



For Immediate Release:
June 9, 2011

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School's Out for Summer: Time to Hit the Parks

Washington, D.C. – As the school year draws to a close, students and parents are looking forward to a summer filled with activity and fun. Many of summer's favorite activities take place on our nation's public lands, the local parks and green spaces kids enjoy when the weather is warm and school is out.

Public lands are available for all people to enjoy – in every community. They include national parks like the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone as well as state and county parks and the public green spaces in your own community. Summer vacation is the perfect opportunity for school weary kids to spend time at their favorite neighborhood park – whether it's participating in sports, hiking with friends, or enjoying a family barbeque.

"We all have ownership of our public lands, and many people don't realize how often they use them," said Robb Hampton, program director for National Public Lands Day (www.publiclandsday.org), a program of the National Environmental Education Foundation (www.neefusa.org). "Parks are everywhere, are often free or low cost and offer a variety of outdoor, healthy activities for people of all ages and abilities. They are our greatest natural resource and should be a part of everyone's summer."

Here are a few ideas on ways you can use your public lands this summer:

- **National Get Outdoors Day**- Mark your calendars for June 11th – the date of this year's National Get Outdoors Day. Celebrate the end of another school year at one of the many events being planned across the country or make your own outdoor fun! To find out more visit <http://www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org/>
- **First Day of Summer**- National Parks celebrate the official start of summer on June 21st with free entrance to the parks (<http://www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm>). Pack up the family and go exploring and don't forget that National Public Lands Day is also a fee-free day at the National Parks.
- **Community events at public school grounds**- Public schools are built on public land, and many fairs and carnivals, as well as parades, farmers' markets and concerts will take place all through out the summer.

Spending time on our public lands also goes hand in hand with First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move Outside campaign to fight childhood obesity. Heading out to your favorite park is an easy way to get the exercise you need while also having fun. You can find special outdoor events near your home by visiting: <http://www.letsmove.gov/where-go>.

The size and scope of the land is as varied as the natural resources and outdoor opportunities for family adventure. Public lands are available for all people to enjoy – in every community. Take advantage of the warm weather and long days to explore and enjoy the spaces that belong to all of us.

After the summer fun is over, take advantage of the opportunities to say “thank you” and give back. One chance to show your appreciation for all that summer fun is on National Public Lands Day on September 24th. It’s a wonderful opportunity to take a break from the back to school activities and spend a day at your favorite park getting it ready for next year’s summer vacation fun.

To find public lands in your community contact your local State Department of Natural Resources or Environment, County or City government or visit www.publiclandsday.org.

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