connecting children with nature. Today you will hear from many of us who have actually taken action to do just that.

In particular, I would like to call your attention to Richard Louv, the author of *Last Child In the Woods: Saving Our Children From An Age of Deficit Order*, and many others who have observed that

today's children are actually in danger of losing that connection or indeed never getting the connection to nature that is so important. It is clear that if we fail to get our children back outside, and fail to have them make a connection with nature, our society as well as our children will suffer.

Now, speaking to you as a mother of three as well as an environmental professional, I am gravely concerned with this issue, and I am very engaged in this issue because if you show me a generation of adults that did not experience the wonders of nature firsthand when they were young I will show you taxpayers and voters who do not care about preserving open space, who do not understand about biodiversity, who will not invest in clean air and clean water and will not work to maintain our forests and parks and keep our lands free from pollution.

At least they will not care until it is too late. There is, of course, no way for us to turn back the times to the good old days when we as kids would fly out the door and not come home until the lights came on—playing endlessly in unstructured play—but if we want to get our children out today, we can still do that. We just need to be creative. We need to be committed. We need to make it easy, safe.

We need parents and their children outside in safe places, and we need to make it interactive for them. We cannot just have open spaces and expect them to come. Now, in Connecticut we have taken some steps, and we are trying to do an initiative that we had launched with the help of Governor M. Jodi Rell back last March, in March of 2006, and we called it the No Child Left Inside Initiative.

The goals of No Child are to reconnect our youngsters with the outdoors, to build the next generation of environmental stewards and to showcase our state's wonderful parks and forests. It is a multifaceted approach to spread the word to families of all types in all corners of the state. The key element of this initiative is our own brand of a reality TV show, and it is complete with clues and prizes.

We call the multi-week contest Our Great Park Pursuit, and we have families traveling to different state parks and forests across the state pursuing games and adventures. When we launched it last year the response was so overwhelming that we had to shut off or overwhelm our state parks. We shut off the contest, but we launched it again this year in 2007. We had more than 750 families signed up.

That is more than 3,000 people signed up in the course of a couple of weeks and registered online to participate in this game. I would encourage you to connect in with our website, it is called [www.nochildleftinside.org](http://www.nochildleftinside.org), because it has become a community bulletin board. There are pictures, there are comments from all of the families participating, and you will see what it looks like when families are having a wonderful time outdoors together.

The seven week adventure this year started in Bridgeport, which is an old industrial city like many that are scattered throughout New England, but we use the occasion to show people that there are great places to visit and there are safe outdoor activities for them no matter where they live. We had them fishing in an urban

pond and having fun in all the grasslands and the zoos that surround it.

This past week the families went on a hike up at Haystack Mountain State Park where they could see the beautiful views of Long Island Sound as well as the beautiful views of the Berkshires in Massachusetts. During the next five weeks they will be visiting five other parks doing a variety of games, and they will be eligible for grand prizes that were donated by private sector business retailers that are outdoor equipment, like camping, hiking and bicycling, to keep them engaged in outdoor activities.

Now, while the Great Park Pursuit is the major focus of our No Child Left Inside effort it is not the only thing we are doing. We are reengaging park interpreters. We cannot expect an urban kid to go in the middle of the woods, plunk him down and say go have a good time. We need to have staff there that will greet them, that can introduce them to the natural resources, that can really get our kids and families hooked.

We are placing free park passes in our libraries so that if access or funding is an issue we will get around that, too, we are offering free park passes to every foster family because of donations from Bank of America, and we are reaching families that we never would have reached and drawn into our park system before. We have a new urban fisheries program to bring the community in the urban areas fish that they can fish.

We give them the poles, we give them the training, we connect them with the park agency. We get them out there and get them hooked. We are focusing on safe swimming so that when we get them out there they will be safe while they are there. So we believe that Connecticut is paving the way in demonstrating that we can take action, and we can turn all of this worry into great things that are exciting, and that are fun and engaging.

Today is a great opportunity for us to engage in this with Congress because we all know that it is very difficult to keep all of these programs operating and functioning.

As we are facing difficulties with budgets, it seems that parks and educational opportunities tend to end up being the last on the totem pole but, as you know, that is a bit shortsighted because nothing is more important than investing in the health and well-being of our children, nothing is more important than stimulating this next generation of environmental stewards and reconnecting them to the outdoors, so through programs like No Child Left Inside we really can make a difference.

I would just end by mentioning Rachel Carson because I know, Mr. Chairman, you did mention her. I do not know if you realize it but this Sunday is Rachel Carson's 100th birthday that we are celebrating. As you know, she was one of the great environmental thinkers of our time and everybody knows about her book, *Silent Spring*, which was a wonderful dedication to make us really sit up and take notice.

She pretty much single-handedly called attention to our great national treasure, the bald eagle, and helped to save that with that book. Rachel Carson also wrote another book, and that book was called *The Sense of Wonder*. It was about this special connection between children and nature.

What she said is if a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it—rediscovering with him the joy, the excitement and mystery of the world we live in. That is exactly what we are trying to do in Connecticut through our No Child Left Inside initiative. We are trying to have children and adults share memorable adventures in our state parks so they can rediscover the joy, the excitement and the mystery of our natural world.

We hope with the support of the Subcommittees here today that we can begin a similar national program that will reach every child in this country and give families everywhere an opportunity to have that kind of life-altering experience. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. McCarthy follows:]

**Statement of Gina McCarthy, Commissioner,  
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection**

Thank you for inviting me to offer testimony today on “The Nature Deficit: Reconnecting Kids with the Outdoors.”

Preparing for today’s event made me think back a little to what the world was like when I was a youngster.

It was a time when you left the house early on a Saturday morning—and you were not likely to return until the streetlights came on.

But that was ok. Staying inside was punishment. What you wanted to do was get outside to ride your bicycle, explore the neighborhood woods or find some adventure somewhere.

I bet if I asked all the adults in this room to think back to the best memories of their childhood, those memories would not be indoors. They would be of time spent outdoors—with friends—or on family trips to a park, a beach or a campground.

I know the world has changed a great deal since I was a child—and most changes have been very positive. The passage of time, however, has taken a heavy toll on our children and their ability and willingness to simply go out and play, unless you count sports or other organized activities, which I do not.

Today, youngsters are not itching to go outside. They are stuck indoors, plugged in to cable TV, DVDs, high-speed Internet access and electronic games. Even if a child wants to go out, the cars drive too fast and no one wants to let their kids out of their sight for safety sake. In many ways, our sense of community is confined to our homes, schools and places of worship.

Whatever the reasons our kids stay indoors, the results are alarming.

**Protecting the Health and Well Being of Our Children**

More and more children are getting an unfortunate head start on health problems such as diabetes and heart disease that they will carry into adulthood.

Medical studies show that in the mid-1970s, five percent of kids were overweight. In 2002, 23% of preschoolers were overweight or obese. Currently the national average of overweight kids is 33%, and obese kids represent 17% of the population. In the last 30 years, rates of overweight and obesity have tripled among preschoolers and quadrupled among school-aged kids. In fact, the prediction is that by 2010, one-half of all American children will be overweight.

In addition, children are less active than they have ever been.

One-third of kids watch more than four hours of TV a day. Young children spend more time watching TV, video games, or computer, than doing any other activity other than sleep. In the United States, fewer than 10% of kids receive daily physical education and only 15% of kids walk to school.

Experts also tell us that spending time outdoors is not only important for physical health, it is critical to the development of cognitive and social skills. Is it any wonder that more and more of our homebound youngsters are taking medication for depression and other behavioral problems?

A number of experts from many fields have written eloquently about the importance of the connection between nature and ourselves and our children.

Edward O. Wilson, the Harvard professor noted for his work in the field of biodiversity, addressed this topic head on.

In his Pulitzer Prize winning book, “The Diversity of Life,” Wilson wrote, “Given the means and sufficient leisure, a large portion of the populace backpacks, hunts,

fishes, birdwatchers and gardens...They crowd the national parks to view natural landscapes, looking from the tops of prominences out across rugged terrain for a glimpse of tumbling water and animals living free. They travel long distances to stroll along the seashore, for reasons they can't put into words."

"These are examples," Smith said, "of what I have called biophilia, the connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life."

Yet, as Richard Louv has observed, we are in danger of losing this important connection.

Louv is a newspaper columnist in San Diego who is leading the charge across our nation to get children back outside. He wrote a book entitled, "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder."

In his book, Richard Louv writes, "...at the very moment that the bond is breaking between the young and the natural world, a growing body of research links our mental, physical and spiritual health directly to our association with nature—in positive ways."

Louv wrote it is critical to restore this bond because "the health of the earth is at stake..." He says, "How the young respond to nature, and how they raise their own children, will shape the configurations and conditions of our cities, homes—our daily lives."

It is clear, that if we fail to get our children back outside and fail to have them reconnect with nature, our society as well as our children, will suffer. Show me a generation of adults that did not experience the wonders of nature firsthand when they were young, and I will show you taxpayers and voters who will not care about preserving open space, maintaining biodiversity, keeping the air and water clean, maintaining our forest and parks, and keeping our land free from pollution.

There is of course, no way to turn back the hands of time. There is no way to wave the magic wand and return to the so-called "good old days," when children could fly out the door and play outside to their hearts content. If we are going to get our children outside again we need to make it easy, safe and fun for parents and their children to rediscover the wonders of nature and some old fashioned sense of community.

#### **Connecticut's Answer: *No Child Left Inside***

In Connecticut, that is exactly what we are trying to do through an initiative we call, *No Child Left Inside*.

With the encouragement of Governor M. Jodi Rell, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection launched *No Child Left Inside* in March of 2006.

The goals of *No Child Left Inside* are to reconnect youngsters with the outdoors, build the next generation of environmental stewards and showcase Connecticut's state parks and forests.

Exactly how are we moving to accomplish these goals? With a multi-faceted approach that tries to spread the word to families of all types in all corners of our state.

A key element of this initiative is a contest that is Connecticut's own version of a "reality TV" show—complete with clues and prizes. We call the contest—which has families pursuing games and adventures in state parks and forests across Connecticut—The Great Park Pursuit, The Connecticut State Parks Family Adventure.

We recently launched the 2007 edition of the contest. More than 750 families signed up on our website to compete. The website—[www.nochildleftinside.org](http://www.nochildleftinside.org) -- is also the "community bulletin board" for participating families, a place where they can share stories and photos of their days in our parks and forests. Take a look at the site, read some of the posing and look at the pictures. You'll see what it looks like when families are having fun together in the outdoors.

This year's seven-week state park contest kicked off May 12 in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Bridgeport is an old industrial city, like many scattered throughout New England. But we used this occasion to show people that there are great places to visit everywhere in our state. At Beardsley Park in Bridgeport, families fished in a pond that we stock as part of an urban fishing initiative and participated in fun and educational games on acres of grass that surround the park.

This past weekend, participating families went on a hike at Haystack Mountain State Park in western Connecticut. There reward was a view of Long Island Sound to the south and the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts from the top of a historic 34-foot high stone tower that sits atop this mountain.

During the next five weekends, families will visit five other parks, participate in a variety of activities and try to maintain their eligibility for three grand prizes. Families that make it to all seven parks will be eligible to compete for these prizes on the last day of the contest. The prizes are attractive packages of outdoor equipment—camping, hiking and bicycling—offered by Connecticut retailers.

Last year, more than 400 families registered for the game; about 200 actively participated. One hundred families came out for every week of the 2006 Great Park Pursuit and were eligible to compete for the grand prizes. This year we expect at least twice as many to be eligible.

#### **No Child Left Inside: Other Program Elements**

While The Great Park Pursuit contest is certainly a major focus of *No Child Left Inside*, it is only the beginning. It should be noted that many of these programs are part of a broad strategy to provide a safe and convenient framework to make certain families have a positive experience when they do get outdoors. You cannot hope to have a meaningful and lasting impact on people's attitudes if you literally drop people off in the woods—especially if they have spent little time there—and tell them to have fun. We need to provide proper guidance, support and activities that will capture the imagination of today's youngsters.

The other program elements include:

##### **Additional park interpreters at Connecticut's state parks.**

- Last summer we were able to add 10 interpreters, bringing our number to 47, and we will again have these positions this summer. The interpreters are able to offer programs and activities at our key parks, and to be on hand to make visits to them more rewarding and enriching. Our park interpreters help ensure that once people go to a park they will want to visit more parks.

##### **Free passes to our state parks and state park museums at public libraries**

- Working with the Connecticut Library Consortium, we have placed a free state park day pass in the main branch of every municipal public library in Connecticut. Library patrons can borrow the pass and use it for free parking—or admission—at the major state parks where these fees are charged. Library patrons can also checkout a guidebook we are providing to research their state park destination. Libraries tell us this program has been a success and the park pass is an item always in demand. We are offering this program for the second year this summer. We also worked with libraries to coordinate their summer reading programs with activities in our state parks—so youngsters could translate what they were reading into first hand experiences in the outdoors.

##### **Safe Swimming**

- We have made the DEP and the *No Child Left Inside* websites a clearinghouse for information on swim lessons offered throughout Connecticut by the Red Cross, the YMCA and city and town park and recreation departments. Once again, if we are successful in getting families back outside and to our park beaches, we want to make certain everyone knows how to swim and be safe in the water.

##### **Expanded Environmental Education**

- DEP is increasing and improving environmental education programs we offer at nature centers and state park facilities we operate. We are working to bring more school groups, scout groups and youth groups to these centers to engage in “hands on” learning that makes the outdoors come to life in a lasting way. That is the best strategy for leaving a lasting impression and stimulating a life-long interest in youngsters.

Several of our new programs are aimed at reaching people in our society who are often left behind and provided with little encouragement or few opportunities to spend time outdoors. These programs, which are helping to increase the diversity of the people we are reaching, include:

##### **Free state park pass for foster families**

- Through a grant from Bank of America, we are able to offer, for the second year, a free state park pass to each of the more than 2,500 foster families in our state. The pass, which normally sells for \$40, is good for free parking at the major parks where the state charges parking fees. Last year more than 1,300 foster families accepted our offer and obtained a pass. We expect this number to grow this year. The foster family state park pass program vastly extends the reach of our *No Child Left Inside* initiative.

##### **Urban Fishing**

- Stocking fish at 11 “family-friendly” trout parks and at four new urban ponds—in coordination with local park department programs. We also offer free school-based fishing lessons in urban schools with the assistance of trained volunteers. There is no activity better than fishing to entice families to spend time together in the outdoors and we want to make certain this activity is readily available and accessible to everyone on our state.

##### **Free Bus Transportation**

- With the leadership of a regional water company in Connecticut, Aquarion, we are offering free bus transportation from Connecticut's urban centers to four of

the Great Park Pursuit activities. This bus service provides an “environmentally friendly” way for families to reach these events. It also, however, makes it possible for families lacking their own transportation to get outside and join in.

### **Lessons of *No Child Left Inside***

So, what do we have to show for our efforts with *No Child Left Inside*?

We believe Connecticut is paving the way and demonstrating that we can take action to address the issue of getting children back outside. No one is going to solve this problem overnight. But it is time to stop lamenting the problem and to take some action. Just get the ball rolling, and we can start building some momentum. The fact that this issue is before two Congressional subcommittees today is a positive sign that we are building some momentum.

Connecticut’s efforts have received tremendous media attention in both our state and across the nation. This has helped call more attention to the issue of getting children back outside.

Staff from the Connecticut DEP is in demand—everywhere—to speak to state and federal officials about what we have done, how it is working and how others can build on the *No Child Left Inside* model.

Two other New England States, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, actually launched their own version of The Great Park Pursuit state park contest this summer. We even lent them our logo.

*No Child Left Inside* is more than child’s play. It is a sustained effort to entice families and children back outside. Once they get out, they will discover the beauty of our state and national parks and the wonders of nature. They will also find out that fresh air and exercise is invigorating and healthfully addictive. We’ve also seen another real benefit—that these outdoor activities bring families together and help families make new friends. Put people outside, away from all of the distractions of modern life, and you are giving people some truly “quality time,” time when they can relax, talk, have fun together and reconnect with each other as well as nature.

Listen to what some of our families are telling us...these are notes posted on the No Child website I mentioned earlier. The excitement and spirit of the experiences these families have had in the outdoors comes ringing right through their words.

These letters came to us at the conclusions of last year’s Great Park Pursuit contest:

*“Kudos, kudos, kudos—please tell whoever dreamed up this idea that this is a real winner! CT has lots of outdoor activities to get our kids out behind the Game Boy, Play Station, TV, etc. I am very impressed with this.”*

*“We are so grateful to the many volunteers who participated and made this so wonderful. This will truly be an experience that the families in CT will remember and cherish.”*

*“We are so fortunate to have moved to this wonderful state...We had a wonderful time, and are grateful to the DEP for providing us with the experience.”*

These letters have come to us with the start of this year’s contest.

The first one came to us after the first day. This family wrote:

*“The first day was so exciting! When we arrived at Beardsley Park there were so many families enjoying the beautiful day, the various activities, and, of course, the fishing! Our 8-year-old son thought the fishing was the best part of the day. So much so, that we were convinced to get fishing equipment for the whole family! He’s been asking to go fishing just about every day! The fun games and activities were a hit with our 2-year-old daughter. The fish prints made are still gracing the fridge door! We are having fun deciphering the clues and look forward to solving them and going to the next park. This is a great way for our family to spend quality time together.”*

After taking the hike that was the activity for the second week, another family’s note on the web page said:

*“We really had a great time Saturday. We met a few families that were as happy about doing this activity as we were. It was damp but not really cold and I was proud of my children and myself as I have not hiked in awhile with a backpack baby. Thank you all for your wonderful words of encouragement, and we look forward to running, hiking, or whatever into you again next time. Thank you also to Trailblazers for teaching us about letterboxing, we think we are going to try it out.”*

### **Shaping a National Policy**

*No Child Left Inside* is a wonderful, ongoing story of accomplishment in Connecticut. The most important point here, today, however, is to relate it to the work of your subcommittees.

How do we use the Connecticut experience to shape national policy and accomplish what we all want to see: more healthy children enjoying the outdoors and developing a lifelong appreciation for nature?

Let me share a few thoughts with you on this topic.

As always, funding is a key.

In Connecticut, we have put our initiative into place with limited funds. A large part of our success is due to grand prizes donated by leading retailers and free time on television donated by our local CBS affiliate to promote the Great Park Pursuit contest.

Ingenuity is great and we all need to work hard to stretch the resources available to us. But, if states are going to succeed in developing their own programs, they need your support. And if we want to use our national parks and forests as a springboard to get families back outside, they also need your support.

And while more funding is needed for maintenance, repairs and upkeep to our national and state parks and forests, we also need additional funds. These dollars are needed to promote the parks, to attract families there and to provide them with programs and activities that make their visits memorable and exciting. We not only want to get families to our parks and forests, we want them to come away excited to plan their next visit.

In the public sector, we always face the budget squeeze.

Somehow, spending on items like parks, park programs and environmental education are the first casualties when the budget ax comes out.

But that is short sighted.

Nothing is more important than investing in the health and well being of our children. Nothing is more important than stimulating a new generation to experience the outdoors and to care about the environment and the very future of our planet.

This week's announcement of a new grant program from the U.S. Forest Service to help state's address this issue is a good start—but it is only a start. The Forest Service, along with foundations providing funding, announced a \$1.5 million "Kids in the Woods" program to help more youngsters reconnect with nature.

The Forest Service says this program will fund 24 projects in 15 states that will reach more than 23,000 children. This points us in the right direction. But working together we can hopefully extend and expand this and other similar programs to help the 50 states reach more and more children. With additional federal funds for programming and outreach, states will be able to leverage support from foundations and the business community.

As Connecticut is showing, through programs like *No Child Left Inside*, we can make a real difference in the lives of our young people and the future of our nation.

#### **"Sense of Wonder"**

Just a few days from now, on Sunday, we will make the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rachel Carson. Rachel Carson was one of the leading environmental thinkers of the 20th century. She wrote the landmark book, "Silent Spring," that warned of the dangers of the unrestricted use of pesticides such as DDT and probably save our national symbol, the bald eagle from extinction.

Rachel Carson understood the important Connecticut between the healthy development of children and the outdoors.

In another of her books, "The Sense of Wonder," she wrote, "If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."

That is exactly what we are trying to do in Connecticut through *No Child Left Inside*.

We are trying to have children and adults share memorable adventures in our state parks so that they can rediscover the joy, excitement and mystery of our world.

We hope that with the support of the subcommittees here today that we can begin building a program—national in scope—that will give families everywhere the opportunity to have that kind of life altering experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Let me begin with questions, and the other members of the Committee as well. Chief Kimbell, you mentioned the environmental literacy in your testimony, and what a need that was, a looming problem that is becoming more and more. The other issue that you mentioned was the need to have an urban interface with our public places and our natural places.

As we listened to Commissioner McCarthy's testimony, she testified that even offering free park passes for targeted populations that are under-represented or under-utilize our public parks is a way to increase attendance at these state parks and get particularly young people and kids involved. Is there any concern in your part, Chief, as we continue to talk about increasing recreational fees the kind of potentially negative impact it is going to have on efforts to encourage families and young people to use our national forest land?

As you mentioned that visitation of young people to our public forests, do you think that recreational fee has an impact on visitation rates?

Ms. KIMBELL. Chairman, less than one percent of the 193 million acres of national forest system land is managed with a fee structure. Less than one percent. The remaining acres, nearly 191 million acres, have open access to anyone and everyone. The national forests vary pretty significantly from the national parks in that we do not have entrance gates, we do not have access gates and there is tremendous landscape there available for use by all Americans and American visitors.

We look at the national forest as being a component and a system of public lands including all the lands that Mr. Cason talked about, and certainly Americans have access across that spectrum.

Mr. GRIJALVA. One other question, Chief. In the Fiscal Year 2008 budget proposal from the Administration it constricts the Forest Service budget. Some of the estimates that we have heard is that if it were to be enacted as recommended that we are looking at a cut of 3,000 FTEs. This potential, what effect would that have on the efforts that we are talking about today to reconnect kids and nature in our forests?

Ms. KIMBELL. The 2008 budget as proposed by the Administration has a lot of very difficult tradeoffs displayed in it, and certainly to finance fire suppression it has caused us to have to show reductions in other programs across the board. Still, with the dollars that are proposed in that 2008 budget we would look at prioritizing allocating those monies to where there are partners, where there are contributed dollars and really focusing on where there is a larger gain to be realized than just if there were national forest system dollars applied to specific projects.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And that larger gain I would assume is part of the subject of this hearing today, reconnecting kids and young people to our public lands?

Ms. KIMBELL. Absolutely. In fact, on Tuesday we had a ceremony at the Department of Agriculture where we awarded grants to 24 projects across the Nation where there were partners who had come forward with dollars and contributed time. This is not simply a Forest Service issue, but certainly we are all in this together across the Federal agencies, the states and local agencies.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Commissioner, if I may, other than the obvious point, which is funding—can't get away from it—but other than the funding question, which you mentioned is in short supply everywhere, are there other specific ways that you think the Federal Government can partner with states to further the programs that Connecticut has created as a model nationally for all of us?

Ms. MCCARTHY. Mr. Chairman, we have had a wonderful response, both with other states who are launching similar types of initiatives as well as with the Federal agencies who have shown great interest in looking at what they do and trying to figure out if they can sort of restructure the way in which they think about the preservation of the country's forests and natural resources.

I know that I have met with many individuals at the Federal level, with the Forest Service, we have gone to working groups together. One of the things they are considering is that much of what we do on the conservation side has tended to set up areas that are less than inviting to individuals. They almost look like they are pristine areas where you would be afraid to bring your kids in for fear that they would trample on the wrong flower.

I think we have to recognize that we need to draw kids in to these natural areas where they can have fun again and try to engage them in an interactive way rather than create museums of our open spaces. We have to think differently about it, and there will be tradeoffs associated with that.

If we continue to keep looking at these areas as if they are pristine, and unconnected with individuals and with our kids, we will not reconnect kids as part of an ecosystem and get them to understand they are part of this larger natural world and it will reinforce this screen saver mentality that they are all by themselves and then the world is this out there. We need to break through that, and I think part of that may be how we manage our lands.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Just before I turn over to the Ranking Member for his questions just let me note that Connecticut has done a very impressive job connecting kids, young people, with nature and with our public lands and truly is a good model for all of us to look at.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Thank you very much.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Bishop?

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Let me see if I can hustle through some of these questions for all of you. Secretary Cason and Chief Kimbell, actually it is probably unfair to ask you this, but maybe you at sometime could provide for us, Chief Kimbell, especially with the programs you are talking about, if there is any objective data you have showing the efficacy of those particular programs, not anecdotal.

It is probably unfair right now, but if you have that if you could supply that for us in the future I would be appreciative.

Ms. KIMBELL. Absolutely we can supply that given specific research data actually from a project in the Los Angeles basin. We can provide just that kind of information.

Mr. BISHOP. That would be helpful, and the same thing with Secretary Cason. I understand that visitation in the national parks, for example, is declining, but it is declining especially amongst young people. I think Commissioner McCarthy just said I think the key element to it, that oftentimes we need to come up with programs that make them more inviting, especially with young people coming in here.

I was actually going to ask you some questions, but to be honest the new director you have at the Park Service clearly understands that and has stated that is one of her goals is to try and make

these parks more inviting so it is not a museum and kids would be willing to come in there. So I commend the Administration for what you are doing in both of these particular areas.

Mr. CASON. Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Let me spend most of the time if I could with the Commissioner. I do not ask any of these questions in criticism because I enjoyed what you said, and I am very pleased with what is going on. I think it would be wise, also, just for the record to show that according to the Center of Disease Control there are four states. The four states that have the least obesity amongst their kids, Connecticut is one of those four states.

Of those four states only one, Colorado, is a public land state. The others have almost very little Federal, Federal public land states that are in there. I did notice, we will have testimony later on, that in a 15 year period of time organized sports have increased like 27 percent, but the obesity has still increased beside that. How long has the Connecticut program been going on? Well, that is the first question. How long have you been doing this program?

Ms. MCCARTHY. We launched it in March of 2006.

Mr. BISHOP. I am actually wondering, have you done any kind of studies to see if there is a Hawthorne effect going on, i.e., people get excited about something when it is new and then it drops off precipitously? I am making the assumption. You probably have not been going long enough with that program to make that kind of evaluation.

Ms. MCCARTHY. No. I cannot say. We can give you some anecdotal evidence. Certainly people are excited about it. Whether it is going to last is the challenge. Moving this into something other than this game situation is what we need to do.

Mr. BISHOP. Yes. Which is a challenge obviously. The parks and the forest have it the same time. It runs with everything, any kind of organized program. Can I just ask you, though, some specifics you had there? When you said they went to Fun in the Grasslands, and the zoos, Games in the Park, can you just give me an example of what you are talking about?

Ms. MCCARTHY. Sure. Let me tell you what we did. We have launched this a couple of times, and we bring in programs that are already developed educational initiatives that have been funded through Federal dollars and state dollars like Project Learning Tree, WOW, Project Wild. These are all educational programs.

Mr. BISHOP. I am not trying to cut you off, I just want to know what would the kids actually be doing?

Ms. MCCARTHY. Part of it was visiting booths where we have a variety of activities. They were fishing. We actually taught them how to fish. We gave away fishing poles that were donated to us. We had instructors there teaching kids and parents how to fish. We even did silly things like tug of war, three-legged races, sack races, because it lights up families.

Mr. BISHOP. That is the kind of stuff I want.

Ms. MCCARTHY. This is not just connecting kids with the outside world. It was a wonderful memory building moment. It was really priceless to see this happen. It was totally unstructured play, which is what we do not get.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. That is what I wanted to hear, and I appreciate that. Especially we noticed, also, with the Chief when you said the kids got hooked on the fishing. I am supposing you are talking about the kids not necessarily the fish. Nice pun anyway.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Much more the kids than the fish, actually.

Mr. BISHOP. I have like one minute. Let me pontificate for just a minute. I appreciate the testimony of the Commissioner because you have illustrated what a state can actually do with the creativity of a state. Louis Brandeis said the states are the great laboratory of experimentation in America. What you are doing in Connecticut probably will not work in Alaska. I do not think it will work in Utah either.

I think what you illustrate is the importance that states can play in this role by designing programs specifically for their demographic needs, and that is why the states need to have the greatest amount of flexibility. The worst thing I think that could happen to this is in some way letting the Federal Government Federalize this program and try to export it throughout the rest of the nation.

My whole background is a school teacher and a member of the legislature. I realized it was often easy to come to the legislature and try and mandate a program for the schools to carry through simply because you only have one spot to stop and you can mandate it over everybody. Even if we mandated something on a state if the local school board did not buy into that program it was not going to be done.

I think you have illustrated very clearly the same thing that will happen on the Federal level. We could mandate almost anything we want to. If the state has not bought into it, if the local communities have not bought into it, if they are not willing to put forth their money, and to work seriously and have this as a major concern we can mandate anything we want to up here and it just flat out will not happen.

So I commend what you have done in the State of Connecticut, and I think it is a good model for other states to look at and then try to replicate it by their own needs, and their own standard, and their own basis and with their own commitment. I am sorry I went over. I apologize for that.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me next go to Ms. Herseth-Sandlin if she has any questions.

Ms. HERSETH. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for having this hearing. I want to thank all of our witnesses for their testimony today. I agree to a large measure with what the Ranking Member was talking about in terms of the flexibility that states maintain as it relates to developing these programs.

However, some states are better than others in working directly with tribes to develop programs that reach children in Indian country, and so I would ask you, Mr. Cason, and Chief Kimbell, what has been developed through your agencies specifically with tribes to enhance these outdoor experiences for Native American children when we have the highest teen suicide rates among that demographic in the country; when we have—not so much in terms of the exact figures that I have for childhood diabetes—but clearly adult onset diabetes in Indian country?

So what has been the outreach there? Are there any programs that have been specifically designed through either of your agencies to work with tribes to enhance outdoor experiences with the Forest Service or other outdoor programs through the BIA or elsewhere with tribes directly?

Ms. KIMBELL. With the Forest Service, we actually have over 600 offices located across the country, most often in very rural communities and most often the closest Federal or state agency office to so many tribal headquarters' locations. The Forest Service has been very actively involved in working with tribes. An immediate example I can give you is in Tuesday's ceremony that was hosted by a number of partner groups.

We were actually able to make an award to a program that has been ongoing for a number of years with the Salish-Kootenai Tribe in Montana where the Rocky Mountain Research Station is working with kids at the sixth grade level to get kids out and involved with understanding the ecosystem and ecology around Flathead Lake, which is an important tribal area.

On the Nez Perce Reservation with the Nez Perce Tribe the Clearwater National Forest in Idaho works very closely with the leadership on the Nez Perce Tribe to offer different programs to the kids in that location. This is repeated around the country working with tribes, with pueblos, with a lot of different Native American groups, both at the governmental level and at the cultural level.

Ms. HERSETH. Just a quick follow-up, Chief Kimbell. Are the state governments in Montana and Idaho involved as partners in that program as well?

Ms. KIMBELL. Not in those two that I mentioned, but the states are very involved in a number of other programs. We try and not duplicate, but rather try and ensure a pretty broad application of our resources.

Mr. CASON. Congressman, I would say for the Department of the Interior, as you know we have the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior, and we have government-to-government relationships with 561 tribes scattered across the U.S. One of the things that I would point out is that generally Indian country is rural to begin with.

The way that our country expanded and where we placed Indians ended up having them in rural locations, so the typical environmental exposure for Indian children is rural to begin with. Then if you take a look at the Department of the Interior overall most of our lands are fish and wildlife refuges, our national parks, our Bureau of Land Management land, and the other programs we have are principally rural as well.

We have cooperative and partnering relationships with both state governments, local governments, Indian tribes, private sector organizations, on how we can bring children into our environment which is essentially a rural environment. So across the board either through 638 compacting or contracting under the Indian Self-Determination Act, there may be examples there where we have actually contracted with the Indian governments to undertake some of our programs.

As Gail was mentioning, we have that kind of a program at the National Bison Range in Montana with the Salish-Kootenai and

with the Athabaskan Tribe in Alaska, so we have a multitude of opportunities there. I do not know the full breadth of programs where we have actually contracted with the Indians, but those are a couple of examples.

Ms. KIMBELL. If I might add just real quickly, too, that we have a lot of natural resource camps for Native American youth. The Forest Service does an in-partnership with states and local agencies and certainly with the tribes. In some of those camps they even go on further to provide training for different potential jobs in fire fighting. These are very active programs, and we would be happy to visit with you more.

Ms. HERSETH. I am well aware of the partnership in South Dakota between the Forest Service and the state firefighting team out in western South Dakota, and with the students that I have met personally from some of the tribes—not just in South Dakota but also from surrounding states—who have participated and understand how important that is.

Mr. Chairman, if I may just ask for one more minute to comment on Mr. Cason's response. I think what we are trying to get at here is an educational outdoor experience for children. It is not a rural experience, it is an educational outdoor experience. I grew up on a farm in a rural county right on a national wildlife refuge and benefited from programs offered within the refuge, benefited from the types of field trips that some of the schools in this rural county participated in.

So I do not think that it is adequate simply to say that given the history of where reservations were located there the children are growing up in a rural setting.

It is creating programs where we integrate native culture that has been demonstrated to enhance the educational experience, to participate in not only with what the Forest Service has to offer on other Federal lands, but also providing resources and expertise with the sensitivity and input gathered from elders and others to create these programs, not just the fact that because these young people are growing up in a very remote area. That in and of itself addresses the issue that urban young people may not have.

So I appreciate some of those relationships that have developed as it relates to park management and other things, but I do want to make clear that just because a young person grows up in rural America does not mean they are having an enhanced outdoor educational experience unless we have programs that we have developed to ensure that. So I appreciate the additional time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Gilchrest, any questions, please?

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess the word here is initiative on our part. The word is not a mandate, the word is not a Federal program. I think the word is initiative, and what the gentlelady from South Dakota said—North Dakota, South Dakota, I always get those two states mixed up, South Dakota—is the word integration.

It is the integration of ideas not necessarily that is coming from the Federal Government, or the state government, or the local government, it is the integration of ideas. Emerson said a quote a

number of years ago which I will paraphrase. A thousand forests from one acorn. It is that seed we plant.

I remember back in the 1960s when President Kennedy and his family were playing touch football, hiking mountains and going on 50 mile hikes, and I was in high school at the time, and we wanted to do all of them. It was just the idea that people were doing that. Recently, a few years ago I started in my district taking homeless children on picnics, and hikes in the woods and canoe rides.

My area is mostly rural, but there are a few urban areas, and I can tell you whether they are rural kids or urban kids. Some of them have no exposure to the outside, to the woods. We have also taken juvenile delinquents, kids from an urban area, kids from homeless shelters along with their families, and the way we set it up we brought them to this beautiful spot on a tidal basin, we laid out on two big picnic tables every little nut, and grape, and seed and you name it that we could find, we put it on a table, we said we are going to go for a hike like the Indians did a thousand years ago.

Here is a bag, this is what we want you to pick up and this is what you are going to have for lunch. You would have thought that each one of those little berries, or acorns, or beechnuts, or cat tails, or whatever they gathered was worth \$100, they were so excited. Now, it did take a little organization to do it, but for the most part they were on their own during that day with a little bit of direction.

That seed that was planted into their minds that we do several times a year exceeded all our expectations about their wonderment and a child's ability to learn. So what I would suggest, going back to what my high school days were like, with sneaking out of the house at 4:00 a.m. with my high school buddies because my parents did not want us to walk around Rahway, New Jersey, it is where I grew up, for 50 miles, but we did it, we mapped out 50 miles.

Pretty sore when we got back. We played touch football all the time. Could local rangers, whether it is BLM, the Forest Service, Park Service, wildlife refuges or even people in the state invite their Member of Congress to invite a group of children and their parents for a hike through the woods or some activity like that? Across the country you would have 535 people doing some activity.

Not a mandate but taking some initiative, creating that ingenuity on the part of your partners in your district to set up a program with a local homeless shelter, with urban kids, with Native Americans, with the Lions Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary or whatever, that could be carried on for a long time to come.

The gentlelady from Connecticut mentioned *Last Child In the Woods*, which is an extraordinary book that I guess if you thought about it you would probably already have all the answers, but just reading the book reenforces a view that is deep inside all of us.

So what I would like to suggest, and your quick comment on it for my last 15 seconds is could a park ranger, wildlife refuge manager, BLM, Forest Service manager, send out an invitation to the local congressman to talk about an idea where you could get kids out in the woods with their parents?

Mr. BISHOP. Make sure your answer is no.

Mr. GILCHREST. Come on. Hey, I was an old school teacher.

Ms. KIMBELL. Actually, we all compete pretty fiercely for the time of the members when they are home during August recess, but we could certainly work on that.

Mr. CASON. I agree with that. We do compete for the attention that we can get. We often host groups, and any congressman here, we would be happy to have you out on the public lands.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. You are welcome. Thank you, sir. Mr. Shuler.

Mr. SHULER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Also would like to reiterate what my colleague, Mr. Gilchrest, was saying. You know, I grew up in western North Carolina. Great Smoky Mountain National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway. Eighty-three percent of my home county was the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, so we really took it for granted that all kids stayed outside all the time. Having kids of my own I am very pleased that my wife had those same values, and our kids stay outside all the time.

My dad never let us have any of the game machines on our TV. That was not part of our lifestyle. But far too often today we are seeing, because both parents are having to work a lot of times, kids are either with babysitters or with their grandparents in my district and not as often outside. The first time I had the opportunity to actually meet with a wildlife officer was when he was checking my license and seeing if I was fishing with live bait on the park.

Mr. Cason, what are some relationships that we have? What are some relationships that you are working with the Department of Education, the Secretary there, of how we can actually integrate the education of the outdoors? We talk about how we can be actively involved in the schools, and we are trying to get our kids involved. It seems like that is the best place to do it is to actually get our kids involved.

Are we getting the officers, are we getting the management into the schools to have these type of programs? It is a learning experience. Then, OK, here is what you can do on our public lands, now let us take it outside the classroom and let us really be instrumental. I know when my kids were up here for a short time during January, February and March—they are young kids so they are in school, but preschool—one of the great things, there is a program here in Alexandria.

They have a program and the kids are outside like 70 percent of the time. Thirty percent is inside, 70 percent is outside. It is learning, it is finding the acorns, it is looking at the seeds, and where the grasses are growing, and frogs and lizards. What are we doing from the standpoint with the education program? That is our basis. That is our children.

Mr. CASON. Great multi-part question. I guess a couple of comments. First, I grew up just like you did. I started hunting and fishing when I was a young kid. Did that with my dad for a long time. So I grew up in the woods, doing things in the woods. I had all the traditional pets, turtles, snakes, frogs, praying mantis, all that stuff, and my boys do, too. I have two young boys right now who are 10 and 12, and we have gone through the same thing.

I have pet homes in my garage for snakes, and turtles and frogs. You mentioned the Gameboys. Both of their Gameboys are currently embargoed now because they have spent too much time on it and not enough time outside. You asked the question about working with the Department of Education. I would say that as far as I know we have not had a specific conversation with Margaret Spellings about trying to do things from top down.

Typically what we end up doing is working from the bottom up. We do have a multitude of programs and contacts between our professional staff, the 70,000 employees we have in the Department of the Interior, with school systems across the country, and that we worked actively with schools on a school by school basis to get kids to the outdoors, whether it be in fish and wildlife refuges, or the parks, or it is in our BLM land, because as I said we have 500 million acres of land out there in various states, and so we work with schools to get kids out.

As it turns out, congressman, we are planning to have Margaret Spellings over to the Department to talk about Indian education in the near future, so I will put it on the Secretary's radar screen to actually ask the question is there something we can do together? As we talk to her about Indian education we will see if there is something we can do on a top down format on this element.

Mr. SHULER. Real quickly, Commissioner McCarthy, tell us a little bit more about the relationship with Bank of America and how that has been a positive influence from a financial standpoint.

Ms. MCCARTHY. It was a wonderful thing. In Connecticut we launched our initiative. It got a considerable amount of press because it was very positive obviously. While Connecticut does not have a huge amount of open space land we certainly have a lot of parks and forests that the state owns and we maintain, so there was a lot of interest among the states. We simply got a blind call from Bank of America who said I love this initiative.

They obviously have money that they spend on charitable giving. They said we have \$10,000, how can you use it? We said, well, I will take it and figure it out. But we had a conversation with them, and we knew that there were more than 2,500 or so foster families in the state.

We well know that those are not the families that generally go to our state parks, so it ended up that they donated funding to an advocacy organization for Connecticut foster families and they in turn, we sent a letter out and offered a free pass to any foster family that wanted one and 1,700 responded, so we were able to send them out free of charge. So it has been a wonderful thing.

They offered it again this year. They have offered it to two other states in our region who have launched similar initiatives, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. So there are wonderful private partnerships available for this activity because it is something that seems to be near and dear to everyone's heart.

Mr. SHULER. Thank you for your testimony. Chief Kimbell, thank you for testifying again. Thank all of you for being here today.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, sir. Mr. Sarbanes, questions, please?

Mr. SARBANES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your having this hearing today. I have started to read more about this issue

that some call nature deficit disorder, other terms where kids are just not outside enough, and as a result I have been paying a lot more attention to how my own three kids spend their days.

It is obvious the forces that pull kids inside and keep them inside are significant and any bag of tricks we can come up with to try to pull kids outside, have them engage; obviously the dividends are both at the individual level because children benefit when they are outdoors in so many ways, but collectively we all benefit because it raises their consciousness.

They are going to be the next generation stewards of our environment and the outdoors, and so there is a real value there as well. I am very interested in the potential to have there be more integration within schools of that consciousness of environmental science education. I serve on the Education and Labor Committee. I am trying to bring that perspective to the table as we look at the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind and where there is potential to integrate that more.

I agree that it has to be done not through a mandating kind of approach, but by creating initiatives, and grant opportunities and other ways to encourage schools to work collaboratively with all the resources that are out there to deliver these programs to children. So in that vein, Commissioner McCarthy, I would love to have you speak just a little bit more to what Congressman Shuler began a conversation on, and that is where do you see the most effective partnerships existing in your experience?

Can you describe some of the most effective partnerships that have existed between schools, and parks and other resources that are out there? Maybe you could comment on what you have seen at the elementary, middle and high school level in particular.

Ms. MCCARTHY. We have been doing work that has been supported by the Federal Government and state funds for a number of years in terms of trying to get environmental education into the schools and make some connections. It is everything from planting trees and gardens at the schools to after school activities. We have our own camp where kids can go, and there are a number of programs for kids from very small to older.

What I have found is with No Child Left Behind, we have more difficulty with the No Child Left Inside. We are losing our recesses. They are not going outside in Connecticut as they were before, and getting that opportunity to have even field trips out to the parks is getting limited.

We have to be very careful to take and build it into curriculum that is in the standard curriculum for the schools now so that if you are out in the park we have to connect it with the science curriculum or we may be able to connect it with one of our historic parks and build it into the social studies curriculum.

There is no free time in the schools, and so we have struggled to figure out what is the next big thing we can do, which is why we began to focus less on the schools and more on families because I think we are trying to build a way of doing exactly what you suggested, which was how do you draw kids out from their homes, and their computers, and their video games and their I-pods? It needs to be interactive.

What we have not adjusted well to I think is this need for an interactive way of getting kids outside into the parks and into the forests. You know, it is just not good enough to have it there and they will come. So part of the thing that I am trying to drive at the Federal level is that it is great to have a centennial where you invest in huge infrastructure in the parks, but just because you build a clean toilet it does not mean they are going to come or go.

Sorry. I could not resist. You have to have something that draws them there. We have not invested in the people in the programs to keep up with that investment, and you really need to drive that home. For us the Great Park Pursuit was about families. I am trying to make families reconnect, have some wonderful unstructured play and make that connection outside. That seems to be working at least anecdotally.

I could show you the e-mails of families who started out going to a park, and in fact the winner of last year's Park Pursuit because we had donated large gifts, outdoor equipment, took the camping equipment rather than the more expensive kayaks because their family wanted to go camping, and they went camping last year three or four times. So they are making those connections. We just need to drive them out there initially, and that is the challenge.

Mr. SARBANES. Thank you. I believe that you made a reference to sort of the fact that there is not time in the day for recess, for physical education, and it would probably be productive, and maybe this is happening for the advocates, those that were advocating for more recess and more physical education to come back in the schools to join up with the advocates of children being outside.

I agree that the family opportunities are critical outside of school, but too often it seems like families are having to battle against the wrong kind of modeling in the schools on this particular thing. If one could hand off to the other and back in terms of this consciousness about the environment it would be much better for our kids and raise that awareness across the board, so hopefully we can move in that direction.

Ms. MCCARTHY. I would love to work with you on it, congressman. It is a great idea.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Excellent point, Mr. Sarbanes. That is a very, very good point. One quick question, and then a comment and then I want to thank the first panel for your time and your testimony. One of the issues that comes up from parents and even community-based organizations that want to work in public parks, and forests and are working with kids is the issue of safety. Let me begin with you, Commissioner.

How do we deal with that concern or that worry? Legitimate it might be or not be, but the fact that perception and that question of safety comes up needs to be dealt with. Chief, Deputy Secretary, please comment as well. Commissioner?

Ms. MCCARTHY. I think that is probably the single biggest issue that we are facing is the safety issue. I know when my kids were young it was a large issue. I was more relaxed than many of the other parents. I can remember my daughter, Julie, when she was nine she wanted to go with me to the Blue Hills, which is a small,

little hiking area downtown just south of Boston. Beautiful area. I went there every day as a kid. My father took us all there.

She called up a friend to take her friend with us when we were going hiking, and she could not go. I spoke to the friend's mother and she said I cannot let her go there, I have heard there are snakes there. I said, yes, there are snakes there, that is why we are going. We have terrified our children not just about what could happen to them if they are out of our eyesight, but what could happen to them if they actually experience real world things.

So that is really why we focused on our park and our forest system. It is a safe place, people recognize it so, it is a controlled atmosphere. There are 105 state parks and 32 state forests in the small community like Connecticut, and they are wonderfully safe places. All we really need to do is get them engaged initially with this seven or eight week game. They get more comfortable, they can understand what is risky and what is not and hopefully begin to integrate it into their own lives in a way that we do not need to support any longer. So that is the idea.

Ms. KIMBELL. Thank you, Chairman. I believe I testified to you a couple of months ago, and this was one of those issues. The whole business with the kids being more comfortable in the out of doors is an important part of our conservation ed programs as well. Not being afraid of the snakes, but maybe looking for the snakes. Not being afraid of the bears, but knowing how to behave around bears.

Not being afraid of alligators, but knowing how to behave around alligators. So that is an important part of our program. At the same time we do realize that our national forests and grasslands are often in very remote locations and sometimes can attract people who perhaps are not the cream of society and that create some issues for forest visitors. We are working very hard on that with other law enforcement agencies, all Federal, state and county.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Mr. CASON. The only thing I would add, Chairman, is it is basically a risk management process and an education process. We have all kinds of risk in life. Getting exposed to the outdoors, you take some minimal risks being in the outdoors, but if you are educated about what they are and how to deal with them, as Gail was saying, that you can mitigate a lot of those.

There is a flip-side risk, too, that if we do not get our kids in the outdoors there are risks and consequences that happen with that, too. So we just need to be smart about it to the extent that we as Federal agencies are sponsoring visits to our Federal lands. We try to look at what the character of the land is, what kind of recreational or outdoor opportunity we can offer.

We look for the safety issues and try to mitigate those safety issues when we expose people to the outdoors. So there is an intelligent process that we go through to deal with the safety issues.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Yes?

Mr. GILCHREST. Can I just follow-up with a quick comment? There is always that safety issue, but I am glad Ms. Kimbell made a comment about how you deal with it when you are out in the woods. Knowledge is the solvent for danger, which is a quote by

Norman Cousins some 40 years ago. It is that information that is so valuable, and you cannot get it on a computer screen.

I wanted to follow-up on a couple of things that Mr. Sarbanes said talking about education, and then Ms. McCarthy made a comment about No Child Left Behind, which is something I voted against mainly for the reasons that you said, plus I was a former school teacher. Two quick comments. As a former school teacher every year in September—and I taught history—we would learn about Native Americans, and early American history, and things like that and we would cure and tan cow hides in the room.

Now, we had a little easier access to cow hides. We were surrounded by dairy farms. We would also send the kids out early in September to run to the fields and pick up grasshoppers, bring them back in the room and we would fry them because Native Americans would eat them when there were not other things around. The excitement that these kids generated, and their ability to then learn about American history was extraordinary.

The other quick comment I wanted to make about Last Child In the Woods by Richard Louv—if you want kids to learn math, and science, and literature, and history, and poetry, and art and all of those things to make them fundamentally a sound human being, the core curriculum could be the environment, could be ecology. This is in essence what Richard Louv talks about in his book.

He actually gives, in several chapters, a method of employing ecology as the core curriculum because out of ecology comes an understanding of human activity, and is compatible with nature's design and that includes all of the sciences including math and everything else. So I think maybe there should be some initiative.

Mr. Sarbanes could drop this as an amendment, that if we want to reauthorize No Child Left Behind the core curriculum for public schools to get Federal aid—well, I do not want to go that far with all the mandates. We do not want to mandate. Thanks again for all your testimony and insight.

Mr. CASON. Yes. Mr. Chairman, if I could just make the comment on this same point. We just had a senior executive meeting for the Department of the Interior where we brought virtually all of our senior executives together. Richard was a lunchtime speaker for us, and we actually passed out a copy of his book to all of our senior executives as a further step in trying to reinvigorate our thinking process and the looking for opportunities within the Department of the Interior to connect kids with nature.

So it is an initiative. It is timely that you were commenting on it.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you. Before I close, Mr. Sarbanes, any closing comments?

[No response.]

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, again. The comment I am going to make, I think Mr. Gilchrest made a good point when he talked about let us not get hung up on the issue mandate but really concentrate on the idea of initiatives that we need to take and the incentives that might accompany those initiatives as we go along. The other point I was going to make, and that is about the urban interface and the fact that youth have to be involved, back home in Tucson we are blessed with many beautiful public places.

Second, third generation kids that live in the community, we do outings. Second, third generation never saw the Grand Canyon, do not know where Organ Pipe is, have not been to the forest or Petrified Forest, have not been to the Saguaro National, on, and on and on. I think that to me is probably the greatest motivator because once they do they become allied with the idea to conserve and preserve those places.

Hopefully this hearing is going to lead us in that direction to concentrate on initiatives and the kinds of incentives I think to accompany those initiatives. I want to thank the panel very much, and we will call the next panel now. Thank you.

Mr. CASON. Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to add in your commenting on that, Gail and I are just going to put out this publication in the Sunday paper in Tucson in the next couple of weeks to invite people there out to our public lands just like you were talking about.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

[Pause.]

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me thank the panelists for being here today. Very much appreciate it. Looking forward to your testimony. As I indicated to the previous panel your written testimony will be entered in its entirety in the record, and hopefully we can all try to maintain a five minute for the oral comments.

Let me begin with Dr. Ginsburg, American Academy of Pediatrics, your testimony, doctor, and thank you.

**STATEMENT OF DR. KENNETH R. GINSBURG, MD,  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS**

Dr. GINSBURG. Thank you. Good morning. I am moved by the testimony that I have already heard as well as the Congressional statements that I have heard, and I am truly honored to be here. My name is Dr. Ken Ginsburg, and I am proud to represent the American Academy of Pediatrics, which is a nonprofit professional organization of 60,000 pediatricians.

I am an adolescent medicine specialist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. My major interest is resilience—the exploration of how individuals thrive despite adversity.

While Ms. Sandlin is not in the room, I want to say that my interests and my passion in resilience came from the inspiration that I felt during my formative years as a young adult when I spent several years on a Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. My interest in resiliency stems from their spirit and what I learned from those people.

I have also authored the Academy book, "A Parents' Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings." Simply stated, play is the work of childhood. Play is essential to healthy development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional well-being of children and youth.

In January the Academy published a new clinical report affirming the central importance of play for all children and addressing the marked decline in play time available to many children. That

statement, of which I was the lead author, marked the first time that the American Academy of Pediatrics considered that children's play time was sufficiently endangered to warrant an official policy pronouncement in support of its importance.

This hearing also recognizes that fact by highlighting the shrinking opportunities available for most children to engage in exploratory play outdoors. Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations' High Commissions for Human Rights as a fundamental right of every child.

Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity and physical, cognitive and emotional strength. Play is crucial to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact with the world around them. Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles sometimes together with other children or with their parents.

As they master their world, play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resilience they will need to face future challenges. Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts and to learn self-advocacy skills.

When play is allowed to be child driven, children practice decision making skills, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest and ultimately engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue. Child driven play can have other benefits as well, most notably in promoting physical health.

It has been suggested that encouraging unstructured play may be an exceptional way to increase physical activity levels in children, making it an important strategy in the resolution of the obesity epidemic. Overweight and obesity increase children's risk for a range of health consequences including heart disease, diabetes, bone and joint problems and sleep apnea. Overweight children often become overweight adults, and the affect of obesity in adult health is well-known and profound.

Playing in outdoor natural environment allows children to explore both their own world and their own minds. Nature places virtually no bounds on the imagination, and it engages all of the senses. For all children this setting allows for the full blossoming of creativity, curiosity and the associated developmental advances. The outdoors also presents marvelous opportunities for parents to interact with their children in a fashion that fosters both the development of the relationship between the child and parent and the child.

When parents observe their children in play or join with them in child-driven play, they are given a unique opportunity to see the world from their child's vantage point as the child navigates the world perfectly created to fit his or her needs. We must emphasize that if we are to successfully connect kids with nature to take the fear of nature away from them, we must first diminish the fear of nature in their parents and instill the love of nature in their parents.

Play in nature provides children with opportunities for self-directed physical activity that can help promote physical health

and reduce obesity. Unlike team sports, individual play in nature allows the child to tailor exercise to his or her own interests and abilities, often using the highest levels of creativity. The great outdoors can move children away from the passive entertainment of computers and TV and into an interactive form that engages both body and mind.

The AAP makes a range of recommendations for our pediatricians so that when they interact with families that they emphasize the importance of unstructured play for healthy child development. Many of these recommendations are equally relevant for our governmental policies, and so I would like to paraphrase them for you today.

1. Policy makers should recognize that free play is a healthy, essential part of childhood. All children should be afforded ample, unscheduled, independent, nonscreen time to be creative, to reflect and to decompress.

2. Governmental policies should emphasize that active, child-centered play is a time tested way of producing healthy, fit young bodies.

3. Federal agencies should support the development of safe spaces in under-resourced and impoverished neighborhoods. This may include initiatives such as opening school, library or community facilities to be used by children and their parents after school or on weekends, or by establishing programs, and we have heard about them, that help connect families with Federal parks and lands.

4. The Federal Government should support a variety of physical education opportunities for children in addition to school physical education programs. These must include the protection of children's recess time and the promotion of extracurricular physical activity programs and nonstructured physical activity before, during and after school.

Federal policies should support the reduction of those environmental barriers through an active lifestyle, which means that the government should adequately fund programs that support families' efforts to engage in a healthy lifestyle. Federal efforts should build upon social marketing—social marketing that promotes increased physical activity.

Programs and initiatives that Federal agencies can help promote active, healthy living as a normative lifestyle. In conclusion I genuinely appreciate this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Academy applauds the Subcommittee's efforts to bring attention to the issues associated with the health and developmental benefits of unstructured play in a natural environment.

Federal policies can serve an important role in promoting opportunities for active, healthy living for all children including through creative use of Federal lands programs. Let us never forget that children will lead us into the future. We must ensure that our future leaders, the people who will be sitting at this table in 30 years, will love, appreciate and care for the environment. We look forward to working with you to protect and promote the health and well-being of all children.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Ginsburg follows:]

**Statement of Kenneth Ginsburg, MD, MS Ed, FAAP,  
on Behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics**

Good morning. I appreciate this opportunity to testify today before the Natural Resources Subcommittees on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans and National Parks, Forests and Public Lands at this hearing, “No Child Left Inside: Reconnecting Kids with the Outdoors.” My name is Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg, and I am proud to represent the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. For the past six years, I have served as a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Committee on Communications. I am an adolescent medicine specialist at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. I also serve as Director of Health Services at Covenant House of Pennsylvania, a shelter for homeless and disenfranchised youth. My major interest is resilience, the exploration of how individuals thrive despite adversity. I have authored the Academy book, “A Parent’s Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings.”

**Play Is Essential to Healthy Child Development**

Simply stated, play is the work of children. Play is essential to healthy development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth.<sup>1</sup> In January, the AAP published a new clinical report affirming the central importance of play for all children and addressing the marked decline in play time available to many children in the U.S. That statement, of which I was the lead author, marked the first time that the American Academy of Pediatrics considered that children’s play time was sufficiently endangered to warrant an official policy pronouncement in support of its importance. This hearing also recognizes that fact by highlighting the shrinking opportunities available for most children to engage in exploratory play outdoors.

Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child.<sup>2</sup> Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development.<sup>3</sup> It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact with the world around them. Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles, sometimes in conjunction with other children or adult caregivers.<sup>4</sup> As they master their world, play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resiliency they will need to face future challenges.<sup>5</sup> Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills.<sup>6</sup> When play is allowed to be child driven, children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest, and ultimately engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue.

Play is integral to the academic environment. It ensures that the school setting attends to the social and emotional development of children as well as their cognitive development. It has been shown to help children adjust to the school setting and even to enhance children’s learning readiness, learning behaviors, and problem-solving skills.<sup>7</sup> Social-emotional learning is best integrated with academic learning; it is concerning if some of the forces that enhance children’s ability to learn are elevated at the expense of others. Play and unscheduled time that allow for peer interactions are important components of social-emotional learning.

**Play Has Additional Health Benefits**

Child-driven play can have other benefits as well, most notably in promoting physical health. It has been suggested that encouraging unstructured play may be an exceptional way to increase physical activity levels in children, which is one im-

<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics, Ginsburg, K., and the Committee on Communications and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. Clinical Report: The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds. Pediatrics. 2007;119:182.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 183 (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid (internal endnotes omitted).

portant strategy in the resolution of the obesity epidemic.<sup>8</sup> We are all aware of the alarming statistics with regard to obesity rates: the prevalence of overweight among children aged 6 to 11 has more than doubled in the past 20 years, going from 7% in 1980 to 18.8% in 2004. The rate among adolescents aged 12 to 19 more than tripled, increasing from 5% to 17.1%.<sup>9</sup> Overweight and obesity increase children's risk for a range of health consequences, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, bone and joint problems, and sleep apnea.

Overweight children often become overweight adults, and the effect of obesity on adult health is profound.

Children engaged in creative play frequently are also exercising in the process, adjusting their activities to their own physical and developmental capabilities. It has been suggested that efforts to reduce obesity might be more effective if they promoted "play" as opposed to "physical activity" or "exercise."<sup>10</sup> Preschool children have been documented to engage in higher levels of physical activity while playing outdoors. If prevention is the key to reversing obesity trends, then encouraging outdoor play for children could be an important component of a comprehensive strategy.

Unstructured play time can reduce "screen time" dedicated to television and computer games as well. In sharp contrast to the health benefits of active, creative play and the known developmental benefits of an appropriate level of organized activities, there is ample evidence that passive entertainment such as television viewing and video games is not protective and, in fact, has some harmful effects.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Time for Free Play Has Been Markedly Reduced For Some Children**

Despite the numerous benefits derived from play for both children and parents, time for free play has been markedly reduced for some children. This trend has even affected kindergarten children, who have had free play reduced in their schedules to make room for more academics.

Currently, many schoolchildren are given less free time and fewer physical outlets at school; many school districts have responded to pressure to improve academic performance by reducing time committed to recess, the creative arts, and even physical education in an effort to focus on reading and mathematics.<sup>12</sup> This change may have implications on children's ability to store new information, because children's cognitive capacity is enhanced by a clear-cut and significant change in activity.<sup>13</sup> A change in academic instruction or class topic does not offer this clear-cut change in cognitive effort and certainly does not offer a physical release. Even a formal structured physical education class may not offer the same benefit as free-play recess.<sup>14</sup> Reduced time for physical activity may be contributing to the discordant academic abilities between boys and girls, because schools that promote sedentary styles of learning become a more difficult environment for boys to navigate successfully.

#### **Opportunities for Play in Nature**

Play in an outdoor, natural environment allows children to explore both their world and their own minds. Surely many of us have treasured memories of time spent as a child in an untamed, natural place—perhaps the woods behind one's home, or a summer camp, or the first time camping out in a tent. Nature places virtually no bounds on the imagination and engages all of the senses. For all children, this setting allows for the full blossoming of creativity, curiosity, and the associated developmental advances.

The outdoors also presents marvelous opportunities for parents to interact with their children in a fashion that fosters both the development of the relationship and the child. Families may hike, fish, camp, or canoe together. Children and parents can explore the bugs and mushrooms of the forest floor, or observe the patterns of the pebbled stream. When parents observe their children in play or join with them in child-driven play, they are given a unique opportunity to see the world from their child's vantage point as the child navigates a world perfectly created to fit his or her needs. The interactions that occur through play tell children that parents are

<sup>8</sup> Ibid (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>9</sup> Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Curtin LR, McDowell MA, Tabak CJ, Flegal KM. Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity in the United States, 1999-2004. *JAMA* 2006;295:1549-1555.

<sup>10</sup> Burdette HL, Whitaker RC. Resurrecting Free Play in Young Children: looking beyond fitness and fatness to attention, affiliation, and affect. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2005;159:46-50.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 185 (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 184 (internal endnotes omitted).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid (internal endnotes omitted).

fully paying attention to them and help to build enduring relationships.<sup>15</sup> Parents who have the opportunity to glimpse their child's world learn to communicate more effectively with their child and are given another setting in which to offer gentle, nurturing guidance. Less verbal children may be able to express their views, experiences, and even frustrations through play, allowing their parents an opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of their perspective.

Play in nature provides children with opportunities for self-directed physical activity that can help promote physical health and reduce obesity. Unlike team sports, individual play in nature allows the child to tailor exercise to his or her own interests and abilities, often in conjunction with creative efforts. The great outdoors can move children away from the passive entertainment of computers and TV and into an interactive forum that engages both mind and body.

#### **Impediments to Outdoor Play**

The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified a number of factors that are currently contributing to the reduction of free play time available for children. These include but are not limited to the following:

- In many communities, children cannot play safely outside of the home unless they are under close adult supervision and protection;
- Children are being passively entertained through television or computer/video games;
- A national trend to focus on the academic fundamentals of reading and arithmetic decreases time left during the school day for recess, creative arts, and physical education;
- More families have a single head of household or 2 working parents and fewer multigenerational households in which grandparents and extended family members can watch the children, thereby creating the need for children to be involved in structured programming;
- Parents wishing to make the most effective use of limited time with their children often believe that facilitating their children to have every opportunity is the best use of that time. In other words, some parents believe that transporting children between activities represents better parenting than playfully and directly engaging with their children;
- Parents receive messages from a variety of sources stating that good parents actively build every skill and aptitude their child might need from the earliest ages, and that play may, in fact, be a waste of time; and
- The increasing rigor of the college admissions process, through which children are encouraged to build a college resume through both academic excellence and a wide variety of activities and volunteer efforts starting at younger ages, thereby reinforcing the sense that play and unscheduled time are wasteful.

Each of these issues presents unique challenges to any parent or community wishing to restore free play time for children. As such, there is no single solution that will address all of the issues for every community. For all children, however, advocates need to promote the implementation of those strategies known to promote healthy youth development and resiliency.

#### **Recommendations**

The AAP makes a range of recommendations for pediatricians in their interactions with families to help emphasize the importance of unstructured play for healthy child development. Many of those recommendations are equally relevant for our governmental policies, and so I would like to paraphrase them for your use today:

Policymakers should recognize that free play is a healthy, essential part of childhood. All children should be afforded ample, unscheduled, independent, nonscreen time to be creative, to reflect, and to decompress.

Governmental policies should emphasize that active child-centered play is a time-tested way of producing healthy, fit young bodies. This issue must be kept in mind when reauthorizing legislation including educational and fitness programs.

Federal agencies should support the development of "safe spaces" in underresourced neighborhoods. This may include initiatives such as opening school, library, or community facilities to be used by children and their parents after school hours and on weekends, or by establishing programs that help connect families with federal parks and lands.

The federal government should support a variety of physical activity opportunities for children in addition to school physical education programs. These should include the protection of children's recess time and the requirement of extracurricular phys-

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 183 (internal endnotes omitted).

ical activity programs and nonstructured physical activity before, during, and after school hours, that address the needs and interests of all students.

Federal policy should support the reduction of environmental barriers to an active lifestyle. The government should adequately fund programs that support families' efforts to engage in a healthy lifestyle, whether through large-scale efforts like creation and maintenance of public federal lands or local initiatives such as the construction of safe recreational facilities, parks, playgrounds, bicycle paths, sidewalks, and crosswalks.<sup>16</sup>

Federal efforts should build upon social marketing that promotes increased physical activity. Programs and initiatives at federal agencies can help promote active, healthy living as a normative lifestyle.<sup>17</sup>

In conclusion, I appreciate this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Academy applauds the subcommittees' efforts to bring attention to the issues associated with the health and developmental benefits of unstructured play in a natural environment. Federal policies can serve an important role in promoting opportunities for active, healthy living for all children, including through creative use of federal lands programs. We look forward to working with you to protect and promote the health and well-being of all children.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Ms. Amy Pertschuk. Did I say it correctly?

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Pertschuk.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Managing Director, Children and Nature Network.

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Please.

**STATEMENT OF AMY PERTSCHUK, MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
CHILDREN AND NATURE NETWORK**

Ms. PERTSCHUK. On behalf of Richard Louv and the Children and Nature Network I am going to be talking today about a challenge that will profoundly impact the relationship of humans with the environment and on how we can face that challenge successfully. I will be reading from testimony prepared by Richard Louv, and I would be happy to answer questions following the testimony.

We live in a country of bountiful natural resources, land, water, wildlife, yet within the space of a few decades the way children understand and experience their neighborhoods and the natural world has changed radically. Children are far more aware of the global threats to the environment, but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading.

As one suburban fifth grader put it, in what has become the most quoted statement in the emerging children and nature movement, "I like to play indoors better because that is where all the electrical outlets are." His desire is not that uncommon. In a typical week only six percent of children ages nine to 13 play outside on their own, and studies also show a dramatic decline in the past decade in such outdoor activities as swimming and fishing.

Even bike riding is 31 percent down since 1995. Urban, suburban and even rural parents cite a number of everyday reasons why their children spend less time in nature than they themselves did including access to nature, competition from television, computers

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<sup>16</sup>American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness and Council on School Health. Active Healthy Living: Prevention of Childhood Obesity Through Increased Physical Activity. Pediatrics. 2006;117:1834-1842.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

and Gameboys, dangerous traffic, and more homework and other activities.

Most of all parents cite fear, fear of strangers. Conditioned by round the clock news coverage they believe that there is an epidemic of abductions despite the evidence that the number has actually remained roughly the same for the past two decades, and the 2007 data shows that child safety is at an all time high.

Part of our task as a society is to begin to think in terms of comparative risks and to consider the great benefits of a nature/child reunion. Yes, there are risks outside our homes, but there are also risks of raising children under virtual house arrest. Threats to their independent judgment and value of place, to their ability to feel awe and wonder and to their sense of stewardship for the Earth, and most immediately threats to their psychological and physical health.

We have witnessed the rapid increase of childhood obesity, Type II diabetes. Healthcare leaders now worry that the current generation of children may be the first since World War II to die at an earlier age than their parents. Getting kids outdoors more, riding bikes, running, swimming and especially experiencing nature directly may well serve as an antidote to much of what ails the youth.

Congress has a unique opportunity in this and coming years to help turn these trends around. Government cannot do this alone nor does it have to. A public movement is growing to leave no child inside, but government, with its influence over parks, open space and how we use these resources, shape our cities, education and healthcare systems has a critical role to play.

Rather than simply stemming the tide, our nation can realize enormous benefits for the physical, emotional and cognitive health of our children and for the health of the Earth itself. What can government do? How can it expand the good work that has begun? We spell out a series of specific suggestions for programs and initiatives in the prepared testimony we submit to you today.

Here are a few examples. Government could increase the number of naturalist interpreters to our national parks and other public nature settings. These professionals become even more important as children experience less nature in their own neighborhoods. Establish national conservation corps to reach diverse communities to actively recruit young people into the conservation professions.

Replicate wonderful programs like Connecticut's No Child Left Inside, or Texas' Life's Better Outside, or Nebraska's Healthy Families Play Outside to repopulate our national parks with families. Establish innovative nature attractions such as the simple canopy walk created by biologist Meg Lowman in Florida which doubled the attendance of one state park.

Develop new grants programs like the U.S. Forest Service's "More Kids in the Woods" that just this week announced their awards to local programs. Encourage national parks to work with and support local child and nature movements. Work in collaboration with the Departments of the Interior, Education, Agriculture, Health & Human Services, to help green the nation's crumbling urban parks.

Under the right conditions cultural and political change can occur rapidly. The recycling and antismoking campaigns are our best examples how social and political pressure can work hand in hand to create a societal transformation in just one generation. The Children and Nature movement has perhaps even greater potential because it touches something even deeper within us biologically, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pertschuk follows:]

**Statement of Richard Louv, Author, "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" and Chairman of the Board of Directors, Children & Nature Network (C&NN), Presented by Amy Pertschuk, Managing Director, C&NN, on Behalf of Richard Louv and the Board of Directors of the Children & Nature Network**

Thank you for the opportunity today to testify before the Committee on Natural Resources about a challenge that we face that will have a profound impact on the human relationship with the environment—and how the nation can successfully face that challenge.

Within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience their neighborhoods and the natural world has changed radically. Even as children and teenagers become more aware of global threats to the environment, their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading. As one suburban fifth grader put it to me, in what has become the signature epigram of an emerging children and nature movement: "I like to play indoors better 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are."

His desire is not at all uncommon. In a typical week, only 6 percent of children, ages nine to thirteen, play outside on their own. Studies by the National Sporting Goods Association, and American Sports Data, a research firm, show a dramatic decline in the past decade in such outdoor activities as swimming and fishing. Even bike riding is down 31 percent since 1995. In San Diego, California, according to a survey by nonprofit Aquatic Adventures, 90 percent of inner-city kids do not know how to swim; 34 percent have never been to the beach. In suburban Fort Collins, Colorado, teachers shake their heads in dismay when they describe the many students who have never been to the mountains, visible year-round on the western horizon.

Urban, suburban, and even rural parents cite a number of everyday reasons why their children spend less time in nature than they themselves did, including disappearing access to natural areas, competition from television and computers, dangerous traffic, and more homework and other pressures. Most of all, parents cite fear of stranger-danger. Conditioned by round-the-clock news coverage, they believe in an epidemic of abductions by strangers, despite evidence that the number (about a hundred a year) has remained roughly the same for two decades, and that the rates of violent crimes against young people have fallen to well below 1975 levels.

Congress has a unique opportunity in this and coming years, to help turn this trend around. Government cannot do this alone—nor does it have to. As I will show, later in this testimony, a public movement is growing to leave no child inside. But government, with its influence over parks, open space and how we shape cities, education and health care, has a crucial role to play. Rather than simply stemming the tide, our nation can realize enormous benefits for the physical, emotional and cognitive health of our children, and for the health of the earth itself.

Part of our task, as a society, is to begin to think in terms of comparative risks, and the great benefits of a national nature-child reunion. Yes, there are risks outside our homes. But there are also risks in raising children under virtual protective house arrest: threats to their independent judgment and value of place, to their ability to feel awe and wonder, to their sense of stewardship for the earth, most immediately, threats to their psychological and physical health. The rapid increase of childhood obesity leads many health-care leaders to worry that the current generation of children may be the first since World War II to die at an earlier age than their parents. Getting kids outdoors more, riding bikes, running, swimming—and, especially, experiencing nature directly—could serve as an antidote to much of what ails the young.

The physical benefits are obvious, but other benefits are more subtle and no less important. Take the development of cognitive functioning. Factoring out other variables, studies of students in California and nationwide show that schools that use outdoor classrooms and other forms of experiential education produce significant

student gains in social studies, science, language arts, and math. One 2005 study by the California Department of Education found that students in outdoor science programs improved their science testing scores by 27 percent.

And the benefits go beyond test scores. According to a range of studies, children in outdoor-education settings show increases in self-esteem, problem solving, and motivation to learn. "Natural spaces and materials stimulate children's limitless imaginations," says Robin Moore, an international authority on the design of environments for children's play, learning, and education, "and serve as the medium of inventiveness and creativity." Studies of children in schoolyards with both green areas and manufactured play areas found that children engaged in more creative forms of play in the green areas, and they also played more cooperatively. Recent research also shows a connection between the length of children's attention span and direct experience in nature. Studies at the University of Illinois show that time in natural settings significantly reduces symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children as young as age five. The research also shows the experience helps reduce negative stress and protects psychological well-being, especially in children experiencing the most stressful life events.

Even without corroborating evidence or institutional help, many parents notice significant changes in their child's stress levels and hyperactivity when they spend time outside. "My son is still on Ritalin, but he's so much calmer in the outdoors that we're seriously considering moving to the mountains," one mother tells me. Could it simply be that he needs more physical activity? "No, he gets that, in sports," she says. Similarly, the back page of the October issue of *San Francisco* magazine displays a vivid photograph of a small boy, eyes wide with excitement and joy, leaping and running on a great expanse of California beach, storm clouds and towering waves behind him. A short article explains that the boy was hyperactive, he had been kicked out of his school, and his parents had not known what to do with him—but they had observed how nature engaged and soothed him. So for years they took their son to beaches, forests, dunes, and rivers to let nature do its work.

The photograph was taken in 1907. The boy was Ansel Adams.

Studies show that almost to a person conservationists or any adults with environmental awareness had some transcendent experience in nature when they were children. For some, the epiphanies took place in a national park; for others, in the clump of trees at the end of the cul-de-sac. But if experiences in nature are radically reduced for future generations, where will stewards of the earth come from? A few months ago, I visited Ukiah, California, a mountain town nestled in the pines and fog. Ukiah is Spotted Owl Central, a town associated with the swirling controversy regarding logging, old growth, and endangered species. This is one of the most bucolic landscapes in our country, but local educators and parents report that Ukiah kids aren't going outside much anymore. So who will care about the spotted owl in ten or fifteen years?

Federal and state conservation agencies are asking such questions with particular urgency. The reason: though the roads at some U.S. National Parks remain clogged, overall visits by Americans have dropped by 25 percent since 1987, few people get far from their cars, and camping is on the decline. And such trends may further reduce political support for parks.

In past decades, idealistic, outdoor-oriented young people were drawn to government careers in conservation. But as baby boomers move toward retirement, the stock of new conservationists simply may not be there. Since the 1970s, undergraduate enrollment in traditional conservation and natural resource programs fell by half, according to research conducted by Terry Sharik, a professor at Utah State's College of Natural Resources. Sharik points to decreased physical involvement of children in nature as one of the prime reasons. Conservation agencies have had a particularly hard time attracting more culturally diverse employees and members from inner cities and small towns. For all the recruitment shortcomings, Sharik and Cheryl Charles, now president of the Children & Nature Network, who organized a conference last year on what she calls "the coming brain drain in government conservation agencies," point to decreased physical involvement of children in nature as a major factor.

We should point to progress, at the government level. In September 2006, the National Conservation Training Center and the Conservation Fund hosted the National Dialogue on Children and Nature in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The conference drew some 350 people from around the country, representing educators, health-care experts, recreation companies, residential developers, urban planners, conservation agencies, academics, and other groups. Even the Walt Disney Company was represented. "What brought this varied group of powerful individuals together and maybe for the first time under one roof? The Nation's children brought us to Shepherdstown," said Interior Sec. Dirk Kempthorne, in his welcoming remarks. "I

think we should take a break from our Blackberries in order to encourage the nation's children to pick blackberries.”

At the state and national level, impressive efforts are springing up around the country, from Texas' "Life is Better Outside" campaign to Connecticut's "No Child Left Inside" program to get families into underused state parks. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge in Washington State successfully brings hundreds of school children to the Refuge and combines school lessons with tree plantings for habitat restoration. These efforts connect children to nature and give them a sense of hope and personal responsibility. In a similar move, the U.S. Forest Service is launching More Kids in the Woods, which would fund local efforts to get children outdoors.

In October 2006, the superintendent of Yellowstone National Park called for a "no child left inside" campaign to make children more comfortable with the outdoors. As the participants at Shepherdstown came to understand, individual programs can be made far more powerful if they are in contact with other programs, if a larger pattern or movement, one inclusive of government but not exclusive to it, is developed.

For decades, environmental educators, conservationists, and others have worked, often heroically, to bring more children to nature—usually with inadequate support from policymakers. A number of trends, including the recent unexpected national media attention to Last Child and "nature deficit disorder," have now brought the concerns of these veteran advocates before a broader audience. While some may argue that the word "movement" is hyperbole, we do seem to have reached a tipping point. State and regional campaigns, sometimes called Leave No Child Inside, have begun to form in at least 24 urban regions and states, including Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, the San Francisco Bay Area, St. Louis, Florida, Colorado, Kentucky, Texas, and in Canada as well. A host of related initiatives—among them the simple-living, walkable-cities, nature-education, and land-trust movements—have begun to find common cause, and collective strength, through this issue. It has attracted a diverse assortment of people who might otherwise never work together.

Nonprofit environmental organizations are showing a growing interest in how children engage with nature. In 2006, the Sierra Club intensified its commitment to connect children to nature through its Building Bridges to the Outdoors Youth Project, and has ramped up its legislative efforts in support of environmental education. The National Wildlife Federation is rolling out the Green Hour, a national campaign to persuade parents to encourage their children to spend one hour a day in nature. John Flicker, president of the National Audubon Society, is campaigning for the creation of a family-focused nature center in every congressional district in the nation. "Once these centers are embedded, they're almost impossible to kill," says Flicker. "They help create a political constituency right now, but also build a future political base for conservation." Of course, such programs must teach children how to step lightly on natural habitats, especially ones with endangered species. But these experiences are essential for the survival of conservation. The truth is that the human child in nature may also be an endangered species—and the most important indicator of future sustainability.

The Conservation Fund is launching a National Forum on Children and Nature and have enlisted governors, mayors, cabinet secretaries and corporate CEO's and non-government organizations to help raise national awareness about the problems facing our children and the role that nature can play in addressing those problems. Support comes not only from environmental organizations, but also from religious leaders, liberal and conservative, who understand that all spiritual life begins with a sense of wonder, and that one of the first windows to wonder is the natural world. "Christians should take the lead in reconnecting with nature and disconnecting from machines," writes R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the flagship school of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Farsighted members of the business community are awakening to the link between this issue and future economic health. The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), which represents hundreds of companies selling everything from backpacks to kayaks, reports good sales of upscale products—but sales of traditional entry-level gear are nearly dead in the water. Discouraged by the trend, some companies have dropped their entry-level product lines. The rapid increase in child inactivity and obesity has "sent a big message to the industry that we need to do something to reverse this trend," according to Michelle Barnes, OIA's vice president for marketing. As a result, such companies as REI are paying more attention to this issue. Mountain Equipment Co-op, the largest provider of outdoor equipment in Canada, is also concerned. Among other approaches, that company, a co-op with several million members, is considering a stunning proposal: to provide free rentals of outdoor equipment to children across Canada.

Health is at the very center of this issue. To build a stronger constituency for open space and parks, the children and nature movement offers a way to connect

nature more directly to health. While public-health experts have traditionally associated environmental health with the absence of toxic pollution, the definition fails to account for an equally valid consideration: how the environment can improve human health. Howard Frumkin, director of the National Center for Environmental Health, points out that future research about the positive health effects of nature should be conducted in collaboration with architects, urban planners, park designers, and landscape architects. "Perhaps we will advise patients to take a few days in the country, to spend time gardening," he wrote in a 2001 *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* article, "or [we will] build hospitals in scenic locations, or plant gardens in rehabilitation centers. Perhaps the...organizations that pay for health care will come to fund such interventions, especially if they prove to rival pharmaceuticals in cost and efficacy."

This we do know: when people talk about the disconnect between children and nature—if they are old enough to remember a time when outdoor play was the norm—they almost always tell stories about their own childhoods: this tree house or fort, that special woods or ditch or creek or meadow—those "places of initiation," in the words of naturalist Bob Pyle, where they may have first sensed with awe and wonder the largeness of the world seen and unseen. When people share these stories, their cultural, political, and religious walls come tumbling down.

And when that happens, ideas can pour forth—and lead to ever more insightful approaches to how we educate our children, how to truly sustain any future health care system, and how we develop our cities. The *Sacramento Bee* reported in July 2006 that Sacramento's biggest developer, Angelo Tsakopoulos and his daughter Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis, who together run AKT Development, "have become enthusiastic promoters" of new designs for residential development that will connect children and families to nature. Rather than excusing more sprawl with a green patina, developers might even encourage the green redevelopment of portions of strip-mall America into Dutch-style eco-communities, where nature would be an essential strand in the fabric of the urban neighborhood.

All this may be wishful thinking, of course, at least in the short run. But as Martin Luther King Jr. often said, the success of any social movement depends on its ability to show a world where people will want to go. The point is that thinking about children's need for nature helps us begin to paint a picture of that world—which is something that has to be done, because the price of not painting that picture is too high.

What can government do, how can it expand the good work in has begun? Government could increase the supply of naturalists and interpreters at our parks and other public nature settings; these professionals will become even more important as children experience less nature in their own neighborhoods. Conservation agencies could establish a national conservation corps to reach into so-called minority communities to actively recruit young people into the conservation professions. At the federal and state levels, park systems might replicate Connecticut's "No Child Left Inside" program, which has so successfully repopulated that state's parks with families—or establish innovative nature attractions, such as the simple "canopy walk" created by biologist Meg Lowman in Florida, which doubled the attendance of one state park.

Reauthorization of the Leave No Child Behind Act should assure that nature be returned to our schools, by encouraging field trips, natural playgrounds, outdoor classrooms, and broad support for outdoor and environmental education. Congress might also establish a national Take Your Child Outside Week. Federal and state conservation agencies might loosen current restrictions of the use of government funds for outreach efforts. "Here we sit with the mandate of managing the resource for future generations," one state official told me recently. "The legislature wants us to manage habitat and wildlife but minimizes support for the other, critical half of the equation, managing the people surrounding and influencing that habitat." By encouraging and working with a national Leave No Child Inside movement, government agencies could seek philanthropic partners beyond traditional sources of conservation dollars: for example, foundations concerned about child obesity; education philanthropies promoting experiential learning; civic organizations that see the link between land and community.

Collaborations between the Departments of Interior, Education, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services could help green the nation's crumbling urban and suburban parks. Farms and ranches could become the new schoolyards—if government can pay farmers not to plant crops, surely it can pay farmers and ranchers to plant the seeds of nature and rural cultures in the next generation. Much more can be done.

Under the right conditions, cultural and political change can occur rapidly. The recycling and antismoking campaigns are our best examples of how social and polit-

ical pressure can work hand in hand to create a societal transformation in just one generation. The children and nature movement has perhaps even greater potential—because it touches something even deeper within us, biologically, spiritually.

In January 2005, I attended a meeting of the Quivira Coalition, a New Mexico organization that brings together ranchers and environmentalists to find common ground. The coalition is now working on a plan to promote ranches as the new schoolyards. When my turn came to speak, I told the audience how, when I was a boy, I pulled out all those survey stakes in a vain attempt to keep the earthmovers at bay. Afterward, a rancher stood up. He was wearing scuffed boots. His aged jeans had never seen acid wash, only dirt and rock. His face was sunburned and creased. His drooping moustache was white, and he wore thick eyeglasses with heavy plastic frames, stained with sweat. “You know that story you told about pulling up stakes?” he said. “I did that when I was a boy, too.”

The crowd laughed. I laughed.

And then the man began to cry. Despite his embarrassment, he continued to speak, describing the source of his sudden grief: that he might belong to one of the last generations of Americans to feel that sense of ownership of land and nature. The power of this movement lies in that sense, that special place in our hearts, those woods where the bulldozers cannot reach. Developers and environmentalists, corporate CEOs and college professors, rock stars and ranchers may agree on little else, but they agree on this: no one among us wants to be a member of the last generation to pass on to its children the joy of playing outside in nature.

*Richard Louv is the author of “Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder” and chairman of the Children & Nature Network ([www.cnaturenet.org](http://www.cnaturenet.org)). E-mail: [rlouv@cts.com](mailto:rlouv@cts.com)*

*Portions of this testimony were adapted from “Last Child in the Woods” and from an article in the March/April issue of Orion Magazine: <http://www.orionmagazine.org/pages/om/07-2om/Louv.html>*

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much. Mr. Calengor, past Chairman of the Board, American Sportfishing Association. Sir?

**STATEMENT OF JERRY CALENGOR, PAST CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION**

Mr. CALENGOR. Thank you. My name is Jerry Calengor and I am the Chairman of Normark Corporation, an international fishing tackle and manufacturing company. I am here today on behalf of the American Sportfishing Association, the Recreational Fishing Tackle Industry’s trade association, and we appreciate this invitation to testify.

Recreational fishing has been and remains one of the most popular outdoor activities. Over the last five years over 80 million Americans have ventured into the outdoors to enjoy fishing. However, we in the industry see several disturbing trends. For many years the growth in fishing participation followed the growth of our nation’s population, but in the mid-1990s this trend peaked as you can see on the chart.

Since then fishing popularity has started a slow decline, and our children are following the same trend. According to a report released in February by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the percentage of children introduced to fishing declined from 53 percent of the population in 1990 to 42 percent in 2000. The only good news in this report is that it appears that the decline has stabilized in the last few years.

Now, let me talk a minute about what the recreational fishing community has done to respond to this challenge. In the mid-1990s we, along with the state boating and fishing managers, recognized a downward trend in participation and asked Congress to respond.

As a result, in 1998 Congress passed the Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act.

This Act required the Secretary of the Interior to implement a national outreach plan to address these concerns. The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, the RBFF, was created to carry out the mission. Today RBFF has eight years of experience in developing an effective outreach program for boating and fishing. I have had the pleasure of serving on the RBFF board of directors and with the experience I can say the organization is ahead of the curve in thinking about kids, the outdoors, as well as thinking about kids and families.

In fact RBFF created Take Me Fishing, the ad campaign, which is also, by the way, a call to action. You could see it on the chart. Who is making this call to action? The children of course. It is the children who are saying take me fishing. RBFF has also created a unique website directed at connecting families through fishing and boating experiences, and I would urge you to take a close look at [takemefishing.org](http://takemefishing.org), see Figure 4, for the breadth of where-to and how-to information.

Also, they have assembled the education that surrounds introducing kids to fishing in a series of best practices. We have learned that one-day or half-day fishing events just are not enough. You cannot introduce a child to fishing one Saturday in May and create a lifetime love of angling and outdoors. It takes time, and it takes repetition. As a father of three and nine grandchildren I can tell you it takes a lot of time and a lot of worms.

Further, RBFF research has shown that being good stewards of our resources comes through great interaction. A child who thinks the river is cool is one thing. A child who thinks the river is cool and fishes it has a greater experience, and a greater desire to participate in the sport and a greater awareness and concern of resource stewardship. Finally, one of the most important things we have learned along the way is that the way fishing was taught to our generation is not the way fishing is taught to the children of today.

If you are under the age of 35, the odds are high that neither your parent nor your grandparent introduced you to angling. In a recent survey of avid anglers among those whose dads introduced them to fishing 88 percent were 35 or older. The majority of those under 35 are being introduced by someone else. Mr. Chairman, the world has changed and the children have changed, so we should not be surprised that the activities they participate in are changing.

Our role models were parents and grandparents who introduced their kids to the outdoors. That process is broken or at least is not working as well as it once did. If we as a society want to reconnect our children with nature, we need to develop a new model.

Many parts of this model are outlined in Richard Louv's book, *The Last Child In the Woods*, but one part of the model that receives little attention is the role that Federal and state resource management, along with everyone else involved, will have to take the credo that if we build it they will come and revise it. They believed and for years it was true that if we properly managed our natural resources the public would come to enjoy them.

However, the testimony I am hearing today I do not think that is true anymore. So I believe the job that we all have to be involved in and must change is we must work to ensure healthy, abundant natural resources, and they must also design programs and policies that encourage and engage the public in enjoying those resources. Our nation's future depends on it. Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Calengor follows:]

**Statement of Jerry Calengor, Chairman, Normark Corporation,  
on behalf of the American Sportfishing Association**

Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, my name is Jerry Calengor. I am Chairman of Normark Corporation an international sportfishing corporation. I am here today to testify on behalf of the American Sportfishing Association (ASA). The ASA is the recreational fishing tackle industry's trade association. We have as members over 650 companies, organizations, and agencies representing thousands of people throughout the world, includes members of the sportfishing and boating industries, state fish and wildlife agencies, federal land and water agencies, conservation organizations, angler advocacy groups and the outdoor media. We appreciate the opportunity to testify here today on this important issue.

And Mr. Chairman, I would also like to thank the various angling organizations that provided material on their programs. These include the Recreational Fishing and Boating Foundation, the Alliance for Fly Fishing Education, the Daniel Hernandez Youth Foundation, Family Tyes, the Future Fisherman Foundation, and the National Recreation and Park Association.

**The Status of Fishing**

Recreational fishing has been and remains one of the largest outdoor recreational activities in this nation. Along with swimming and camping, it is one of the most popular outdoor activities. Over the last 5 years, over 80 million Americans have ventured into the outdoors to enjoy fishing. However, we in the industry see several disturbing trends. For many years, the growth in fishing participation followed the growth in our nation's population. But, in the mid-1990s, this trend peaked and since then fishing's popularity has started a gradual decline (see Figure 1). Unfortunately, fishing is not the only outdoor sport in stagnation or decline.

In a 2006 study, the Nature Conservancy found that Americans are growing less and less interested in spending time outside. The report showed that over a 16-year period, from 1987 to 2003, adult visitation to national parks decreased by 25 percent. It should come as no surprise that of the two dozen possible explanations for this trend, video games, movie rentals, internet use and rising fuel prices ranked the highest.

And kids are following this same trend. According to a report released in February by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the percentage of children introduced to sportfishing declined from 53 percent of the population in 1990 to 42 percent in 2000. The only good news that I can see is that this decline has appeared to have stabilized in recent years. A closer look at the data shows that this decline is in even greater in children from urban areas. No surprise there but as our society continues to urbanize, introducing our children to fishing and the positive effects it can have on their lives is proving to be a significant challenge. And why should we care? I believe there are three primary reasons. The first is basic economics. Quite simply, anglers, boaters, and hunters pay for a significant majority of the conservation work that occurs on in this country. Each year, anglers and the industry they support pay over a billion dollars in licenses fees and excise taxes for fish and wildlife resource management. As a nation, we can't afford to loose those funding sources.

The second reason is succinctly and alarmingly illustrated in Richard Louv's recent book, *Last Child in the Woods*. Mr. Louv makes a clear connection between a series of disturbing childhood trends—the rise in obesity, attention disorders and depression—to the absence of outdoor activity in their everyday lives.

Finally, the last reason why we should be so gravely concerned about our children losing touch with the natural world may also be the most important. For as a society, if we—if our children—lose our affinity for the natural world around us, where will the next generations of stewards come from?

**The Progress**

In the mid-1990s, the boating and fishing industries, along with state boating and fishing managers, recognized the downward trend in participation levels and asked

Congress to respond. As a result, in 1998, Congress passed the Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act. The Act required the Secretary of the Interior to implement a national outreach and communication plan to address participation issues associated with recreational fishing and boating, while ensuring public support for aquatic resource conservation. The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, or RBFF, was created to carry out this mission.

Today, RBFF has eight years of experience in developing an effective, consensus based outreach and communications program for boating and fishing. I've had the pleasure of serving on the RBFF Board of Directors. By working cooperatively with state managers and the boating and fishing industries, the organization has successfully built a platform of consumer awareness and created a core constituency of stakeholder partners. RBFF is ahead of the curve in ensuring that there are a variety of programs aimed at introducing children to the outdoors.

RBFF is also ahead of the curve in doing the research that confirmed that fishing is an effective way of connecting children with nature—as well as connecting children with their families. As a result, RBFF created the “takemefishing” ad campaign—which is also, by the way, the call to action (see Figure 2). And who is making the call to action? The children, of course! It's the children who are saying “take me fishing” (see Figure 3).

The campaign has received broad industry support. Since its inception, the boating and fishing industries have contributed more than \$17 million in support through both cooperative marketing and outdoor media support. Here are some examples of those media organizations that have donated advertising space (see Figure 4) to broadcast the “take me fishing” message. RBFF has also received additional support from partners in the form of donated time, show space, value-added advertising, event placement and cooperative partnerships.

RBFF has also created a unique web site directed at connecting families to fishing and boating experiences. I would urge you to take a close look at [takemefishing.org](http://takemefishing.org) (See Figure 5) for the breadth of “where to” and “how to” information. This web site has a database of over 10,000 places to boat and fish around the country. In addition, the site has tips on family recreation, license requirements and aquatic conservation.

RBFF has also assembled the education that surrounds introducing children to fishing into a series of Best Practices. I'm pleased to report that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has endorsed the use of these guidelines in state aquatic education programs around the country. We've learned that one-day or half-day fishing events, although they have their place, just aren't enough. You can't introduce a child to fishing one Saturday in May and create a life time love of angling, and the outdoors. It takes time and repetition.

We've also learned that adequate skills development does work to create a long term connection to the outdoors. RBFF research has shown that being good stewards of our resources comes through repeat interaction. A child who thinks the river is cool is one thing. A child who thinks the river is cool—and who also has some fishing experience—has a much greater desire to participate in the sport and a greater awareness and concern for resource stewardship.

Finally, one of the most important things we've learned along the way—is that the way fishing was taught to our generation is not the way fishing is taught to today's kids. If you're under the age of 35, the odds are high that neither your parent nor your grandparent introduced you to angling. In a recent survey of avid anglers, among those whose dads introduced them to fishing, 88 percent were 35 or older. The majority of those under 35 are being introduced by someone else. In other words, the recruitment model that many of us in this room grew up with is no longer working!

### **Grassroots Efforts**

While RBFF has contributed substantially to our efforts to learn and understand the best ways to introduce children to boating and fishing, as well as providing the necessary tools, much of the important work is done on the ground at the grass roots level—actually taking children fishing. A variety of clubs and organizations as well as state and federal agencies conduct such programs. Some of the better known programs are listed below.

### **Alliance for Fly Fishing Education**

Launched in 2001, the Alliance for Fly Fishing Education (AFFE) is a collaborative partnership of national fly fishing education providers. AFFE's mission is to generate life-long fly anglers and resource stewards through providing quality learning experiences based on Best Practices in aquatic education. AFFE accomplishes this mission by serving as the nexus for fly fishing education resources and con-

necting available assets (i.e., grassroots clubs, organizations, NGOs, retailers, and the fly fishing industry) with interested newcomers to fly fishing and promoting meaningful threshold experiences and long term mentorship.

For the last 5 years, the “Discover Fly Fishing” program has conducted threshold experience fly casting programs in a general outdoors shows across the country. This program reaches over 5,000 new fly anglers annually, taking them through their first steps with a fly rod and guiding them to local resources to support and expand on their fly fishing experiences. The “Discover Fly Fishing” web site now serves as a national resource of existing fly fishing education programs and as a tool to keep the general public updated as to where to connect with high quality instruction and support.

Even though it represents a small percentage of the general angling community, fly anglers historically and by default have a close association with the natural world. A new campaign will connect local youth service organizations with their local communities fly shops, Trout Unlimited chapters and Federation of Fly Fisher clubs. This Mentor Outreach program will guide youth and adults in to the complexity of fly fishing. This project holds great promises to not only expand the sport in a meaningful way, but to educate communities about a way to interact with their local natural resources for the rest of their lives.

#### **Daniel Hernandez Youth Foundation**

Founded in 2001 by professional angler Dan Hernandez, the Daniel Hernandez Youth Foundation holds free local fishing events and boating trips throughout California in an effort to ensure that every child gets an opportunity to experience the thrill of sportfishing and a basic introduction in the marine sciences. Since its inception 6 years ago, the foundation has reached over 9,500 youths with its Open Ocean Adventures and lake events.

The Foundation’s events are held in underserved communities throughout Southern California. The hands-on activities help them engage an interest in and learn about marine life. The foundation utilizes two key programs “Open Ocean Adventures” which is an event catering to at-risk, inner city kids ages 7-15. The children board a chartered fishing boat and are taken out to the open ocean for a day of ocean fishing and instruction in boating safety. The “Meet Me at the Lake” program is a volunteer-lead, half-day youth fishing event at a local city lake where youth meet and interact with local firefighters and police officers as well as learn to practice casting, knot tying, and marine life education. Everything needed for a day of fun and fishing is provided free of charge to all attending children.

#### **Family Tyes**

Founded in 1979, the Family Tyes program goal is to provide youth and families with life-long, positive alternatives to negative influences. Family Tyes is committed to youth development, family values and environmental conservation. For over 20 years, the program’s fly fishing activities have reconnected thousands of Pennsylvania and New Jersey children and their families to their environment through fly fishing.

Fly fishing creates a curiosity and connection that leads directly to a lifetime passion for the natural world as well as creates a culture and language that breaks down barriers, encourages communication and fosters lasting relationships among youth and among youth and the natural world.

The Family Tyes program engages over 2,000 youth from 22 school programs in fly fishing activities including, fly tying and rod building with an extensive trip itinerary including local, state and national sites. Family Tyes offers a positive alternative to troubled lifestyles which results in opportunities for youth to gain confidence, to overcome shyness and stress, and to build confidence through achievement, hard work and commitment. When the Family Tyes system is offered collaboratively through youth-serving organizations such as at risk urban teens in inner city high school or outreach events, the experience becomes a tool of racial reconciliation, violence prevention and source of deep personal pride.

#### **Hooked on Fishing Not On Drugs®**

For more than 20 years, the Future Fisherman Foundation has been providing youth across the nation with the opportunity to learn how to fish and learn positive life skills through the Hooked on Fishing Not on Drugs® (HOFNOD) program. More than 500,000 youth participate in HOFNOD programs and activities each year. HOFNOD helps reinforce academic concepts while providing important life lessons about patience, stewardship, and helping youth reconnect with themselves, their communities, and nature. The HOFNOD program is an important link to engaging youth in fishing as a life long recreational activity. Through a nation-wide network of partnerships among state aquatic educators, HOFNOD state coordinators and

local volunteers, HOFNOD delivers positive life skills and angling activities in a variety of ways based on long-term mentorship programs.

Studies have shown that more than 60 percent of youth participants report a stronger interest in fishing following their participation in the program. The strong partnerships that exist among state and national groups help to fuel the need to create new conservation minded anglers. Currently, there are 23 states with active HOFNOD state coordinators and more than 14,000 instructors have been trained to conduct HOFNOD programs over the 20 year history of the program.

#### **National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)**

The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and the National Recreation and Parks Association formed a partnership in 2005 to provide community-based fishing and boating instruction and participation opportunities through NRPA's extensive parks and recreation network. The program is national in scope with 300 sites around the country including six anchor locations in Ft. Worth, TX, Baltimore, MD, Lacrosse, WI, Tacoma, WA, Columbus, OH, and Miami, FL. Recognizing fishing as an ideal way to introduce children to nature and foster long term-recreational activities, parks create on-the-water instructional programs as well as provide loaner equipment and social networking that help support continued participation.

The community based parks and recreation setting removes the majority of barriers to participation for all populations. Low- or no-cost programs in convenient, safe and familiar settings help to facilitate trial experiences for many participants. Additionally, the majority of these programs are located in urban settings close to public transportation. The "neighborhood" aspects of these parks also provide children and their families an opportunity to develop "ownership" of the resource and grow to understand and want to preserve and protect it. The 2006 pilot program featured 10 sites and touched nearly 13,000 individuals. Approximately 60,000 participants are expected in 2007.

#### **Physh Ed—National Physical Education Grant Program**

The Physh Ed program is an educational effort coordinated through the Future Fisherman Foundation and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. The program is designed to provide K-12 public, private and charter schools the resources and training they need to teach fishing and boating as part of the school's in-class physical education curricula. Since the program's inception in the 2003/2004 school year, over 40,000 youth in 152 schools in 39 states have been introduced to fishing and boating. Approximately 95 new schools are expected to participate in the 2007/2008 school year.

Individual school based programs are designed to be long-term programs that focus on skill development and the infusion of conservation messages. Fishing and boating activities provide ample opportunities to children to connect with nature. The school environment provides the ideal avenue to introduce youth at an early age to the skills and knowledge needed to ensure that outdoor recreational activities such as fishing and boating remain a recreational activity for life. The success and scope of many Physh Ed programs expand beyond the walls of the classroom to include community based partnership programs involving local retailers, after-school clubs, and weekend and community events.

#### **Recommendations**

Mr. Chairman, the world has changed. The way children are raised has changed. Where they're raised has changed and who's raising them has changed. So we shouldn't be surprised that the activities they participate in have changed. Our old model, the one I grew up with, where parents or grandparents introduced their children to the outdoors is broken. It is not working any longer, at least to the magnitude it once did.

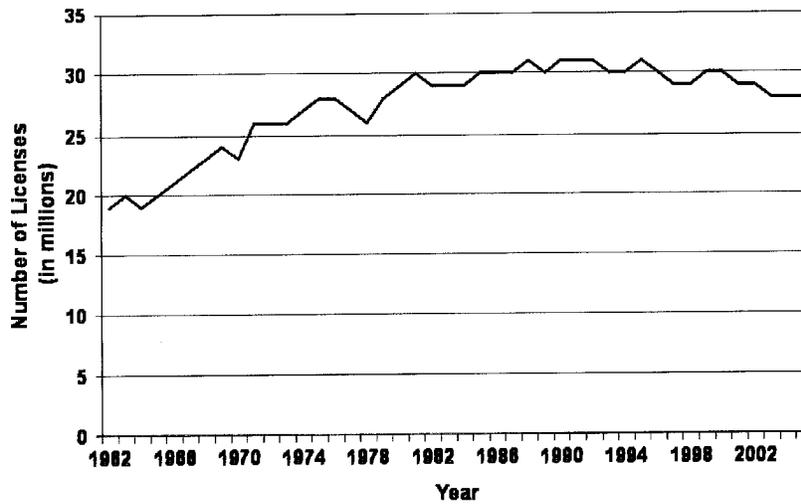
We in recreational fishing have tried to change with the times. But as you can see, we've only been able to slow the decline. I would argue that if we, as a society, are to reconnect our children with nature, we need to develop a new model. Many parts of this model are outlined in Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods*. But one part of the model that Louv fails to address and that receives little attention is the role that federal and state resource managers could have in reconnecting our children to the natural world.

For years these managers have worked under the credo that "if we build it, they will come." In other words, state fish and wildlife and federal land management agencies have viewed their role in managing natural resources, as exactly that...to manage wildlife and their natural habitats. They believed, and for years it was true, that if they appropriately managed our natural resources, the public would come to

enjoy it. As long as one generation took on the responsibility of introducing the next generation to the out-of-doors, this model worked.

However, the data and trends that we are addressing in this hearing suggests that this may not be true today and certainly will not be true in the future. So, I believe the job of our natural resource managers must change. Not only must they have the resources to ensure healthy abundant natural resources, they must also have the resources to design programs and policies that encourage and engage the public in enjoying the same. Our nation's future depends on it.

**Figure 1: State Fishing License Holders**



## Figure 2

Take me fishing.

And I'll know you have  
time for me.

Take me fishing.

Let's just get in  
the boat and go.

Take me fishing.

So I can tell you about  
this girl at school.

Take me fishing.

So I'll always have  
something in common.



"takemefishing."

Rediscover the joy of boating and fishing. Get information and get going at [takemefishing.org](http://takemefishing.org)

## Figure 3

Take me fishing.

Because you're the  
coolest grandpa ever.

Take me fishing.

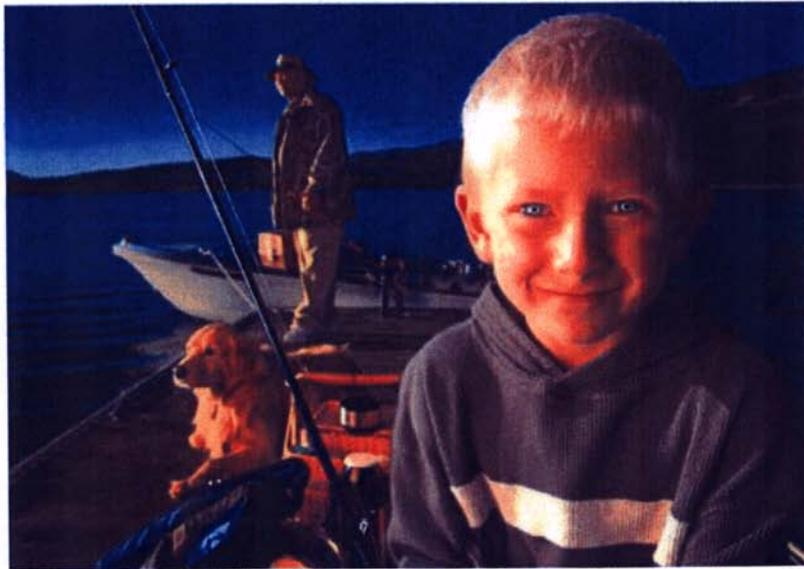
So you can tell me  
stories about my dad.

Take me fishing.

And show me how  
to drive the boat.

Take me fishing.

So I'll always remember you.



"takemefishing"

GET INFORMATION AND GET GOING AT  
[TAKEMEFISHING.ORG](http://TAKEMEFISHING.ORG)

Figure 4



Figure 5

**"takemefishing"**  GO

NEWSLETTER FRS PRESSBOOK SURVEY

- PLACES TO GO
- FISHING
- BOATING
- FAMILY FUN
- CONSERVATION
- SAFETY
- EVENTS

**Rediscover the Joy of Boating and Fishing**  
 Welcome to TakeMeFishing.org, where you'll find everything you need to plan your next trip. Search our database of over 10,000 places to fish and boat to find a great location near you. You'll also find tips on how to fish, fun family features, and much, much more.

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 Honoring the accomplishments of junior anglers. Nominate your kid today.

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 Click here to take our website survey.  
 We promise it isn't a BIG one!

**FIND PLACES TO FISH & BOAT**    **HOW TO FISH & BOAT**

**FIND PLACES TO FISH & BOAT**

Choose your state from the map above for detailed information on fishing and boating.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir. Next is Mr. Richard Dolesh, Director of Public Policy, National Recreation and Park Association. Sir?

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD J. DOLESH, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY, NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION**

Mr. DOLESH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to members of the Committee for the invitation to be here. I am the Director of Public Policy for the National Recreation and Park Association, but I worked 30 years in parks and recreation. I began my career as a park naturalist and eventually came to manage and develop nature programs and nature interpretation facilities, and manage natural area parks. I have extensive experience working with kids, teens and park visitors of all ages.

We believe that connecting children to nature and the outdoors always has been a core mission of public parks and recreation. Sometimes public parks and recreation is seen as the provider of ball fields and athletic fields, but we are all about providing a connection to nature and to our public lands. However, it has become evident in recent years that both children and their parents have begun to lose touch with nature and the outdoors.

In fact this trend is reaching crisis proportions among some age groups, and we are really in danger of losing a whole generation of kids who have lost that essential connection with the values and rewards that nature and the outdoors bring. These fears are not unfounded. This trend is of great concern to the members of the National Recreation and Park Association.

It is abundantly clear to us that the Federal Government has an essential and continuing role to play in connecting kids to nature. Our extensive system, the national parks and Federal public lands, is the envy of the world. It is admired throughout the world. How many kids really can have that national public lands or national park experience, go to a campfire led program by a ranger or take a nature hike with a national park ranger?

While it can be a transforming experience for children and adults alike, there are really very few who get to have that experience. There are millions of kids however who are becoming disconnected with nature and do not have that opportunity to go to a national park. In many ways our state and local parks, our urban parks and our regional parks are the answer.

NRPA recently sent out a survey to public park and recreation agencies to learn what programs and facilities the public sector is providing to connect kids with nature and the outdoors. We sent it to about 2,000 agencies and about 250 to 300 responded. We are still analyzing the data, but among the findings 68 percent of local, municipal, regional public park and recreation agencies provide nature programs for the public.

That means that fully one-third do not. The most successful nature-based programs by agency measures were nature-based education programs in cooperation with local schools followed by nature-based summer camps and nature day camps. Sixty-one percent of the public park and recreation agencies surveyed had nature-based parks and facilities such as nature centers, outdoor classrooms or self-guided nature trails.

However, that means that 40 percent of public park and recreation agencies responding had no such nature facilities. Interestingly, over 74 percent of public park and recreation agencies utilized public/private partnerships for nature activities. Fifty-three percent had partnerships with the private sector to manage parks and operate facilities.

Tellingly, 91 percent of agencies that were not offering nature-based programs declared they would do so if they had adequate funding available for staff and additional resources. Eighty percent of agencies said they were interested in opening new nature-based facilities if funds were available. You know, some of these preliminary findings are surprising.

That one-third of public park and recreation agencies offer no nature-based programs at all show that there could be significant gaps in opportunities for parents and children to connect with nature through close-to-home park and recreation facilities. Of equal concern is that 40 percent of public park and recreation agencies did not have nature-based parks or facilities.

However, there was good news in the survey results. We found that although admittedly from a small sample of a fraction of the total number of local park and recreation agencies we learned that these 250 agencies alone had more than 1.3 million children under the age of 13 who participated in nature-based programs in 2006, and that their programs also served 170,000 teenagers.

Even if 40 percent of these 250 agencies had no dedicated nature parks the remaining agencies who responded had more than 350,000 acres public land devoted primarily to nature. We believe that the heart of the challenge to connect kids to nature is a connection of parks and public lands. Children must be able to have safe access to parks and public lands, and the importance of such a connection to the land cannot be overestimated.

We have come to see that having close-to-home access to nature and parks is vital to kids establishing and maintaining a lifelong connection to nature and the outdoors. The effort to connect kids to the outdoors and to come to love nature, though, is one in which the challenges should not be minimized.

We continue to ask ourselves how do we get a generation of kids interested in nature if their parents may not even be interested in nature or, worse, fearful at turning them loose to go exploring in fields, forests and wetlands like we used to. In fact, in discussions with nature and program facility managers I found them to be quite perplexed about how to deal with the perception of a safety issue.

Many think it is far safer for kids to play in natural areas than to be on the streets or perhaps cruising the internet, but the perception of the lack of safety is real and it can create fear. We jokingly suggested perhaps we need dog parks for kids where parents can turn their kids loose to turn over rocks and streams, and go exploring and feel completely at ease about their safety.

All joking aside, there is a significant and important role that the Federal Government plays in enabling kids to connect with nature. The Land and Water Conservation Fund State Assistance Program is a perfect example of how the Department of the Interior can play a vital role in connecting kids to nature. Since the beginning of this

program over \$4 billion and 41,000 projects have been aided with local and state government.

It is the one Federal program that buys land, protects in perpetuity and makes it available for the public. Just to give you an idea, in the last seven years there have been 3,300 Land and Water Conservation Fund projects and over a half billion dollars of Federal assistance matched by a half billion dollars of local government assistance. Of these, 800 had directly had nature-related activities, programs or facilities.

There are other programs, too. The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program with the National Park Service, a technical assistance program that helps local communities build greenways, trails, parks, heritage tourism. The Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act, which has not been funded for four years. Vital to connecting the hardest to serve, the hardest to reach kids.

I have given you prepared testimony with many examples of local Land and Water Fund projects, many in your own districts. I urge you to consider looking at that and see what the Land and Water Conservation Fund has done for your communities in your states.

Mr. GRIJALVA. If I may, sir, I am going to have to ask you to—

Mr. DOLESH. Yes, sir. I am glad to close. We will not meet this challenge unless we are prepared to take bold action. This should be a national priority for us, and you are uniquely positioned to do something meaningful about it. We stand ready with a host of private sector, nonprofit educational institutions to deliver with the Federal Government agencies and the Federal investment, and we thank you for your help and the opportunity to do this.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dolesh follows:]

**Statement of Richard J. Dolesh, Director of Public Policy,  
National Recreation and Park Association**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Madame Chairman, and members of the subcommittees. My name is Richard Dolesh and I am the Director of Public Policy for the National Recreation and Park Association. I am pleased to present testimony on the subject of reconnecting kids with nature and the outdoors.

By way of background, I worked for 30 years in parks, recreation, and conservation, beginning in 1972 for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and then from 1999 to 2002 for the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources. I began my career as a park naturalist and came to manage natural area parks and develop nature interpretation facilities and programs for the public. I have had extensive experience working with children and youth as well as park visitors of all ages in nature-based programs, nature education facilities, and natural area parks.

Since 2002, I have been employed by the National Recreation and Park Association, first as a Senior Policy Associate, and since 2005, as the Director of Public Policy.

NRPA is a national non-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to advancing parks, recreation, and conservation efforts that enhance the quality of life for all people. NRPA's network of more than 20,000 citizen and professional members represents public parks and recreation at all levels. NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy lifestyles, recreation opportunities for all Americans, and the conservation of our nation's natural and cultural resources.

Connecting children to nature and the outdoors always has been a core mission of public parks and recreation. However, it has become evident in recent years that both children and their parents have begun to lose touch with nature and the outdoors. In fact, this trend is reaching crisis proportions among some age groups, and the fears that a generation of kids is losing touch with the essential values and rewards that nature and outdoor recreation bring. This trend is of great concern to the members of the National Recreation and Park Association.

I would like to offer a few observations from my personal experiences and from knowledge gained from colleagues working in parks and recreation across the country. I would also like to offer some comments on what we at NRPA see as the vital role that the federal government can and should play in bringing solutions to this urgent challenge. Finally, I would like to offer some comments about what public parks and recreation at the local, regional, and state level can do to contribute solutions, for it is in close-to-home parks that kids have the greatest opportunity to reconnect with nature and the outdoors. Many ask, what can the federal government do and what can Congress do to help reverse this disturbing trend?

It is abundantly clear that the federal government has an essential and continuing role to play in connecting kids to nature. Our extensive system of federal public lands and the many interpretive services and educational opportunities in our national parks, forests, and other federal public lands constitutes the best system of parks, facilities, and programs in the world. Based on a long history and tradition of interpretive programs and services, park rangers and naturalists have become iconic figures in American history in the ways that they have connected families and children to nature and natural history over nearly one hundred years of service. They have communicated not just the facts of natural science, but a love of nature and a philosophy of stewardship that has built knowledge and a love of nature in generations of those who share in the experience.

As the 100th anniversary of the National Park System approaches, it is entirely fitting that funding and resources are in place to welcome visitors to learn and enjoy our magnificent national parks.

However, how many kids can go to a national park and participate in a nature hike or a ranger-led campfire program? While this can be a transforming experience for children and adults alike, there really are very few who are able to participate in such activities. There are millions of kids who are becoming disconnected with nature who will not have the opportunity for a national park experience.

NRPA is attempting to gain an overview of just what local and regional park and recreation agencies are doing to provide close-to-home places for kids and adults to connect with nature and the outdoors. At the initiative of two of our professional branches, the National Society for Park Resources (NSPR) and the American Park and Recreation Society (APRS), NRPA recently sent out a survey to about 1900 public park and recreation agencies to learn what programs and facilities the public sector is providing to connect kids to nature and the outdoors. The survey questions focused primarily on what type of nature-based programs, parks, and facilities these agencies had, if any, and what opportunities they offered to the public to connect with nature.

Approximately 250 agencies responded, and while the data is still being analyzed, there are some highlights to share from those agencies that responded:

- 68% of public park and recreation agencies provide nature programs for the public, but nearly one third have appeared to have no nature programs.
- Of the public park and recreation agencies that do provide nature programs, naturalist led nature hikes are largest type of nature program, offered by 82% of agencies, but 69% had nature arts and crafts activities, 63% had fishing related activities, and 63% had nature based summer camps or day camps.
- The most successful nature based programs by agency measures were nature-based education programs in cooperation with local schools, followed by nature based summer camps
- 61% of the public park and recreation agencies surveyed had nature-based parks and facilities such as nature centers, outdoor classrooms, or self-guided nature trails. However, nearly 40% of the public park and recreation agencies responding had no nature-based parks or facilities.
- Over 74% of public park and recreation agencies utilized public/private partnerships for nature activities, and 53% had partnerships in managing and operating facilities
- 91% of agencies that were not offering nature based programs declared they would do so if adequate funding were available for staff. 80% of agencies are interested in opening new nature based facilities if funds were available.

Some of these preliminary findings are surprising. That one third of public park and recreation agencies offer no nature based programs at all show there could be significant gaps in opportunities for parents and children to connect with nature through close-to-home park and recreation nature-based programs.

Of equal concern is that nearly 40% of responding public park and recreation agencies said that they have no dedicated nature parks or facilities. If these results prove to be true for a larger sample of public park and recreation agencies, this is a signal for concern.

However, there is good news from public park and recreation agencies as well. While this survey is admittedly only a snapshot from a fraction of the total number of public park and recreation agencies in the nation, we learned that these 250 agencies alone had more than 1.3 million children under age 13 who participated in nature-based programs in 2006, and their programs also served more than 170,000 teenagers. And even if 40% of the 250 responding agencies have no dedicated nature parks, the remaining agencies protect more than 350,000 acres of public park land devoted primarily to nature.

At the heart of the challenge to connect kids to nature and the outdoors is a connection to parks and public lands. Children must be able to have safe access to parks and public lands, and the importance of such a connection to the land cannot be overstated. We have come to see that having close-to-home access to nature in parks and outdoor recreation areas is vital to kids' establishing and maintaining a lifelong connection to nature and the outdoors.

The effort to reconnect kids to nature and the outdoors is a difficult one, and the challenges must not be minimized. We must continue to ask ourselves, how do we get a generation of kids interested in nature when their parents may not have any interest, or worse, may be fearful of turning their children loose to go exploring in fields and forests and wetlands like we used to.

In fact, in discussions with nature facility and program managers, I have found them to be quite perplexed on how to deal with this perception of safety issue. Many think that it is far safer for kids to play in natural areas than to be on the streets or perhaps even to be cruising websites, but the perception of a lack of safety can create fear. I jokingly suggested that perhaps we need "dogparks for kids" where parents can turn their kids loose to turn over rocks in streams and go exploring and feel completely at ease about their safety.

There is significant and important role that the federal government plays in enabling kids to connect with nature. The federal government, through the federal land managing agencies provides matching grants and technical assistance programs to state and local governments. These matching federal grant programs are vitally important to achieving the goal of connecting children and families to nature and the outdoors because they enable literally thousands of local communities to build parks, develop greenways and trails, conserve open spaces, and protect wildlife habitat—interesting natural places that kids and their parents can visit and get in touch with nature.

This is why the technical assistance programs and matching federal investments made in partnership with states and local communities are so important to the effort to connect kids with the outdoors.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a perfect example. Both the federal side of LWCF and the state side of LWCF enable the purchase of public lands that will be open to the public for recreation, and best of all, in perpetuity. I will concentrate most of my comments on the state side of the LWCF since it has such an impact on helping communities and localities connect kids to the outdoors. And even though my comments about the federal side of LWCF are limited, this part of the program is extremely important to our national public lands since it enables purchase of additions to National Parks, National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and other federal public lands.

By way of brief overview, since the beginning of the LWCF program, the state side of the program has aided almost 41,000 local and state park, recreation, and conservation projects. Almost \$4 billion dollars in matching funds have been provided. These "matching" federal grants are often matched at a much higher rate than 50% since the local and state agencies provide much more in in-kind resources and local funding. Project sponsors commit to keeping the lands and facilities open to the public and available for public use in perpetuity.

The LWCF is the one federal program targeted to conservation and recreation that protects lands and waters and makes them available to the public in perpetuity.

Just to give you an idea of what good the LWCF accomplishes in allowing kids to connect to nature, in just the last seven years, since FY 2000, the LWCF state assistance grants have funded over 3,300 state and local projects with over a half billion dollars in matching assistance. Note that in the past seven years, the states and localities have provided more than one half billion of their locally generated funds to match the federal investment.

Of the 3300 facilities and public lands projects that have been aided in the last seven years, over 800 have included purchase of land or the development of trails. While some might be part of larger parks, 238 projects had campgrounds; 192 had fishing facilities; 21 had public hunting lands; 267 were for natural area parks; and nearly 1000 had facilities for family picnicking.

Just to give you a few examples of LWCF projects that enable kids to connect to nature and the outdoors, some of which are in your home districts, here is a partial list of recent LWCF projects:

#### **State of Washington**

##### *Bainbridge Island—Gazzam Lake acquisition—WA*

LWCF project assisting in the acquisition of 50 acres in addition to 300 acres existing. The acquired parcel will provide an important trail connection for people accessing the park from the south, allowing better pedestrian connectivity. This park protects important forests and wetlands and will also eventually provide a trail linkage to the Puget Sound.

##### *City of Poulsbo—Liberty Bay Park—WA*

LWCF project provided assistance for a new seawall, and a new waterfront trail, as well as lighting and benches, etc. It was recently inspected by a staff member who concluded that the city did a beautiful job in providing waterfront access. The trail also connects with another LWCF site.

Two excellent projects are pending in Bremerton, WA. One is the acquisition of a parcel that will expand the existing Evergreen Park, an urban waterfront park. The other is a park development project at Blueberry Park that will result in a small paved loop trail primarily for children on tricycles and small bikes and additional improvements planned such as restroom and field improvements. This park is within walking distance of a school.

#### **State of Oregon**

##### *Bezell Memorial Forest Development—Benton County, OR*

Project funds are being used to construct a recreational and interpretative infrastructure in Bezell Memorial Forest, a forest-conservation zone resource near Corvallis, Oregon. The project will complete the site's trail loop system, install interpretive signs, construct bridges for pedestrian creek crossings, construct two open forest observation shelters, and remove invasive species along creek riparian areas.

##### *Clearwater/Vinyard Park Acquisition—Willamalane Park and Recreation District, OR*

Project funds were used to acquire a 17.6-acre addition to Clearwater Park. in Springfield, Oregon. It provides surrounding residents public access to the Springfield Millrace and Willamette River. Possible future site development includes pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian trails; picnic facilities, and interpretative signs and kiosks.

#### **State of Maryland**

##### *Chesapeake Bay Conservation Easement & Land Acquisition—Centreville, MD*

Total Cost—\$4,180,000, LWCF Assistance—\$1,250,000

This project is a Federal, State and County (Queen Anne's) partnership that acquired 312+ acres of farmland previously known as the Riggs farm in the Town of Centreville. This property will be used for multiple recreation purposes that include active and passive outdoor recreation development, preservation of wildlife and water quality areas and a demonstration farm. Activities will be developed to meet a wide variety of recreational needs for children, youth, adults and senior citizens.

#### **State of New Jersey**

##### *Hoboken Waterfront Park—NJ*

Total Cost—\$3,026,840, LWCF Assistance—\$1,513,420

This project acquired 2.03+ acres of prime property near the waterfront along the Hudson River with views of Mid-Manhattan in a densely populated area in the City of Hoboken and Weehawken Township. The city plans to link this property with Hoboken Cove Park (across the street) with a pedestrian walkway beneath Park Avenue. The city also intends to develop active and passive recreation amenities including walkways, benches, lighting, and landscaping. The proposed development will provide children, youth, adults and senior citizens with neighborhood recreational opportunities that are close-to-home.

#### **State of New York**

##### *Roe Park, Highland Falls, NY*

Total Cost—\$500,000, LWCF Assistance—\$250,000

LWCF assistance will help renovate Roe Park, a 9.45+ acre facility in the Village of Highland Falls. The park is being rehabilitated due to safety concerns and over-

use of existing facilities. Proposed work includes improvements to the picnic area, sports and playfields, pond renovation and support facilities. Once the proposed development is completed, children, youths, adults and senior citizens will enjoy a safer and more user friendly park recreation experience.

#### **State of West Virginia**

*April Dawn Park, Huntington, WV*

Total Cost—\$519,840, LWCF Assistance—\$259,920

The Greater Huntington Parks and Recreation District used LWCF assistance to create this unique playground for children that has a play structure of a fictitious monster “Teays Valley Monster” that is the first water playground structure in West Virginia. One section contains the face and spray apparatus of the monster, the middle section contains play forms that comprise the body, and lastly, the monster’s tail contains a sand mystery dig section for children to explore and use their imagination. This play apparatus has become the center piece of this one acre park that is enjoyed by children and youth as adults and senior citizen watch in amazement. The park also has a picnic shelter, comfort station, gazebo, open play area, benches, and walkways.

#### **State of North Carolina**

*Azalea Park, City of Asheville*

LWCF Development assistance at this 150 acre park includes picnic areas, fishing facilities, trails, and support facilities. This site provides activities for a variety of interest and age groups. Three new pedestrian bridges will also be developed in future development phases.

#### **State of Florida**

*Dreher Park, City of West Palm Beach*

Dreher Park, which totals about 100 acres, first received L&WCF assistance in 1976 for site preparation, water and sewer system, irrigation, roads, parking areas, landscaping, picnic facilities, restrooms and other support facilities. The most recent project provided assistance to install 3 new playgrounds, a freshwater fishing pier, and 2 new miles of nature trails at this urban park site. In addition, three existing picnic facilities and the restroom facilities were renovated. Located in a well developed residential area in the southeastern quadrant of the City of West Palm Beach, this park is one of the last remaining parcels of open space bordering I-95 within the City limits. Dreher Park is a unique environmental experience and features different ecosystems, native plantings and freshwater habitat.

#### **State of Louisiana**

*Brechtel, Sam Bonart and Village De L'est Playgrounds New Orleans*

Brechtel Park, which totals 122 acres, is located adjacent to a residential area and while many of its users walk to the park, it is considered a regional park and its users come from the general population of the City. The park has several nature trails, picnic facilities, natural areas, a lagoon, tent pad camping, an exercise trail for the physically challenged and a playground. Bonart Park is also located adjacent to a residential area. In addition, it is bordered on one side by an elementary school and is heavily used by its students. Village De L'Est Park is located adjacent to a residential area and is also bordered on one side by an elementary school. L&WCF assistance was used to replace deteriorated playground equipment at all of these parks.

#### **State of Minnesota**

*City of Baxter—Mississippi River*

Total project costs: \$1,200,000; Federal share: \$ 260,123

In this Land and Water Conservation Fund project, the Trust for Public Land will convey 63 acres overlooking the Mississippi River to the city of Baxter for the creation of a new natural resource-based regional park. This site will serve one of the fastest growing areas of Minnesota, enhance public access to the Mississippi River, and complement an existing state park, state trail, city canoe landing, and nationally significant river corridor.

#### **State of Oklahoma**

*Boley Historical Pond, Boley, OK*

Total project costs: \$26,352; Federal share: \$13,176

The town of Boley (Oklahoma) will utilize this L&WCF grant to create a 1.5-acre recreational fishing pond at the Boley Historical Park. Boley received a previous L&WCF grant for the development of picnic areas and a concession/restroom facility at this same park. Located in Okfuskee County, 67 miles east of Oklahoma City, Boley is nationally significant historically because it is representative of the many towns established by African Americans who migrated from the south to northern and western communities after the abolishment of slavery.

#### **State of Texas**

##### *Penitas Park and Wildlife Refuge, City of Penitas, TX*

Total project costs: \$845,440; Federal share: \$422,720

The city of Penitas, in Hildago County, Texas will utilize a \$422,720 Land and Water Conservation Fund grant to assist in the acquisition and development of the 37.5-acre Penitas Park and Wildlife Refuge. This NPS grant, awarded to the city of Penitas through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, will help the city develop a number of outdoor recreational facilities to include picnic areas, a playground, a natural area with a nature trail, an exercise trail, a fishing pier, shuffleboard courts and horseshoe pits, an exercise garden, a pavilion, and a visitors station. The refuge portion of the project is especially important because it contains native brush habitat as well as a wetlands area. The refuge is situated in a major flyway for migratory birds.

##### *Fort Bend County Regional Park and Trail, Ft. Bend, TX*

Total project costs: \$1,000,000; Federal share: \$500,000

Fort Bend County, Texas, will utilize a \$500,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund grant to assist in the acquisition and development of Regional Park and Trail. This NPS grant, awarded to Fort Bend County through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, will help the county develop a number of outdoor recreational facilities which include picnic areas, a playground, a baseball/softball field, a soccer field, a natural area with a nature/hike trail, and a canoe launch site. Some of the donated 19.2 acres will become a dedicated wetland.

##### *Montgomery County Spring Creek Greenway, Montgomery County, TX*

Total project costs: \$2,000,000; Federal share: \$1,000,000

Montgomery County (Texas) will acquire and develop 407 acres of land along Spring Creek. Spring Creek is the boundary between Montgomery County and Harris County. Spring Creek Greenway straddles the two counties, with access and facilities on both sides of the creek. Montgomery County and Harris County have an interlocal agreement to participate and administer the lands and facilities in this grant application.

Both Montgomery and Harris County plan to preserve, through donations, purchases, or conservation easements, 33 linear miles of forest along Spring Creek. Larger forested preserves, known as gateway parks, will eventually be connected by a forested "trunk line trail." One of the existing gateway parks, John Pundt Park, will also be developed under this L&WCF grant including new picnic areas, a playground, a canoe landing, a natural area with a nature trail, hike/bike/horse trails, a pavilion, trail access routes, and a restroom facility.

This Spring Creek Greenway project will connect and protect over 800 acres of forest, on both sides of the creek, in order to preserve, protect, restore, and educate the public about an ecological gem—a biologically diverse ecosystem that provides important habitat for many wildlife species just north of Houston.

##### *Hays County San Marcos Springs Conservation Park, Hays County, TX*

Total project costs: \$800,000; Federal share: \$400,000

Hays County, Texas, will utilize a \$400,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant to assist in the development of the 250.7 acre San Marcos Springs Conservation Park. This NPS grant, will help the county create a new park and develop a number of outdoor recreational facilities to include; picnic areas, tent campsites, a natural area with a nature trail, xeriscape garden, amphitheater, wildlife/wetlands observation stations, and a night-time classroom.

##### *Houston Sims Woods Park, Houston, TX*

Total project costs: \$800,000; Federal share: \$400,000

The city of Houston, Harris County, Texas will utilize a \$400,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant to assist in the acquisition and development of 27.3 acres of land at Sims Woods Park. This NPS grant, awarded to the city of Houston through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, will help the city create a new 75.3 acre park which will include a canoe launch site; a natural area with

a nature trail and numerous outdoor teaching/observation stations related to nature/wetlands; and, cultural topics.

This is just a small sample of the hundreds of LWCF projects that have been funded in the past seven years. However, since 2005, the LWCF has not been funded to the level it should be, and NRPA and a host of national, regional, and local conservation and recreation advocacy groups have brought this matter to Congress. In fact, we find it very difficult to understand that in the face of this urgent national challenge that the Administration would propose terminating this extremely valuable and worthwhile program for the past three years. The LWCF state assistance program is proposed for termination and zero funding in the 2008 budget. We hope that the members of this committee, along with all the Members of Congress, see the worth of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and recommend that Congress restore an adequate and appropriate level of funding, at least \$100 million, for 2008.

There are a number of other technical assistance programs and matching federal grant programs that enable local communities to do more to provide nature-based programs, parks, and facilities to families and children that are close to home, safe, and easily accessible.

These programs include the National Park Service's River's Trails and Conservation Assistance program, a technical assistance program that provides planning assistance and coordination among government agencies and private sector entities for greenways, hiker-biker trails, water trails, heritage tourism promotion, and assistance with local projects that connect kids with nature and the outdoors. The \$8.2 million RTCA program budget has suffered a series of cuts in recent years, but is proposed for a \$650,000 increase in 2008. The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Coalition, a group of national and regional advocacy organizations has called for a \$3.8 million increase in the program budget for 2008 which would restore the program to its 2002 level and enable it to do more projects annually, projects that would undeniably contribute to connecting kids with nature.

Another National Park Service program that assists cities and urban counties rehabilitate deteriorating urban park facilities is the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR), authorized under the UPARR Act of 1978. The National Park Service has provided matching federal funds for 1529 urban park projects. However, UPARR has not received funding since 2002, and is in danger of being terminated. Congress must act to revitalize this necessary and important program that enables cities to reach their most at risk and underserved kids to help them reconnect with nature. NRPA along with a number of national organizations has requested that \$30 million be appropriated for UPARR in 2008.

There are many not for profit, educational, philanthropic and conservation organizations that are poised and ready to be partners in this effort. NRPA, for example, is taking several specific initiatives to better connect kids to nature and the outdoors. Our National Partnerships department is coordinating the innovative Teens Outside program with a generous grant from the Outdoor Industry Foundation. The Teens Outside pilot program, first modeled in Asheville, NC, is an eight week outdoor skills and activities program designed to get teens involved through outdoor recreation such as mountain biking, kayaking, hiking, and rock climbing. The hope is that the experiences of the 20 agencies in expanded pilot programs will lead to a nationwide model for other communities and agencies.

Also, NRPA in cooperation with the National Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) is implementing the "2007 Take Me Fishing Community Initiative," a program to encourage development of community based fishing and boating education and appreciation programs. Resources to eligible communities may include grants-in-aid, equipment grants, and scholarships to training workshops, as well as program materials, promotional material and toolkits. This initiative is expected to eventually involve hundreds of communities.

There is much that Congress and the federal agencies can do to address this urgent national crisis. First and foremost should be to commit to providing funds for those matching grant programs and technical assistance programs that can do the most good to connect kids to the outdoors. With your help, local park and recreation agencies are poised and ready to provide safe, close-to-home places for kids and their parents to explore nature on their own terms.

We will not meet this challenge unless we are prepared to take bold action. This should be a national priority, and you are uniquely positioned to take actions that will meaningfully address the crisis. However, we respectfully point out that it cannot be done at the sacrifice of those programs and services that also needed and doing so much good. It is vital to connect our national public lands and resources to state, regional, and local parks and conservation lands. In this way we can build long-lasting partnerships that go to the heart of every community, and strengthen and support each other in this mission, which will not be accomplished in a year

or even a decade. Your help and your leadership is truly needed, and our children yet to come will thank you for it.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir. Mr. Dale Penny, CEO, Student Conservation Association. Mr. Penny, I understand you have a guest that we will yield some time, too, and introduce for the Committee?

Mr. PENNY. I do, sir. I will do it.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Mr. PENNY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**STATEMENT OF DALE PENNY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, ACCOMPANIED BY  
JEREMY BYLER**

Mr. PENNY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Dale Penny. I am President of the Student Conservation Association or SCA, and I want to thank you for inviting Jeremy Byler, a student member of SCA, and me to be here today to speak about one successful and sustaining model of getting young people connected to the outdoors. SCA's mission for the past half Century has been to connect young people to our natural world and through meaningful hands-on service create the next generation of conservation leaders.

SCA was started by a young woman still in college who saw the need to engage young people in helping preserve national parks, and since then nearly 50,000 high school and college age students have volunteered through SCA to provide over 26 million hours of service in America's parks, forests and public lands in all 50 states.

The results of these efforts has not only been an enormous benefit to the environment and the agencies, but it has also attracted and inspired thousands of young people to form a lifelong connection with the natural world and for many of them to pursue conservation careers. In fact, the National Park Service reports in an informal survey that about 10 percent of its field staff employees were Student Conservation Association alumni.

Key to SCA's success over these 50 years has been that we have operated as a genuine public/private partnering organization with the public land management agencies through a cooperative agreement. SCA and each agency share a commitment and work together to accomplish a critical public purpose, to preserve this nation's natural and historical heritage while attracting and preparing the next generation of conservation stewards.

Today as we have heard the need to engage young people with nature is more acute than ever. As this nation becomes more diverse and more urban it is essential that our Federal agencies reach out in new ways to embrace new populations and make the experience on public lands more relevant to diverse backgrounds, and that the agencies themselves become more representative of the changing face of our nation.

Here is some of what I have learned about youth and nature through SCA. First, young children find real joy in nature when introduced in a fun way and especially when they see role models of high school students and college students leading them and enjoying the outdoors. The older youth act as a sort of a pied piper in a way that older adults just cannot.

Second, children connect with and learn more from nature when they are engaged in fun, hands-on activities to protect the land, whether that be trail building, or tree planting, or gardening. This touches something deep within them and changes their relationship to that place.

Finally, when young people are actively engaged in exploring and giving back to the land they leave the environment healthier, but they also realize more of their personal potential, develop the ethics and commitment to become engaged citizens, proponents for protecting our public lands and active conservation votes.

Therefore, I have three specific recommendations for these Committees in order to overcome some administrative barriers and enhance the value of nonprofit partners working with Federal agencies.

1. Explicitly authorize the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to enter into cooperative agreements with nonprofits that engage young people in voluntary conservation service learning experiences on our public lands, especially those organizations that actively reach out to diverse populations. Cooperative agreements are the appropriate legal instrument to memorialize the respective roles the Federal Land Management Agency and the nonprofit partners have in accomplishing this public purpose.

2. Encourage the bureaus to develop more programs in partnership with nonprofits in which high school and college age young people serve as role models for outreach and education of young children such as the Junior Ranger Program which is administered by the National Park Service and SCA members participate in as Ambassadors.

3. With appropriate youth serving nonprofits such as SCA open the door for our young people to qualify for entry level jobs within the interior and agricultural bureaus. These actions would enable us as nonprofits to be more effective partners with the land management agencies and attract a more diverse new generation of young conservation professionals who will in turn inspire and engender a love for the outdoors with many more children through environmental education, outdoor adventure and hands-on experience in nature.

I look forward to answering any questions you might have. As you mentioned I actually have two of our current students that are here with us today. I want to introduce first is Monica Baltimore back here, and then Jeremy Byler is going to say a few words about his experience. Maybe he can say more than all of us have been able to say about this so far.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Penny follows:]

**Statement of Dale Penny, President,  
Student Conservation Association**

My name is Dale Penny, President of the Student Conservation Association (SCA). Thank you for inviting Jeremy Byler, a student member of SCA, and me here today to speak about SCA's efforts to get kids outdoors. Nothing could be closer to those of us who work with the Student Conservation Association. SCA's mission, for the past half century, has been to connect young people to our natural world through meaningful hands-on service and create the next generation of conservation leaders.

SCA was started in 1957 by Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam who saw the need to engage young people in helping preserve National Parks. Since then, nearly

50,000 high school and college students have volunteered through SCA to provide over 26 million hours of conservation service in America's parks, forests and public lands. SCA student volunteers have served from the back country of Alaska to the urban centers of America's great cities in all 50 states.

The results of these efforts has not only been an enormous benefit to our environment and land management agencies, but it has also attracted thousands of young people to form a lifelong connection with the natural world and for many of them to become rangers, scientists, environmental educators and resource managers within all the bureaus of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture. In fact, the National Park Service has informally estimated that over 10% of its current employees were Student Conservation Association volunteers.

Key to SCA's success over these 50 years has been that we have operated as a genuine Partnering organization with the public land management agencies through a Cooperative Agreement. SCA and each agency share a commitment and work together to accomplish a critical public purpose: to preserve this nation's natural and historical heritage while attracting and preparing the next generation of conservation stewards.

I will note that a number of members of the Natural Resources Committee have experience with SCA. Representative Jay Inslee's parents led SCA crews on Mount Rainier when he was young, and Representatives Jim Costa, Ron Kind and Henry Brown have each had SCA interns in their Congressional offices to learn about resource management policy before completing their internship in a National Park where they learned about the practical application of those policies. I believe these Representatives can readily attest to the value of developing a love of nature and a conservation ethic at a young age.

Today the need to engage young people with nature is more acute than ever for all the reasons that have been outlined and for which these committees are meeting. Therefore, I will not take the committee's time elaborating. I will, however, add that as this nation becomes more diverse and more urban, it is essential that our federal agencies reach out in new ways to embrace new populations and make the experience on public lands more relevant to diverse backgrounds, and that they become more representative of the changing face of our nation.

Here is what I have learned about youth and nature through SCA:

First, most young children find real joy in nature when introduced in a fun way and when they see role models, especially high school and college students, enjoying the outdoors.

Second, children connect with and learn more from nature when they are engaged in hands-on activities to protect the land rather than simply being in the outdoors. This can always be done in age-appropriate and fun ways.

Third, teens and young adults are a valuable asset to land managers by getting actual work done while serving as examples for younger children.

Fourth, non-profit organizations that focus on youth and conservation provide essential complementary capabilities for federal agencies when they are embraced as full partners.

Finally, when young people are actively engaged in giving back to the land they leave the environment healthier, realize more of their personal potential and develop the ethics and commitment to become engaged citizens, proponents for protecting our public lands and conservation voters.

Therefore, we have three specific recommendations for these committees in order to overcome administrative barriers and enhance the value of non-profit partners working with federal agencies:

I. Explicitly authorize the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to enter into Cooperative Agreements with non-profits that engage young people in volunteer conservation service-learning experiences on our public lands, especially those national and local not-profits that actively reach out to diverse populations. Cooperative agreements are the appropriate legal instrument to memorialize the respective roles of the federal land management agency and non-profit partners in accomplishing this public purpose.

II. Encourage the bureaus to develop more programs, in partnership with non-profits, in which high school and college-aged young people serve as role models for outreach and education of young children, such as the Junior Ranger program administered by the National Park Service.

III. With appropriate youth serving non-profits, such as SCA, open the door for our young people to qualify for entry level jobs within the Interior and Agriculture departments.

These actions would enable us to be a more effective partner with the land management agencies and attract a more diverse new generation of young conservation professionals who will, in turn, engender a love for the outdoors with many more

children through environmental education, outdoor adventure and hands-on experience in nature.

Thank you.

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**STATEMENT OF JEREMY BYLER, SENIOR,  
SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

Mr. BYLER. Mr. Chairman, distinguished representatives, my name is Jeremy Byler, and I have the lofty task of representing the youth bracket that we are talking about. I live in Washington, D.C., and I am a senior at the School Without Walls Senior High School here in the District. I have been involved with the Student Conservation Association for four years and have been on two of the Organization's month-long summer crews, one in Yellowstone National Park and another in the White Mountains of Alaska.

In the four years that I have been involved with SCA, I have gone through considerable growth. The experience has opened my eyes to a world much larger than the D.C. metropolitan area. I am a strong believer in the power of experiential learning and have many stories that have impacted my life. The one that sticks out the most to me is my first Student Conservation Association summer crew to Yellowstone back in 2004.

Before this trip I was an incredibly shy and timid person who was hesitant to talk in public or try anything new. I came out of the experience as an outspoken and passionate advocate for conservation. The experience of being away from my family and familiar surroundings taught me a greater independence and has allowed me to finally begin speaking my thoughts and passions instead of just holding them inside.

The crew members become a supportive family of friends that encourages and teaches one another, learns from each other and fosters growth and development in each of its members. If not for this experience designing and building bridges, camping 15 miles away from a dirt road, roughing it out in the wild for a month and gaining confidence from a supportive crew, I would not psychologically be able to get up in front of a group of people, let us say Members of Congress, and speak my mind.

Since returning from Yellowstone, I have become an avid public speaker, and I have spoken at the Conservation Learning Summit among leaders in the National Park Service and other conservation organizations, and I was on a panel at the D.C. Green Festival in 2006 discussing the importance of youth in conservation. Due to my experiences with the Student Conservation Association, I have grown as a leader and passionate advocate in the conservation field.

Strictly because of my involvement with SCA I have now devoted my life to conservation. In fact, in the fall I will begin pursuing a degree in civil and environmental engineering at Bucknell University. As I continue to grow in this next stage of my life, I feel confident that the independence and the awe-inspiring wonder that I experienced through my summer crews will continue to act as catalysts for the journey.

SCA sent me out and reconnected this kid with the outdoors, and I am forever changed because of it. I strongly wish this experience for any and every youth across the nation. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, Jeremy, and I appreciate your comments. If it were not for the protocol, I would probably ask you to continue to chair this meeting. Mr. Alan Lambert, Scout Executive, National Capital Area Council. Sir, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF ALAN F. LAMBERT, SCOUT EXECUTIVE,  
NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL, BOY SCOUTS OF  
AMERICA**

Mr. LAMBERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to come today and discuss with you one of the most challenging issues that we face in the healthy development of our children. Regardless of where we grew up most of us remember a much different childhood than the youth of today. Unstructured outdoor play was a significant part of our early childhood. For us suburban and urban kids, mom's rule to come in when the streetlights came on was the time boundary we had.

Vacant lots became the frontier. Forts and treehouses were built in open spaces. Games, stickball, softball, dodgeball, football, capture the flag, kick the can, tag, you name it, were the order of the day. The games had no adult supervision and were put together by groups of kids playing. Members needed to be recruited, the rules were set and off we went.

We played and played, forgetting the pressures of the day, learning to resolve our conflicts and in most cases coming home slightly after the streetlights went on. Somewhere along the way we have forgotten the importance of unstructured play in the healthy development of our children's lives. The incredible discoveries that are found in a stream or an open field are being replaced by surfing the web.

The healthy competitions found in the games of my childhood are being replaced by the individual competition found in the gaming world. Play has become organized and structured. Everything has a time and a place, a need for sign ups, mom or dad's help and transportation. Come home when the streetlights come on has been replaced by a schedule of activities to participate in, much like school, or by the words entertain yourself, which to today's youth means something electronic.

The result is a loss of imagination and the skyrocketing health issues associated with youth obesity and behavior. Was the energy that we burned playing each day a result of ADD or ADHD or did play provide the therapy for the restless active youth of my day? The Boy Scouts of America has been an outlet for the energies of boys for almost 100 years. Established by congressional charter our mission is to instill values in young people helping them to achieve their fullest potential.

The classroom we use for character development is the outdoors. The founder of scouting, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, observed the youth of London using military training manuals as part of their play. He felt that if these youth, usually poor, inner-city youth without structure at home, were excited by what they read in these manuals he could design a program that focused them on outdoor skills, fitness and fun.

In the process they also learned a code to live by, to be responsible and disciplined and the importance of being self-reliant.

American naturalists Dan Beard and Ernest Thompson Seton saw the possibilities in combining a love of the outdoors with Baden-Powell's plan and helped design the core of the programs we use today. The results are impressive.

Since 1910 over 100 million youth have experienced the fun and adventure of scouting in America. Almost all of them participate in the core outdoor programs: camping, hiking, conservation and learning the skills to protect and enhance the natural environment around us. In 2006 more than one million youth experienced long-term outdoor camping programs. We operated 404 scout summer camps across America and many millions more participated in short-term weekend camping and hiking programs throughout the year.

I represent the National Capital Area Council which serves the youth and families of 16 counties in Maryland and Virginia plus the District of Columbia. In that territory we serve over 85,000 youth in our programs. The core of our strategy is to implement the mission of scouting through the outdoors. We have taken this responsibility seriously. In 1996 our Council acquired the property that Disney had targeted to become a northern Virginia theme park.

Located less than 50 miles west of the capital near Haymarket, Virginia, this property was perfect for our mission. After a period of planning and development and an investment of \$18 million we opened the property for full programming last year. When fully operational Camp William B. Snyder will allow us to expose thousands of youth to the fun and adventure of the outdoors.

We also operate Goshen Scout Reservation, a 3,500 acre traditional scout camp located near Lexington, Virginia. Since 1966 Goshen has been a place where thousands of youth have learned to camp, cook their first meal, participate in a conservation project and have fun. Besides the periods of instruction everything that happens at camp is aimed at fun with a purpose.

A couple of our local efforts with those of our national office, places like Philmont Scout Ranch, the Florida Sea Base and the Northern Minnesota Canoe Base. The Boy Scouts of America have committed to using the outdoors as a platform to help develop healthy children, but the story does not stop there. All across America scouts use public lands as part of their program.

From local community parks to our nation's largest forests scouts connect their inside learning with outside applications. Fun with a purpose has practical, educational meaning. The impact on fitness is also huge. Prepare for a 25 mile hike at 10,000 feet in the mountains of New Mexico carrying a 40 pound backpack. You will learn the definition of fitness real quick.

So why is this important? Why should we be discussing some fun childhood memories here in Congress? Interestingly, our success with connecting youth with nature has a direct impact on many of the issues we have wrestled with today. Let me offer you some examples. First, the issue of youth fitness is the most obvious and most pressing to today's healthcare debate.

If you think sports programs are the answer, from 1981 to 1997 youth participation in organized sports increased by 27 percent across America. It is ironic that the childhood obesity issue has

coincided with this increase. One wonders if the strict schedules and lack of unsupervised play are more the issue. Access to parks, public lands and outdoor programs are certainly part of the solution.

Next, consider the availability of individuals interested in science, technology and math. As we continue to structure our lives we take away the most potent tool in our toolbox, fostering their imagination, innovation and dreams. Connecting with nature and allowing unstructured play time provide a tremendous and proven method for sparking an interest in America's lifelong pursuit.

Last, I believe the outdoors provide us with a platform for our great partnerships between government, business, educators and parents. There are few places that can effectively bring this large group together. Whether for social or educational purposes, our outdoor resources are places that people can gather. Strategic partnerships can be created to link with schools, and parks and camps to teach science, and math and the outdoors, presenting these subjects in a totally different light—fun with a purpose.

Almost 100 years ago when asked what makes a good scout leader—

Mr. GRIJALVA. Sir, I am going to have to ask you to wrap it up.

Mr. LAMBERT. Robert Baden-Powell thought a moment and said a good leader of youth is someone who can find adventure in a mud puddle. As we debate the issues that confront us, let us always be mindful that our children need places to play, to dream the dreams that will take us to new places, and to learn to be good stewards of the open spaces entrusted to us. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lambert follows:]

**Statement of Alan F. Lambert, Scout Executive,  
National Capital Area Council, Boy Scouts of America**

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to discuss one of the most challenging issues that we face in the healthy development of our children. The picture isn't pretty—our youth have retreated indoors, to a life that revolves around electronic games, television, and the internet. The result we see is also not a pretty one—youth obesity rates are reaching epidemic proportions; the impacts of this will be felt for years to come.

Regardless of where we grew up, most of us remember a much different childhood than the youth of today. Unstructured outdoor play was a significant part of our early childhood. For us suburban and urban kids Mom's rule to "come home when the street lights come on" was the time boundary we had. Vacant lots became the frontier. Forts and tree houses were built in open spaces. Games—stickball, softball, dodge ball, football, capture the flag, kick the can, tag—you name it—were the order of the day. The games had no adult supervision and were put together by group of kids playing. Members needed to be recruited, the rules were set and off we went. We played and played—forgetting the pressures of the day, learning to resolve our conflicts, and in most cases—coming home slightly after the street lights went on.

Somewhere along the way, we have forgotten the importance of unstructured play in the healthy development of our children's lives. The incredible discoveries that are found in a stream or an open field are being replaced by surfing the web. The healthy competitions found in the games of my childhood are being replaced by the individual competition found in the gaming world—play stations, Xboxes, et cetera. Play has become organized and structured—everything has a time and a place, a need for sign ups, mom or dad's help, and transportation. "Come home when the street light come on" has been replaced by a schedule of activities to participate in—much like school or by the words "entertain yourself"—which to today's youth means something electronic. The result is a loss of imagination and the skyrocketing health issues associated with obesity and behavior. Was the energy that we burned playing each day a result of ADD or ADHD or did play provide the therapy for the restless, active youth of my day? I'll point you at an excellent resource for these issues—a book

titled “The Last Child in the Woods” by Richard Louv which discusses the impacts of the nature deficit and some great solutions.

The Boy Scouts of America has been an outlet for the energies of boys for almost 100 years. Established by Congressional Charter, our mission is to instill values in young people helping them to achieve their fullest potential. The classroom we use for character development is the outdoors. The founder of Scouting Lord Robert Baden-Powell observed the youth of London using military training manuals as part of their play. He felt that if these youth, usually poor inner city youth without structure at home, were excited by what they read in these manuals he could design a program that focused them on outdoor skills, fitness, and fun. In the process they also learned a code to live by, to be responsible and disciplined, and the importance of being self-reliant. American Naturalists Dan Beard and Ernest Thompson Seton saw the possibilities of combining a love of the outdoors with Baden-Powell’s plan and helped design the core of programs we use today.

The results are impressive. Since 1910, over 100 million youth have experienced the fun and adventure of Scouting in America. Almost all of them participate in the core outdoor programs—camping, hiking, conservation, and learning the skills to protect and enhance the natural environment around us. In 2006, more than 1 million youth experienced long-term outdoor camping programs—we operated 404 Scout summer camps across America—and many millions more participated in short-term weekend camping and hiking programs throughout the year.

Recently, the BSA commissioned the folks at Louis Harris & Associates to look at the outcomes of Boy Scout Summer Camp. They found through their survey of youth and parents some interesting benefits beyond the obvious connections to the outdoors and fitness requirements.

Scouts indicate that summer camp is more than just a place to have fun. It also offers Scouts the opportunity to participate in physically and intellectually challenging activities, introduces them to new and rewarding experiences, and provides them with supportive and caring relationships.

This study infers that positive outcomes of Scout summer camp occur because the environment and activities at camp incorporate all of the elements of healthy youth development.

*Strong Personal Values and Character.* Reflective and thought-provoking activities are one avenue through which summer camp helps build strong values and character.

*Positive Sense of Self-Worth and Usefulness.* Summer camp helps to instill a positive sense of self-worth and usefulness in young people by providing them with service opportunities, as well as positive peer-to-peer and intergenerational communications. In addition, summer camp helps to build young people’s leadership skills, confidence, and self-esteem.

*Caring and Nurturing Relationships with Parents, Other Adults, and Peers.* Summer camp builds caring and nurturing relationships by engaging young people in group activities with both peers and adults. And for a majority of Scouts, strong bonds of friendship are developed at summer camp.

*A Desire to Learn.* Summer camp inspires young people to think about nature and consider the environment.

*Productive and Creative Use of Time.* Summer camp provides young people with productive and creative uses for their time by offering a valuable mix of both physical and intellectual activities.

*Social Adeptness.* Summer camp helps young people to become more socially adept by offering them opportunities to participate in and contribute to team-building activities.

Overall, parents speak highly of and appear very impressed with Scout summer camps. Nationally, 93 percent of parents say their son’s summer camp experience met or exceeded their expectations. Almost all (96 percent) say they would recommend Scout summer camp to others.

Leaders enjoy and appreciate their time spent at Scout summer camps. Nationally, 94 percent of leaders say they met all or some of their goals, and 53 percent say their experience was better than they thought it would be.

Leaders who attend Boy Scout summer camp overwhelmingly agree that the camp offers them the following benefits:

- Played a role in helping young people succeed/grow
- Helped youth realize their own abilities
- Was with people I respect
- Built friendships with youth

## Findings from Scout Journals

### *Strong Personal Values and Character*

A strong sense of character is evident when a person chooses to do what is right, even when no one else is around. A person's character is built from the inside out. It starts and ends within the individual. To build this critical trait, young men need opportunities that challenge them personally to consider their beliefs and to reflect on the things that are important to their growth.

Summer camp supports the building of character and values by engaging young men in things like "decision making" (80 percent) and "flag ceremonies" (68 percent). Additionally, boys at camp participate in religious services/devotions/prayers (67 percent).

As important, Scouts in a fast-paced society are given time to reflect on their personal relationship with God (69 percent) and personal principles and values (56 percent) at camp.

### *Positive Sense of Self-Worth and Usefulness*

Young men have a need to feel useful, capable, and valued. These are the components that build self-confidence. Among boys who are entering their teen-age years (the average Scout camper is 12.8 years old), perhaps no other time in their life is more important for building self-esteem.

Positive communication between boys and their peers and between youth and adults leads to feelings of self-worth. At summer camp, the majority of Scouts are complimented by adults (76 percent) and peers (72 percent).

Additionally, Scouts feel that their opinions are valuable and heard. More than six of 10 Scouts (63 percent) are asked to give their opinion while at camp. This seemingly simple gesture results in feelings of personal value. Three-quarters or more indicate that they are listened to by other Scouts (80 percent) or adult leaders (74 percent).

Boy Scouts at summer camp attain growth through serving others. Such activities result in a sense of being valuable and useful. Majorities of boys serve their peers at camp through helping clean up campsites (89 percent), helping clean up after meals (87 percent), and serving food (76 percent).

Service also comes through personally helping someone who may have received an injury (39 percent).

When boys take leadership responsibility, they gain self-esteem. At summer camp, one-half (50 percent) of the boys are given an opportunity to lead others in an activity or service.

### *Caring and Nurturing Relationships with Parents, Other Adults, and Peers*

Children crave strong relationships with people they can trust. Having someone to connect with is critical to positive, healthy development. These relationships allow for the sharing of interests, struggles, and successes. It is through these relationships with parents, role models, and friends that young people learn to effectively handle the difficulties and challenges of life.

At Scout summer camp, boys commonly listen to (84 percent) and compliment (75 percent) other Scouts. Also, they make a new friend or become better friends with someone (80 percent). Friendships are an outcome of summer camp that can impact lives well beyond the camp experience.

Mentoring requires working together, and this happens at Scout summer camp in two key ways: adult leaders who teach boys (76 percent) and Scouts who learn new skills from other Scouts (72 percent).

The fact that many boys talk with an adult leader for advice (60 percent) while at camp suggests that a level of trust and respect is established in the relationship.

### *A Desire to Learn*

Life is about learning and using what is learned to improve things for oneself and others. Youth who are not given opportunities to test and explore new things may never live up to their full potential.

Summer camp is, in effect, an outdoor classroom for learning experiences. The majority of boys "try something they have never tried before" (86 percent), "test a new skill" (81 percent), "see something they have not seen before" (75 percent), or "learn about the environment" (65 percent) while at camp.

Other important learning-related factors found at camp are that Scouts feel challenged (69 percent) and test their mental/thinking abilities (71 percent).

A natural extension of the desire to learn, fostered at camp, is to put it into action through experiential learning. This type of learning is the best kind because it means a boy learns by doing!

The opportunity to earn more than 31 merit badges while at camp amply meets this need. Merit badges are discussed more specifically in the next section of this report.

#### *Productive and Creative Use of Time*

Because so many lead full-scheduled lives, young people understand the value of time, and they consider it important to use their time efficiently and productively. While redundancy is important for reinforcing positive values, young people desire activities and opportunities that they perceive as new and relevant to their growth. For this reason, various merit badge options are an important aspect of camp.

Time spent achieving goals is a common positive aspect of Scout summer camp. Almost all Scouts “complete a merit badge” (83 percent) or “work with others on a badge or task” (88 percent) while at camp. Also, significant percentages of Scouts “work on a camp-improvement project” (60 percent) or “learn/practice first aid” (49 percent).

Majorities of Scouts felt prepared (80 percent), that they accomplished something worthwhile during camp (78 percent), and useful (64 percent). Productive use of time matches with good feelings of contribution (57 percent).

#### *Social Adeptness*

Positive and healthy relationships are essential for successful youth development. By being placed in social settings, young people learn such social skills as the art of conversation, how to contribute to team goals, and how to resolve interpersonal conflicts in a healthy way.

Camps are structured to encourage boys to spend time working and playing together in ways that seldom happen outside of the camp environment. In the outdoors, boys are removed from independent activities, such as playing video games and watching television, and are encouraged instead to socially interact with peers. At summer camp, almost every boy meets new people (94 percent). Additionally, majorities of Scouts collaborate with other youth on accomplishments (73 percent), participate in group decision making and activities (64 percent), and even help resolve interpersonal conflicts (53 percent). These social growth experiences are outcomes of the design of summer camps.

#### *Other Important Findings*

Other important findings from the research include the high proportion of boys who participate in fitness-building activities and events. Perhaps not surprising, swimming (85 percent) and hiking (70 percent) are among the most common fitness activities experienced.

These experiences are frequently tied to goal achievement. Many boys set personal goals for things they want to accomplish while at camp. Among these, 70 percent indicate they met those goals during camp.

Perhaps the best indication of the “satisfaction” that boys have at camp is the finding that more than three-of-four boys (78 percent) who attend camp would recommend camp to others.

#### **Findings from Parents of Scouts**

To fully understand whether or not Scout summer camp is making a difference in the lives of boys, Harris Interactive included a survey among parents of boys who attended summer camp. This section of the report provides responses received from parents of boys who attended summer camp.

For decades, parents have given anecdotal evidence to BSA camp directors and staff members that the camp experience changed their sons. One commonly communicated sentiment has been “You took my boy and he came home more like a young man.” More than 80 percent of parents (81 percent) indicate that summer camp resulted in a positive change in their sons.

When asked to describe the reasons they believe a positive change took place, parents mention growth in self-esteem, new skills learned, and increased levels of personal responsibility.

Overall, parents are very satisfied with their son’s experience at Scout camp. More than nine of 10 parents (93 percent) indicate their son’s summer camp experience met or exceeded their expectations. In addition, almost all parents (96 percent) say they would recommend to other parents that their sons attend Scout summer camp.

Since its inception, the Scouting program has been designed to encourage interaction between parents and their children. Scout summer camp follows this design, and the fact that almost every parent (98 percent) discusses the summer camp experience with their son validates that the design works.

### Findings from Scout Leaders

The outcomes of Boy Scout summer camp are not exclusively beneficial to Scouts. By surveying adult leaders who attended summer camp, it was determined that Scoutmasters and other adult leaders also grow and learn while at camp.

Summer camp meets (35 percent) or exceeds (56 percent) the expectations of adult leaders. This is a significant finding since a majority have been to summer camp three or more times as an adult.

Most leaders set personal goals for camp (79 percent), and almost all achieve at least some of those goals (94 percent).

Adult leaders understand the focus of summer camp is on supporting the growth of youth. Notably, more than nine of 10 adults (96 percent) agree that they “played a role in helping young people succeed/grow” during the camp experience. A similar percentage agree that they “helped youth realize their own abilities” (92 percent). At a time when many youth experts are concerned that boys are becoming socially independent at younger ages, Scout camp helps bring people of all ages together. Adult leaders who attend camp clearly agree that they “built friendships with youth in the unit” (92 percent). This finding is coupled with the fact that 82 percent of adult leaders agree that they increased their understanding of today’s youth while at camp.

Personal growth benefits for leaders are another outcome of Scout summer camp. The majority of adult leaders agree that they were with people they respect (92 percent), they had fun (91 percent), they felt close to nature (84 percent), they built friendships with other leaders (81 percent), they learned from other leaders (71 percent), and they reduced their stress (65 percent).

I represent the National Capital Area Council which serves the youth and families of 16 counties in Maryland and Virginia and the District of Columbia. In that territory, we serve over 85,000 youth in our programs. The core of our strategy is to implement the mission of Scouting through the outdoors. We’ve taken this responsibility seriously. In 1996, our Council acquired the property that Disney had targeted to become a Northern Virginia theme park. Located less than 50 miles west of the Capitol near Haymarket Virginia, this property was perfect for our mission. After a period of planning and development, and an investment of almost \$18 million dollars we opened this property for full programming last year.

When fully operational, Camp William B Snyder it will allow us to expose thousands of youth to the fun and adventure of the outdoors. Young boys and girls from at risk communities within a short distance from this building have already experienced the thrill of spending time outdoors. Thanks to the tenacity of our Board of Directors, the vision of my predecessor, Ron Carroll, and the generosity and commitment of Bill and Sally Snyder we will be uniquely positioned to provide outdoor experiences for our areas youth.

We also operate Goshen Scout Reservation—a 3,500 acre traditional Scout Camp located near Lexington Virginia. Since 1966, Goshen has been a place where thousands of youth have learned to camp, cook their first meal, participated in a conservation project, and had fun. Beside the periods of instruction, everything that happens at camp is aimed at “fun with a purpose”.

Couple our local efforts with the resources of our National Office—facilities like Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, the Florida Sea Base located in the Florida Keys, and the Northern Minnesota Canoe Base in the Boundary Waters area the Boy Scouts of America have committed to using the outdoors as a platform to help develop healthy children. But the story doesn’t stop there. All across America, Scout use public lands as part of their program. From local community parks to our nations largest forests Scouts connect their inside learning with outside applications. Fun with a purpose has practical, educational meaning. The impact on fitness is also huge—prepare for a 25 mile hike at 10,000 feet in the mountains of New Mexico carrying a 40 pound backpack—you learn the definition of fitness real quick.

So why is this important? Why should we be discussing some fun childhood memories here in Congress? Interestingly, our success in connecting youth with nature has direct impact on many of the issues we wrestle with today. Let me offer a few examples.

First, the issue of youth fitness is the most obvious and most pressing related to the health care debate. The ramifications of unfit young people and the health problems they will face in the future will certainly strain an already stressed system. Think sports programs are the answer? From 1981 to 1997, youth participation in organized sports increased by 27 percent across America. It is ironic that the childhood obesity issue has coincided with this increase. One wonders if the strict schedules and the lack of unsupervised play time are more the issue. Access to parks, public lands, and outdoor programs are certainly part of the solution.

Next, consider the issue of the availability of individuals interested in science, technology, and math for our future workforce. As we continue to structure our children's lives we take away the most potent tool in our tool box—fostering their imagination, innovation, and dreams. Connecting with nature and allowing unstructured play time provide a tremendous and proven method for sparking an interest in a lifelong pursuit. Examples from the America experience are countless—the impact of the Badlands on Teddy Roosevelt which helped create and protect our vast national forests, children learning about the stars have yearned to explore and become astronauts, and no doubt learning about nature at an early age will help us all be better stewards of our resources in the future. Technology is at play everywhere—I learned to use a map and compass as a Scout—today's youth learn how to use a GPS. Scouts used to learn Morse Code—which was the Instant Messenger of that day. The outdoors provide a great place to put technology to use in practical ways that kids can connect with. More important—they learn to say “What if...” Americans have always had the ability to dream great dreams—I believe the outdoors is a perfect place to teach our youth to dream.

Last, I believe the outdoors provide us with a platform for great partnerships between government, business, educators, and parents. There are few places that can effectively bring this large group together. Whether for social or educational purposes, our outdoor resources are places that people gather. Look at the Mall—within our view people running and playing, learning about nature here in the city, greeting each other, and relaxing. Business is done. The tranquility of the environment makes it attractive to most. And dreams are made. As a young man of 17, I made the decision to dedicate my life's efforts to working with young people while standing at the Lincoln Memorial working with the BSA and the National Parks Service. Strategic partnerships can be created to link schools with parks and camps to teach science or math in the outdoors—presenting these subjects in a totally different light. Fun with a purpose!

Almost 100 years ago, when asked what makes a good Scout leader Robert Baden Powell thought a moment and said—a good leader of youth is someone who can find adventure in a mud puddle. As we debate the issues that confront us, let us always be mindful that our children need places to play, to dream the dreams that will take us to new places, and learn to be good stewards of the open spaces entrusted to us. Our future rest with unlocking the potential of the children we serve. Help us use the outdoors as a tool to ignite the possibilities and future capabilities of these youth. The Boy Scouts of America stands ready to help and to combine our resources with those of our government and community to address the difficult issues that face us. America's youth will respond!

Thank you.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much. Let me begin some questions, and let me begin with Ms. Pertschuk. I have a couple of questions, and also, I am beginning with you because you stuck to the five minute rule.

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. In your testimony you suggested the Federal agency might want to consider the establishment of a youth conservation corps?

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Yes. To recruit the people to participate.

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Could you elaborate just a little bit more on that? How do you see it working?

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Yes. I know that there are recruitment programs in place now, but I think what we need to do is look beyond what we have traditionally thought of as recruitment, for example, college campuses. When I think of recruitment I think of the opportunities that someone like Gina McCarthy is creating in Connecticut. Families that are turned on in a very holistic way to nature.

We should be recruiting at that point as well. There are other sorts of innovative ways of thinking about recruitment in general.

If we are talking about a generation that is really going to care, and take care of and be stewards for the lands I would go so far as to say that we should be recruiting future stewards in nature preschools. We cannot think that we are going to find the students in colleges that are turned on by this, we have to start earlier.

So at every stage of development children need to understand that there is a potential for them to participate both personally and professionally in conservation and land stewardship.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much. The last point you made goes to the point that Congressman Sarbanes was making about how we connect the very important public education function with the very important subject that we are talking about here today, and maybe recruitment is one of those areas as well.

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Last quick question, if I may. You suggested Federal and state agencies should loosen up the use of funds for outreach efforts. What did you mean by loosen up?

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Well, I think that we talk about funds being used for the maintenance and care of our lands, and we do not take into account the fact that we need to care for those people that are going to enjoy those lands as well. I think we need to expand the definition of what healthy land management is, and land use is, and try and combine those and expand the ability for us to fund programs that not only educate but bring families and children into the parks.

I think that would be a really good direction to see this go in.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much. Mr. Calengor, at the end of your statement you mentioned that state and Federal fish and wildlife agencies perhaps spend too much time on managing fish and wildlife resources and perhaps not enough time in attracting the public to enjoy these resources. What do you think is needed in that regard? Your campaign, Take Me Fishing, is a very good example of the kind of attracting people to the resources, but what did you mean in general about the agencies just to clarify that?

Mr. CALENGOR. Mr. Chairman, I think that what we should do is to break down any barriers that are there that prevent people from entering the world of fishing, angling and consequently the outdoors. I think that we should take a long, hard look at how we treat licenses and how they are issued.

I think that from my point of view coming from manufacturing do a better job of marketing this through the group where we have all this electronic data to date, run the licenses and we should be able to go and meet and contact each and every licensed recipient and resell him on the fact that programs are available for them to reposition themselves and possibly address a program, and this is just off the top of my head, we are losing the older fishermen and maybe there could be a two year license at a rate or whatever.

All of these things have to be monitored as far as cash flow and things are concerned. I think we should be looking out of the box a little bit.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Dolesh, a quick question before my time runs up. Some are going to argue, and some do argue, that states and localities should pay for the land and open space for recreation, and that the Federal rules should be minimal at best.

In your testimony you talked specifically about two funding sources that have been either frozen, cut or not funded, but why do you think the Federal Government involvement in these efforts is so vital and important?

Mr. DOLESH. Well, Mr. Chairman, the Federal Government cares about investing in education, and transportation, and urban development and public safety. When have we stopped caring about investing in our kids' future and connecting them to our public lands? The funding source for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, as you know, is the conservation royalties that come from the offshore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, a vastly undertapped amount of money that has been devoted to that purpose but rarely appropriated by Congress.

The unmet need is incredible. The National Park Service estimates the unmet need of states and localities and each five years NRPA does a capital investment survey. It is in the tens of billions of dollars of land that public park and recreation agencies need to buy and want to buy. There is far more need than there are quality public lands for people to have close-to-home access.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Bishop?

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Ginsburg, if I could start with you because I apologize that I missed your actual testimony. I was having some unstructured time outside at the moment. So if I can ask you some specific questions about obesity rates in the research you have done. Is there a difference in obesity rates between urban and rural areas?

Dr. GINSBURG. I know that I cannot comment on the exact difference. I could get that to you. I can tell you that in urban America we know that obesity rates are particularly skyrocketing among impoverished populations that we know.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. Actually, I do not need specifics, but if you would just give me those general areas I appreciate that. How about between the east and the west in the nation?

Dr. GINSBURG. I do not have that data right now.

Mr. BISHOP. Is obesity in any way class related?

Dr. GINSBURG. Obesity is definitely related to poverty and to chronic stress.

Mr. BISHOP. Are there also social and cultural issues that relate to obesity, i.e., crime is a deterrent, latchkey kids, single parent families, et cetera?

Dr. GINSBURG. We know that under resourced kids are less likely to be able to go out and explore the world on their own because the adults are needing to watch them very closely, the communities may not be safe. So we know that in areas of poverty a major barrier to outdoor exploration is the fact that the world may not be safe, and there may not be enough adults to watch the kids because they are working one or two jobs.

Mr. BISHOP. Yes. I appreciate that, again. You also said many schoolchildren are given less free time and fewer fiscal outlets at schools. Why do you think schools are cutting back in that area?

Dr. GINSBURG. It is hard for me to comment on that, but it is clear that recently there has been a greater attention to the fundamentals of reading and math and that many of the other issues around art, music, physical education and those other things are

being cut down severely. We know that in general if we look at sixth grade, for example, we know that about 13 percent of sixth graders have no recess at all.

However, if you look at people in the lowest poverty rate that becomes 34 percent of sixth graders have no recess at all. So in those schools that serve our poorest kids those kids have the fewest recesses as well as the lowest exposure to physical education classes.

Mr. BISHOP. Now, you could have won me if you would have said history as part of those that are being, you know—

Mr. GINSBURG. I love history.

Mr. BISHOP. OK. That is much better then. Thank you. You are learning.

Mr. GINSBURG. All right.

Mr. BISHOP. Ms. Pertschuk, if I could ask a question. In your written testimony you talk about environmental groups like Sierra Club beginning programs to get children outdoors, I think it is Building Bridges to the Outdoors or something like that.

Ms. PERTSCHUK. Yes.

Mr. BISHOP. Do you know how much money groups like the Sierra Club are putting to that outdoor activity?

Ms. PERTSCHUK. I wish I did. I do not have that information. I can get it for you.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. Thank you. That would be very helpful if we could do that at the same time.

Ms. PERTSCHUK. OK. Sierra Club, Trust for Public Land, National Wildlife Federation now has a program that they are targeting in this area as well.

Mr. BISHOP. I think if the testimony that Boy Scouts gave of what they are doing as far as this effort if these organizations could put more of that type of commitment to those areas we could see the private sector taking up a big slack in some of these programs there.

Jeremy, I appreciate your testimony. I certainly hope you do not think that testifying before Congress was one of the highlights. If you are you missed the educational value, it was there, but thank you for being here. I appreciate the comments that were there.

Mr. Dolesh, you just said the Land and Water Conservation Fund is funded partially by the Owen Gas receipts for offshore drilling. Does your group support then increasing the drilling in the outer continental shelf to get more money for these programs?

Mr. DOLESH. Sir, we supported the expansion of Area 181 last year, the proposal to allow 12 and a half percent of those royalties to go to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It is a direct investment in conservation and recreation for all American people from the royalties of that expanded drilling.

Mr. BISHOP. Did I hear a yes in there?

Mr. DOLESH. We did not take a position to say we support expanded drilling. We said if you are going to drill, just as when the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act was authorized in 1965, there ought to be a permanent benefit for conservation and recreation as it was done 40 years ago.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Dolesh, I am going to submit for the record, I will ask you now to consent, to add this chart that was prepared by Center for Disease Control that relates the—

Mr. GRIJALVA. Without objection.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, sir. That relates the obesity rates to different sections of the country. It clearly illustrates here that there is a regional pattern in obesity rates. In fact, if you look over that, the one that has the Federal land ownership, the area of the United States everything in blue is how much of that state is owned by the Federal Government. Joy of joys for those of us in the west.

You see the areas with the heavy blue are not necessarily the areas with the most obesity issues, which simply means can you say there is a connection between Federal land and obesity or are you saying there is a connection between public land and obesity? You have 30 seconds because I am over. I apologize.

Mr. DOLESH. It is a very tantalizing question. The State of Georgia is analyzing this very data in their state recreation planning. The issue is more to how close is the access to home. How can you get to places where you can get healthy and stay fit? That is the key to solving the issue of connecting kids to nature and the outdoors.

Mr. BISHOP. So then the key area is those areas that are having problems with obesity in some situation are the ones in which the land situation needs to be the most accurate, which this map does not relate or correlate in any way to that map, so when we are talking about public land we are not necessarily talking about Federal land we are talking about all public land, state, localities and those types of things?

Mr. DOLESH. We believe there is an important connection to it.

Mr. BISHOP. OK. I have just one more comment, but I will wait until I have an extra shot at this.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK. Mr. Brown?

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the witnesses for coming and giving testimony. This is kind of a new concept I believe, and it is an educational issue for me. As a boy I was raised on a farm and my back door neighbor was the Francis Marion National Forest, which was 250,000 acres, and so I still have that farm today, and I still enjoy going out there and commuting with nature, and riding that tractor, and cutting that grass, and, you know, fishing those ponds.

My grandchildren have access to that, and so I think it is a good notion. I am just trying to I guess put in my mind exactly how we can expand that so more people can be inclusive because it really is a good life. I have gained a few pounds since then, but back in those days we always had enough chores to keep us pretty occupied and I guess keep that obesity from setting in. Anyway, just to get a little bit of information about what is happening what is a nature park?

I know we said we need to expand our regular parks and include a nature park. Tell me what differentiates just a regular. We have a lot of parks down our way, and I guess I am trying to decide how that qualifies. What amenities do you have that would set them apart from just a regular park?

Mr. DOLESH. Sir, a nature-based facility is one that invites the public in to explore nature and experience it on its own terms. It might have a nature trail, it might have interpretive information,

there might be staff assigned, a visitor center, a nature center, a nature museum. All of these are ways that people can experience nature, but the best teacher is nature itself.

We believe that if you can connect kids to nature it is inherently interesting to them, and just the opportunity to do so. So any park can qualify as a nature park.

Mr. BROWN. What we actually did was we had what we call the Palmetto Trail. You know, we are pretty protective of—South Carolina is the Palmetto State—right, and so we call it a Palmetto Trail. It is really a hiking trail that actually goes from the ocean to the mountains, which we enjoy both in South Carolina. So I guess that would be considered part of a nature park since it goes through not only public lands but private lands, too, in order to make that track.

A lot of it tracks the national forest lands, but some private lands are in between, too. OK. I was just interested in Jeremy's testimony. I thought that was a pretty good testimony to prove that communing with nature is certainly some benefit. I was just wondering how many people are in that particular program that Jeremy was participating in?

Mr. PENNY. Yes, sir. Each year we put about 3,000 interns into working with all the Federal land management agencies and state land management agencies all over the country. In addition, we have about 1,000 young people that are in the high school program that provides a continuum of opportunities from urban parks all the way through the Federal lands, and then through them they extend that to tens of thousands of other young people that have that opportunity.

I might also say that we do a variety of internships including one of our interns has been in your office, Congressman, and we appreciate that.

Mr. BROWN. I think he is going to Fort something next.

Mr. PENNY. That is right. Learning about policies in the congressional offices and then going to a national park and learning about the practical resource management.

Mr. BROWN. Well, I can tell you that young man, I could see a real growing experience with him as he came in and had a chance just to kind of interact with House staff, and with me and I think it was a growing experience. In fact, we have a program, too, that we developed in Charleston as part of the Tall Ship Program—

Mr. PENNY. Right.

Mr. BROWN.—where we are having what they call the Spirit of South Carolina. It is just about in its final build out and that will be a similar type program except it will be at sea rather than be I guess on land, but I commend you for addressing this effort and trying to bring new opportunities to youth that is really at disadvantage. Anyway, thank you all for coming and being part of this discussion today.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, sir. Some quick follow-ups. I know Mr. Bishop has some other questions as well. Perhaps Mr. Brown as well.

Dr. Ginsburg, elaborate a little bit for us the differences between participation in organized sports and the kind of unorganized, cre-

ative outdoor play that you were discussing in your testimony today, and what are the benefits to both?

Dr. GINSBURG. Right. We want to be clear. We are not against organized sports. Organized sports are great ways of kids to work together, to learn about leadership, to work with adults and to be supervised by adults. What we want is for kids to have some unscheduled free time to go explore their own areas of interest. What an organized sport allows you to do is spend a couple of hours a day working on a specific issue, and then you are likely to maybe go home and spend time in screen time or doing homework.

What the outdoors allows you to do is not only explore the world, and to explore your own creativity and to find your interest, define who you are in the context of the environment, but it also is constant movement. We have a situation right now where kids are so deeply scheduled from one activity to another inclusive of organized sports, but also perhaps tutoring, and music lessons and other things.

Kids are so over scheduled right now that one of the mantras we here from kids all day long is I am bored, I have nothing to do. What stimulates them is to turn to screen time, to the Gameboys and to the other activities. We believe that as long as there are clouds in the sky, as long as there are trees, as long as there are birds, as long as you can turn over a rock and find an ecosystem, there is no reason to be bored.

The interaction with nature allows you to be constantly moving, constantly playing. That has a real impact on not only physical health—we keep talking about obesity, but please let us not forget about stress, and emotional health and the connection with nature that is going to help with.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. I appreciate the clarification because your point should be noted if this is not an issue against organized sports. It is a call for—

Dr. GINSBURG. Balance. We seek balance.

Mr. GRIJALVA.—a little bit of balance. Thank you. Mr. Penny, your testimony was excellent descriptions of the benefits of SCA partnerships with the Federal Government, how good it is for the young people involved and how good it is for the receiving agency that gets the benefit of their talent, but you also seemed to indicate that there are some arrangement problems.

What is the problem with the current arrangement, and what would you recommend in terms of fostering those private/public, nonprofit/public relationships?

Mr. PENNY. Yes, sir. We feel that the very best way for nonprofits to work with the agencies is through what is called a cooperative agreement. At the heart of the cooperative agreement is not a contractual arrangement, but it is a shared commitment to improve the land and enhance and enrich the experience of the young person. That is the way it has worked with us.

Particularly with us with every time we place a young person with a Federal agency the agency pays about 80 percent of the costs and SCA makes a cash match of getting private individuals through philanthropic support to invest in public lands by supporting that young person. So the value of that is that it benefits

the young person, it benefits the agency, it leverages Federal dollars with private dollars.

There is some concern about that, and understandably so. We do not want agencies using these to just get cheap labor, and that is not the point. A cooperative agreement requires that it is not that.

Mr. GRIJALVA. You are not supplanting another function.

Mr. PENNY. They are not supplanting another function. They are together working for a higher purpose.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you on that important point, and thank you. Mr. Lambert, I do not have a question, but I do want to go to the points that you were making I think and give you an example that dealt with the Boy Scouts. I think last Congress we passed legislation for Valle Vidal, to protect Valle Vidal from gas and oil development.

The Boy Scouts were an important part of that legislation because the ranch is nearby, the activities of the young people that participate in there, and I think that is a good example of a private/public protect of a forest area that was very important, a lot of great natural resources, got great outdoor activities for people, and those are the kinds of encouragements. I just wanted to acknowledge that because your organization had a great deal to do with convincing many of us that was the right way to go.

Mr. LAMBERT. Thank you, sir. We are the stewards of a lot of land in America, and we have to pass it on to future generations, so that partnership is important to us. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Before I close is there any questions?

Mr. BISHOP. Let me just do a couple. I appreciate the gentleman from Arizona. Great minds must go there because the first two questions you asked are two I had, so thank you for those.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I was just trying to cut in our time.

Mr. BISHOP. Yes. We got done in earlier. Let me just make a couple of points if I could just at the very end of this hearing. First, I appreciate this hearing on obesity issues. I just want you all to know that when the big famine hits I am going to be the last one to go, so there. There are a couple of things especially for this panel I would like to keep in mind, and there are only about four.

Number one is that we tend when we try to focus in on one issue like this to look at public lands as simply the recreation for those without public lands. Public lands have a function that is far and deep more than that, so I do not want us to narrow in and lose that concept. Second, there is always the ability for this issue to be captured by other groups. There are bills that are floating around.

I have had groups that come in here who are basically trying to sell recreation stuff, and that now becomes the key element. As they told me, we are talking about real recreation not having a kid stand out there waiting for somebody to kick the soccer ball to him. Yes, you want somebody standing out there waiting for somebody to kick the soccer ball to him.

There is a third one that I think is very clear here in that there are some who are talking about public lands for the concept of obesity and some for the concept of building conservation for the future. Even though we have tied them together in this hearing those are two separate and distinct concepts that we should not try to marry together because it becomes an unnatural one.

Second to the last point deals with what we are trying to look at as far as Federal land ownership versus the need that is out there. As I think we tried to illustrate with the obesity chart that I put into the record there is a correlation between need that is not necessarily the direct correlation with Federal lands which means I appreciate you all coming here, but you should not be here. That is possible for you to get the Federal Government to pass a law to mandate all sorts of activities, and it will not mean diddly squat.

It is kind of like when you were talking about cigarette consumption declining. It is not being mandated by the Federal Government to tell people to quit smoking. It has to be an education issue where they decide to do it themselves because still people are free to make those choices. It has to be an educational process.

You should be doing this in every state Capitol in major county areas because if they do not buy into it there is nothing we are going to mandate that is going to make a big difference. Final one I want to do is a very personal one, and it goes to the message that we are giving as we start talking about obesity in kids. I apologize for taking the time of doing this, and this is almost like personal revelation time. I have to tell it to somebody.

You happen to be here, so you are stuck listening to it. I do have a daughter that when she was in the third grade had a disease that was extremely rare, and because of that the medication that she was on bloated her significantly. She was huge. She was not fat, she was just big on medication. I have a number of times the painful experience of having her come back as a small girl in tears because of comments people made about the fat kid.

Now, I want to know as we go forward with this discussion about obesity we need to make sure that we are very sensitive in the way you do that. There are a lot of kids out here who are going to be called fat kids as we have tried to narrow in saying how wrong it is to be slightly overweight, and they are not overweight simply because they are playing games. There are all sorts of factors that are involved in that.

Some time in the rhetoric that we have to try and pass these bills and bring this issue our rhetoric is so terribly insensitive that it hurts kids who are very, very much aware of the situation they are in. Our rhetoric in an effort to pass bills, or to get more money or anything else is one of those things that actually rips people apart on the inside. I know I am not fat, I am a nutritional over-achiever. I recognize. I have learned to live with it.

Kids are not. Some time in our effort to sell equipment, or to get more money, or to emphasize a need we really are insensitive to how we are ripping kids apart on the inside. So I just want the rhetoric as we go along here to understand that we can do some great harm in our zeal to do a great deal of good. With that I will yield back and quit rambling on. I apologize you had to listen to that. Somebody did.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, Mr. Bishop. Being somewhat challenged in the consumption area myself, I would agree with you. I don't think we heard it any time in this discussion or any discussions on the subject of obesity about what needs to be done about the issue of cruelty. I do not think everybody is aware

that there is a great deal of sensitivity on the issue, but there is a great deal of urgency as well to deal with it.

I appreciate your comments. Thank you very much. This panel has been particularly enlightening, and I appreciate it. Just to say a couple of things, as we work to reconnect, because I do not think it is connect I think it is reconnect, families and youth with our great public places and public lands I think we have to keep in sight what the role of the Federal Government is going to be.

I believe there is a role—whether it is a role of intervention and creating initiatives and incentives to move forward or whether it is the role of ensuring the proper funding is there for our agencies that manage our public lands so that outreach and connection efforts can be developed and organized—I think that is as well because we are dealing with a quality of life issue that is generational.

We seem to be losing that aspect in the generations that are coming up, the connection to our natural places. We are also dealing with a health issue, both mental and physical. Then there is a whole underlying issue which is history, and legacy about our public places, and the need to conserve them and a new generation of constituents to support and protect those areas.

So thank you very much, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue and appreciate your testimony. The meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m. the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

