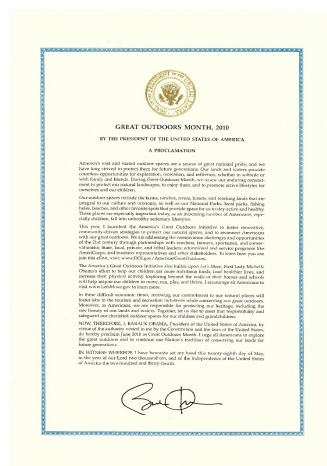


## Great Outdoors Week 2010

Washington, D.C. – Recreation community leaders, allies, friends groups and government agency partners gathered in Washington, D.C. to participate in briefings, events and celebrations of the many significant contributions of the recreation community during **Great Outdoors Week 2010** (June 7-12).

Achievements of the Beacon Award winners, accomplishments of the Recreational Trails Program, the third annual National Get Outdoors Day, the need to build the connection between outdoor recreation and healthier Americans (with the help of some of the nation's leading physicians), and more were addressed during the week. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack also served as the special guest at the June Recreation Exchange luncheon and helped present the American Recreation Coalition's **Legends** Awards to exemplary federal agency employees.

Great Outdoors Week is coordinated by the American Recreation Coalition (ARC) and includes events co-hosted by more than a dozen federal agencies and national organizations. The week is a key component of Great Outdoors Month, a month-long celebration of outdoor recreation in America that also features **National Trails Day** (June 5), **National Fishing and Boating Week** (June 5-13), **National Get Outdoors Day** (June 12), the **Great American Backyard Campout** (June 26) and for the first time in June, **National Marina Day** (June 12).



For the seventh consecutive year, June was officially designated as Great Outdoors Month by a **Presidential Proclamation**. President Obama's proclamation highlights current Administration efforts to get Americans healthier through outdoor activity, like the recently launched America's Great Outdoors Initiative to protect natural landscapes and reconnect Americans to the outdoors, and the First Lady's Let's Move effort to help children eat more nutritious foods, lead healthier lives, and increase their physical activity. More information on these initiatives is available at: [www.LetsMove.gov](http://www.LetsMove.gov) and [www.DOI.gov/AmericasGreatOutdoors](http://www.DOI.gov/AmericasGreatOutdoors). The proclamation states, "America's vast and varied outdoor spaces are a source of great national pride, and we have long strived to protect them for future generations. Our lands provide countless opportunities for exploration, recreation, and reflection, whether in solitude or with family and friends. During Great Outdoors Month, we renew our

enduring commitment to protect our natural landscapes, to enjoy them and to promote active lifestyles for ourselves and our children." Referring to America's great outdoor spaces, the proclamation goes on to say, "These places are especially important today, as an increasing number of Americans, especially children, fall into unhealthy sedentary lifestyles." The President concluded, "I urge all Americans to explore the great outdoors and to continue our Nation's tradition of conserving our lands for future generations." Additionally, this is the first year that all 50 state governors and the Mayor of the District of Columbia have issued proclamations for Great Outdoors Month. While the state proclamations vary in emphasis and reflect key state features, most praise volunteerism, the power of outdoor recreation to contribute to happier, healthier lifestyles, and the legacy of parks and public lands and waters. [Click here](#) to see and download any or all of the Great Outdoors Month 2010 proclamations.

## Friday, June 4

Great Outdoors Week actually began early, with a new and exciting event involving more than 500 students from Virginia's second largest school system, Prince William County Schools. Led by the system's dynamic superintendent, Dr. Steven Walts, the county teamed up with ARC and more than a dozen federal and state agencies and nonprofit organizations to stage a day of experiential learning and fun in a pilot effort planned to expand to include nearly all of the 80,000



students in the system in 2011. Students rotated through learning stations and activities during the day – almost exactly as they would during most school days. But the difference was that the instruction was provided by adjunct faculty drawn from NASA and the Forest Service, BLM and the National Wildlife Foundation and many more. Science, art and history were presented in ways that tied to the coming year curriculum – and a new website ([www.edout.us](http://www.edout.us)) provided even more information on how summer could be used to combine fun and getting a head start on the next academic year. From learning about light spectrums and wetland mitigation projects to drawing entries for the Junior Duck Stamp Contest and learning about the music of nature, the students were attentive and very engaged. Healthy lunches – with carrots and fruit and juice – provided energy while special water bottles – and ample refill opportunities – kept the action going even on a hot day with temperatures in the 90's. The day wrapped with a mass swearing in of Junior Forest Rangers followed by fruit popsicles – and lots of smiles. Expansion of ED OUT to other school districts across the nation is now underway. Dr. Walts, who participated in most of the day, told the event partners that the day had overcome the challenges of making the final days of the school year quality learning time and proved to the students that great fun and adventure can be found beyond electronic screens – where studies now show American youth spend, on average, 7.5 hours daily.

## Monday, June 7

Monday of Great Outdoors Week began with a **Kids Fishing Event**, a key component of National Fishing and Boating Week, on the National Mall at Constitution Gardens, where hundreds of kids fished – many for the first time. The event also serves children with disabilities, providing them with the means to experience an iconic outdoor activity.



ARC's **2010 Beacon Awards** were presented later that day at a special ceremony at the Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge in Laurel, Maryland, hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The awards recognize outstanding efforts by federal agencies and partners in harnessing the power of technology to improve public recreation experiences and federal recreation program management. Award recipients included interpretive cell phone tours, use of social media to promote public lands, and a mobile ATV washer to combat the spread of invasive plant species. To read the full story on the 2010 Beacon Award Winners, [click here](#).

Special guests at the Beacon Award ceremony included students from a local elementary school who told the audience how much the refuge's youth programs have changed their lives over the years and how the programs are valuable means for sparking interest in federal land management careers. One student remarked that most underserved student like her do not get to have formative experiences in the outdoors, but all kids desperately need them. After the awards presentation, attendees were invited to a complimentary tram tour of the refuge.

## Tuesday, June 8



On Tuesday, an enthusiastic group of trails supporters gathered for a Congressional star-studded event at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill for the **Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Achievement Award ceremony**. The CRT awards recognize exemplary use of funds from the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Since the 1991 creation of the program under ISTEA, 13,000+ trail projects have been aided. RTP utilizes federal taxes collected from non-highway recreation use of fuel and now provides \$85 million annually for state

trails programs, typically administered by state park and natural resource agencies. All trail enthusiasts, including those who enjoy motorized and non-motorized recreation activities, benefit from RTP funding. Seven RTP trail projects and programs were recognized, and groups were honored in the additional categories of Outstanding State Trail Program and Outstanding State Recreational Trails Advisory Committee.

U.S. Representatives Tom Petri (R-WI), Jim Oberstar (D-MN) and Nick Rahall (D-WV) – all members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (Rep. Oberstar is the Chairman) and long-time champions of the RTP – were special guests at the awards presentation. The Congressmen praised the health benefits of trails and the importance of RTP funding to trail creation and maintenance. Congressman Petri commented that adequate funding for trails is certainly in society's interest, because "we will pay the consequences one way or another," referring to the consequences of not connecting Americans with the outdoors and the rising healthcare costs due to sedentary lifestyles. Chairman Oberstar expressed confidence in the future relevancy of trails, citing that more bikes were sold than automobiles last year. Beth Osborne, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy for the U.S. Department of Transportation, closed the event praising the dedication and achievement of the award winners, and the contributions of the RTP to the livability initiatives of the Transportation Department.

For details on the winning projects and to find more information on the RTP, [click here](#).

Leaders of **Healthy Measures: Physicians for Healthier Americans Through Fun Outdoors (PHATFOs)** – a physicians group formed at Partners Outdoors 2010 at Cavallo Point – added excitement to Great Outdoors Week. They met with a diverse group of recreation leaders to discuss a new strategy for linking outdoor recreation to a healthier America before taking their message to top Congressional, Administration and healthcare policy leaders. PHATFO Chair Dr. Michael Suk, an orthopedic surgeon and former White House Fellow, and Vice Chair Dr.

Daphne Miller, a family practitioner, medical school instructor and writer (Oprah book selection and Washington Post columnist), urged conservation, recreation and medical interests to unite behind several initiatives, including a proposed national town hall meeting this summer to focus on health and conservation synergies. The doctors helped outline several exciting pilot efforts underway and the opportunities to unite health and conservation efforts around healthy lifestyles and wellness. For more information about the PHATFOs' April meeting at the Institute at the Golden Gate, where an extraordinary group of medical, recreation and conservation leaders moved beyond talk to specific recommendations and actions regarding the health benefits from increasing time spent in parks and other outdoor spaces, [click here](#).

### Wednesday, June 9

On Wednesday, the PHATFOs continued their rounds, meeting with top Interior and Agriculture officials, with the Surgeon General and other key Health and Human Services leaders. They had conversations with Capitol Hill staffers and national healthcare policy gurus and opened the doors to coordination with the Office of Personnel Management on new initiatives using the eight million civilian federal employees and family members as vanguard troops for preventive actions and healthy lifestyles promotion efforts.

Most importantly, the PHATFOs generated widespread enthusiasm for a proposed town hall for the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative – launched in April at a White House Conference and targeted toward delivery of a report to the President on a 21st Century Great Outdoors Strategy by mid-November – in time to be considered for one or more Presidential initiatives in the FY 2012 budget. The PHATFOs seek not only to revolutionize healthcare by employing the great outdoors for mental and physical well-being but also to find a new paradigm to fund the recreation infrastructure on public lands that supports healthy activities, including trails and more.

Both Interior and Agriculture Department officials expressed real enthusiasm for the idea of a Health and the Great Outdoors Town Hall. A draft of the program to be submitted to the Initiative leadership team – the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency – has been prepared, and the topic is on the agenda for the Initiative's upcoming leadership meeting. An impressive list of supporters – including ARC, the Children & Nature Network, Institute at the Golden Gate, National Environmental Education Foundation, National Wildlife Federation, National Park Hospitality Association, Sierra Club, and more – is already in place.

### Thursday, June 10

Top federal agency representatives and recreation enthusiasts gathered on the USDA Whitten Patio for a very special **June Recreation Exchange** with guest U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and the presentation of the **2010 Legends Awards**. Secretary Vilsack talked about his key role in President Obama's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative and the First Lady's Let's Move Initiative. The Secretary outlined three key reasons for the launch of the AGO Initiative. First, he said, we need to better connect people to the environment in order to better preserve and protect the environment, adding that we "cannot just take from Mother Nature – we have to give back." Another key factor is economic development tied to the outdoors. He noted that the outdoors is an industry, one of particular importance to rural America, and that outdoor recreation employs 6.5 million Americans. Lastly, the Secretary commended the important role the outdoors can play in improving the health of Americans. He

noted that nearly one-third of America's children are obese and spend exponentially more time in front of screens than they do in the outdoors. He also noted that weight is strongly tied to students' self-image and academic success. Addressing the obesity crisis in America will also substantially reduce healthcare costs, he added. The Secretary also praised the National Get Outdoors Day effort, coordinated by the U.S. Forest Service and ARC, and added that you don't need fancy equipment to enjoy the outdoors!

Secretary Vilsack also helped present the American Recreation Coalition's **Legends** Awards to exemplary federal agency employees. Six employees of federal agencies were recognized for their actions to significantly enhance recreation opportunities. Recipients ranged from senior national officials to creative and dedicated field-level staffers. For information on the accomplishments of the **Legends** Award winners, [click here](#).



Luncheon attendees then participated in a healthy walk on the National Mall led by a National Park Service ranger, who gave an interpretive talk about the history of the Mall and the Washington Monument. Walkers were rewarded for their healthy physical outdoor activity with a fun **ice cream social**, where they enjoyed ice cream from Breyers, Good Humor, Klondike, Ben & Jerry's, Starbucks, Popsicle and Holanda Fruttare (all compliments of Unilever). The frozen treats were greatly appreciated by those who had endured the heat and humidity of the

National Mall in June and were served up by celebrity scoopers, including USDA Under Secretary Harris Sherman, shown second from right in the picture above, who oversees the Forest Service.

### Saturday, June 12



Great Outdoors Week concluded with National Get Outdoors Day events at more than 90 locations, the third year for this fun, partnership-based initiative. Hosting organizations and partners representing federal and local agencies, nonprofits and the recreation industry came together to offer outdoor recreation opportunities for families – especially children and underserved populations – to sample traditional and non-traditional outdoor fun. Participants were also received invitations to enjoy more in-depth outdoor recreation experiences throughout the summer at EChO events. Each GO-Day event offered a mix of active areas – where guests could learn to use a fishing pole, put up a tent, climb a rock wall, ride a mountain bike, go geocaching, and more – and

information centers where they could learn about nearby opportunities for outdoor recreation. Some sites featured areas that focused on other aspects of healthy living, including sustainability and good nutrition. Many sites also provided photo opportunities with characters like Smokey Bear, Woodsy Owl, and the Blue Goose. The Denver site even had a special visit from the characters from the new Shrek movie! Official GO-Day sites across the nation, from Kingman Island in Washington, D.C. to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Vancouver, Washington, welcomed tens of thousands of new faces to the joy and healthy benefits of the great outdoors.

More information on GO-Day is available at: [www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org](http://www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org).