



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ANNOUNCES \$125,000 GRANT
TO SUPPORT NATIONAL FISHING WEEK**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Mollie Beattie today announced the Interior Department agency has approved a \$125,000 grant to support National Fishing Week activities taking place nationwide June 5-11, 1995.

"National Fishing Week offers citizens across the Nation wonderful opportunities to enjoy the sport of fishing and learn more about the aquatic ecosystems that sustain us," said Director Beattie.

The grant is awarded to the National Fishing Week Steering Committee to help support fishing derbies, aquatic education programs, and other National Fishing Week events attracting an estimated half-a-million participants. These grant funds support efforts by tackle shops, local sportsmen's groups, and Federal and state agencies that sponsor approximately 2,500 National Fishing Week events each year.

One of Director Beattie's top priorities is increasing the understanding and appreciation of aquatic ecosystems by providing educational recreational fishing opportunities for urban youth. To this end, many of the Service's 500 national wildlife refuges located near major metropolitan areas sponsor annual National Fishing Week events. Many of the Service's 74 national fish hatcheries and other field offices also sponsor events.

In addition, the Service joins other Federal agencies and conservation organizations in sponsoring the National Fishing Week kick-off at the Tidal Basin on the Mall in Washington, DC. This event attracts hundreds of inner city youth who wet their lines for the first time while learning basic angling skills as well as something about aquatic environments.

Many Service-sponsored National Fishing Week events are accessible to the handicapped. A number of refuges have built special fishing platforms and other facilities for wheelchair-users as part of a larger effort to ensure all activities at Service facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities.

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In 1995, approximately 43 states and the District of Columbia will host "free fishing days," when fishing licenses are not required, during National Fishing Week.

For information on your state's special events during National Fishing Week, contact the state fish and game agency. For information on Service-sponsored National Fishing Week events, contact the Recreational Fisheries Coordinator, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, MS 820, Arlington, Virginia 22203; telephone 703-358-1718.

A number of fisheries conservation education programs are used during National Fishing Week to encourage an understanding of fisheries and the environment. Two being used widely are Hooked on Fishing - Not on Drugs and Pathway to Fishing.

Hooked on Fishing - Not on Drugs, sponsored by the Future Fisherman Foundation and supported by the Service and numerous other agencies, promotes recreational fishing as a positive alternative to drug use among young people. This program partners fishing industry companies and natural resource agencies with education and drug prevention organizations.

Hooked on Fishing's main component is a teacher's guide containing activities and lessons for grades K-12 using fishing and aquatic resources education to meet drug prevention goals. Additional materials for more in-depth study also are available, including an Aquatic Resources Education Curriculum, a Sport Fishing and Aquatic Resources Handbook, an instructional video, and a documentary video, as well as support materials such as posters, stickers, banners, awards, pledge cards, and hats. In the past, the fishing industry has contributed rods and reels and other fishing gear to school programs built around Hooked on Fishing.

An introductory folder on the Hooked on Fishing - Not on Drugs program can be ordered for \$7 through the Future Fisherman Foundation, 1033 North Fairfax Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314; telephone 703-519-9691. The complete set of educational materials is available for \$67.

Pathway to Fishing teaches potential instructors, such as local government conservation officers and representatives of community groups, fishing clubs, and youth activity groups, how to acquaint youngsters with the basic aspects of the fishing experience. The program is comprised of informational materials that demonstrate how to identify different sport fish species and their habitats; angler ethics; proper baiting, knot tying, and casting techniques; as well as a host of other useful tips.

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Pathway materials include an instructor's guidebook and video, instructional station posters, full-color posters of various sport fish and their habitats, angler ethics decals, and certificates for participants.

Pathway to Fishing was developed by the Berkley Corporation, In-Fisherman, Inc., the Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Forest Service. It sells for \$61 through the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; telephone 202-783-3238 (stock number 024-010-00697-8).

Funding for the Service's grant to the National Fishing Week Steering Committee comes from the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, which consists of monies collected from Federal excise taxes on fishing equipment and motor boat fuels. The fund was established under the Service's Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program (commonly called Wallop-Breaux after its legislative sponsors). The bulk of this fund is allocated to state fish and game agencies for fisheries conservation projects based on each state's number of paid fishing license holders.

The National Fishing Week Steering Committee, headquartered in Washington, DC, is a non-profit volunteer coalition of representatives from businesses, Federal agencies, and other organizations interested in promoting National Fishing Week. For the past 10 years, the Committee has overseen the program and developed materials to support National Fishing Week events.