

Florida Fish Busters'

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## **Fishing remains a fun, healthy, tradition available to everyone**

By Bob Wattendorf

Freshwater fishing is one of the many outdoor recreational activities encouraged by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

The FWC views outdoor recreation as a tremendously beneficial opportunity that should be available to all residents and visitors and strives to provide quality fishing, hunting and wildlife-viewing opportunities.



Cheryl Charles, president of the Children and Nature Network, points out, “People throughout the world are increasingly connected by a resonance and passion, to create a new common sense for the good health of children today and generations to come.”

Dr. Andrew Lepp, assistant professor of recreation, park and tourism management at Kent State, said the benefits from outdoor recreation are varied and plentiful. Outdoor recreation has psychological benefits, including the prevention or reduction of stress and improved self-esteem, confidence and creativity. Lepp also contends it adds to spiritual growth and leads to an increased sense of exhilaration, adventure and challenge from life. Getting outside provides physical benefits, such

as aerobic, cardiovascular and muscular fitness, as well as improved functioning of the immune system.

It even offers benefits for the social life. The great outdoors affords social benefits, such as bonding with like-minded people who also enjoy outdoor activities, and feeling an increased pride in your community and nation.

The economy benefits from all of this activity as well. Outdoor recreation creates job opportunities for others, which leads to economic growth, and preservation of the natural areas needed for outdoor recreation increases property values. The workplace wins because people who regularly participate in outdoor recreation tend to be more productive at work, Lepp said.

The list continues with positive outcomes for the environment. People who participate in outdoors activities usually have increased environmental awareness. This awareness translates to increased involvement in environmental issues.

Specific activities such as fishing can add to the enthusiasm and provide a fun challenge to become increasingly skillful. In Florida, the abundance of natural waters (7,700 named lakes, 12,000 miles of fishable rivers and canals) means the opportunity is available to everyone. From digging worms and making your own cane pole, to casting a lure develops a connection with nature that comes naturally and has been an American tradition since long before Mark Twain's tales of the adventurous Huck Finn.

Every year the FWC works with the Florida Disabled Outdoor Association at their Sportsability event, and this year, we joined them at the Family Café event in

Orlando. These opportunities reinforce the pure fun of experiencing nature, and we redouble our commitment to making fishing accessible for everyone.



Clay Dyer, a professional bass fisherman, who was born without lower legs, no arm on the left and a partially developed arm on the right, inspired hundreds of individuals with physical and mental challenges during his motivational presentation at the Family Café event. Clay is a hero and inspiration to virtually everyone he touches with his life story, he calls “The View from Down Here is Just Fine.” He is also a spokesperson for the C.A.S.T. for kids program.

The FWC is doing its part by teaching kids to fish, sponsoring Becoming an Outdoor Woman events, helping create bank-fishing access and building accessible boat ramps, courtesy docks and fishing piers. Most importantly, the FWC is dedicated to conserving and enhancing fisheries habitat and fish populations for everyone.

We invite you to get outdoors and take someone with you, so you can enjoy all the benefits of getting back to nature.

*Instant licenses are available at [MyFWC.com/License](http://MyFWC.com/License) or by calling 1-888-FISH-FLORIDA (347-4356). Report violators by calling \*FWC or #FWC on your cell, or 1888-404-3922. Visit [MyFWC.com/Fishing/Updates](http://MyFWC.com/Fishing/Updates) for more Fish Busters' columns.*