



# NEWS

*from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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## **NATIONAL FISHING WEEK EVENTS FOCUS ON REELING IN YOUNG ANGLERS**

More than 50 million Americans enjoy the sport of fishing. To celebrate this favored pastime (second only to swimming) thousands of fishing events will be held nationwide during National Fishing Week June 3-9, 1996, including a kickoff in Washington, DC.

Special fishing events held during National Fishing Week are aimed at introducing children to a healthy pastime, giving them a chance to enjoy the outdoors, and teaching them about conservation and the environment.

The National Fishing Week kickoff will be held Monday, June 3, 1996, at Constitution Gardens on the Mall in Washington, DC, where more than 500 children from area schools will try for bluegill and channel catfish in the 7-acre pond.

The youngsters will be able to fish with the cartoon cat "Garfield," created by Jim Davis, honorary chairman of National Fishing Week for a second year.

The kickoff is sponsored by the National Fishing Week Steering Committee, a non-profit coalition with membership from Federal and state agencies, conservation groups, and the fishing industry.

Agencies hosting the kickoff are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and the DC Department of Fisheries. Guest Services, Inc., a major food, lodging, and leisure services company headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia, will donate lunches for the children. Berkley, Inc., a fishing tackle manufacturer and member of the National Fishing Week Steering Committee, will provide beverages, rods and reels, and hats. Jands, Inc. and Remington's Stren Fishing Lines have donated other souvenirs for the children.

During the kickoff, representatives from the agencies, local conservation groups, and the fishing industry will use a popular education program called *Pathway to Fishing* to introduce the youngsters to the world of fishes and the sport of fishing.

*Pathway to Fishing* consists of 12 instructional stations at which participants learn different aspects of fishing, such as fish identification, angling ethics, and knot-tying and casting techniques. *Pathway to Fishing* is available for \$61 from the Government Printing Office, stock number 024-010-00697-8, phone 202-783-3238.

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District of Columbia schools participating in the kickoff include Park View Elementary, Prospect Learning Center, Slowe Elementary, Eaton Elementary, Raymond Elementary, Assumption Catholic, Nativity Catholic, Beers Elementary, and Eastern Senior High School. Maryland schools participating include Central Special Education Center and Walt Whitman High School. Students from Bailey Elementary in Virginia also will take part in the kickoff.

As part of National Fishing Week, Federal agencies will unveil a just-completed National Recreational Fishery Resources Conservation Plan outlining strategies Federal agencies will pursue to improve recreational fishing. The plan's goal is to boost recreational fishing opportunities nationwide through conservation, restoration, and enhancement of aquatic systems and fish populations and by increasing fishing access, education and outreach, and partnership opportunities.

Development of the National Recreational Fishery Resources Conservation Plan was required by an Executive Order on Recreational Fisheries signed by President Clinton during National Fishing Week last year. The plan has been signed by the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Interior, and Transportation, as well as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. As part of the plan, each department has pledged to improve recreational fisheries within the context of its programs and responsibilities.

In addition, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service will announce their final policy on improving administration of the Endangered Species Act as it relates to recreational fisheries. The policy, also a requirement of last year's Executive Order, is aimed at avoiding or resolving conflicts between endangered species conservation and recreational fishing.

Begun more than a decade ago, National Fishing Week starts the first Monday in June and continues through the following Sunday. About 2,500 National Fishing Week events are held annually with an estimated half-million participants nationwide.

Attached is a list of states that are offering free fishing days (allowing the public to fish without a license) during National Fishing Week.

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Note to editors: Photos and video footage from the National Fishing Week kickoff will be available on request from Janet Tennyson, 202-208-5634.