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## National Wildlife Federation Joins Department of the Interior to Celebrate National Parks Week, Engages 600 Kids in Active Outdoor Play

Secretary Ken Salazar, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis Highlight Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative to connect kids to nature

WASHINGTON (April 22) – National Wildlife Federation today teamed up with the Department of the Interior to welcome 600 students at a celebration of National Parks Week, joining the festivities marking the 40th anniversary of Earth Day.

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis spoke at the event, highlighting President Barack Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative and emphasizing the importance of getting young people out into nature to continue our nation's conservation legacy.

## Patrick Fitzgerald, Director of Education Advocacy at National Wildlife Federation, said today:

"Secretary Salazar and National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis understand the importance of reconnecting kids to nature. Today's celebration on the National Mall emphasizes that time outdoors makes children healthier and happier while giving them a sense of conservation stewardship.

The America's Great Outdoors Initiative, launched at a White House conference last week, is about both places *and* people. Conserving the lands and waters that define our country today will be for naught if we fail to instill an appreciation and love of the outdoors in our children and grandchildren. We have an obligation to leave the next generation healthier and better connected to the natural world.

"Studies show that outside of organized sports, kids spend an average of just four to seven minutes per day playing outside while spending more than seven and a half hours each day in front of electronic media. This imbalance is costing our children their health and is putting the future of conservation at risk. Expansion of Interior Department programs can empower America's youth, children and families to get outdoors in nature," said Patrick Fitzgerald.

The National Wildlife Federation's Be Out There movement is closely aligned with the goals of today's event. It is designed to get kids outside more frequently and help prepare them for the future world they will inherit. Visit beoutthere.org for more information.

Today's inaugural *Buddy Bison Earth Day Celebration* was an experiential educational program designed to engage kids in environmental stewardship, promote outdoor activities and health, and celebrate the national parks. Interior employee children attended 'take a child to work day'—outdoors—along with local students, all engaged in games, songs, living classroom exhibits, and interactive environmental station activities.

Time unplugged and playing outside in nature is increasingly a part of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* campaign. Let's move outdoors and encourage our kids to Be Out There. Lack of outdoor time has been linked not only to increased obesity, but depression, stress, diabetes, attention deficit disorder and poor performance in the classroom.

The First Lady says "Let's Move" – the National Wildlife Federation says "Let's move outdoors".

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