

Florida Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

WHEREAS, the *Get Outdoors Florida!* coalition has created the Florida Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. This Bill of Rights provides that every child has the right to:

- Swim in a healthy lake.
- Build a sandcastle, or outdoor fort.
- Camp out under the stars.
- Climb a tree.
- Catch a fish.
- Hike a path.
- Watch a bird.
- Listen to a cricket, bird or frog.
- Smell a wildflower.
- Explore nature.
- Volunteer to help wildlife.
- Celebrate Florida's heritage.





The *Get Outdoors Florida!* Coalition boasts an array of public and private partners including federal, state and non-profit conservation organizations, health and education groups, and businesses. Together they are engaging communities, families and individuals in active outdoor recreation that will connect them to nature, result in healthier lifestyles and help sustain Florida's natural resources.

An early milestone for the coalition was having Gov. Crist and the Cabinet pass a proclamation of support, which included The Florida Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights that says every Florida child has the right to enjoy nature-based activities, such as swimming in a healthy lake, catching a fish, or camping out. The coalition is incorporated in the State of Florida and has applied for federal non-profit status to allow for tax-free donations and other cost-saving advantages.



The coalition formed in part in response to a national trend that was accelerated by publication of Richard Louv's book *Last Child in the Woods*, which describes the disconnect between people and nature as "nature-deficit disorder." The phrase refers to the malignant impact from lack of outdoor activities, such as being a contributor to obesity, attention deficit disorder, asthma and much more. The book also documents that children who spend time outdoors become more fit and lean, perform better academically, play more creatively, have lower stress levels, are more imaginative, display fewer symptoms of attention-deficit disorder, develop stronger immune systems, and have greater respect for themselves, others and the environment.

Although *Get Outdoors Florida!* stands on its own, it is complementary to national groups such as the Children and Nature Network, the Conservation Fund, Get Outdoors It's Yours, and No Child Left Inside. *Get Outdoors Florida!* is currently discussing with Ron Sachs Communications fund raising and sponsorship opportunities to quick start not only a dynamic advertising and brand recognition campaign but more importantly to use social marketing and best education practices to provide a huge array of outreach events around the state.

These initial outreach opportunities will be tied together through the Web site (www.GetOutdoorsFlorida.org) and will engage Floridians in active outdoor recreation that reconnects them with nature. Those initial events will be used to recruit an audience for messages that reinforce the importance of outdoor recreation and inform them about additional opportunities to partake in other activities, enhance their skills or find new locations to get outdoors. Some of those participants will also be encouraged to go to camps (either week-long day camps, or overnight weekend events) that will move them further towards becoming engaged in life-long outdoor recreation and a commitment to resource stewardship. Results will be carefully and scientifically evaluated to document benefits and refine program effectiveness.

To become a corporate sponsor, a partner holding events to get Floridians actively involved in nature-based outdoor recreation, or simply to learn more about ways you, your family and friends can have fun outdoors in Florida, visit our Web site (www.GetOutdoorsFlorida.org), or contact me.

--Bob Wattendorf, Chair, Get Outdoors Florida!
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