

**“Get Outdoors - It’s Yours”  
Linking People, Health and Nature**

Secretary Kempthorne, along with the Jonas Brothers, announced a new initiative “Get Outdoors – It’s Yours” on October 14, 2008 with a video public service announcement. The initiative encourages people to get outside and enjoy America’s public lands.

In Fairbanks, Alaska, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Friends of Creamer’s Field and the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center began doing just that in June, 2008. The *Healthy Walk in the Woods* program is an innovative new community partnership to get people outside where they can enjoy nature...*and* improve their health! Numerous studies demonstrate the physical and mental health benefits of regular exercise, and an increasing amount of research indicates it is also healthy for adults and children to simply spend time in nature. More...

The *Healthy Walk in the Woods* program combines these two arenas by encouraging individuals and families in the community to walk at Creamer’s Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, where more than five miles of trails and boardwalks wind through meadows, boreal forest, and seasonal wetlands. Creamer’s Field is also a popular local bird-watching destination, especially each spring and fall when thousands of migrating waterfowl and sandhill cranes pass through.

Several guided aerobic walks were offered at Creamer’s Field to help familiarize program participants with the trails. For those interested in enhancing their walking experience, backpacks could be checked-out at the Creamer’s Field Visitor Center. Two types of backpacks were available. One was for aerobic walkers and contains a pedometer, bottle of water, binoculars, bug dope, trail map, and moose safety information. The other was for families and nature explorers and contains a sketch book, art supplies, bubbles, magnifying glass, and most of the items that are contained in the aerobic backpack. Pedometers could also be checked-out separately.

The program was advertised to the Fairbanks community at large, as well as to specific groups such as clients in the Diabetes Program at Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center and employees at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Participation in the *Healthy Walk in the Woods* program increased as the season progressed and more people heard about it. The pilot program ended with the arrival of snow, but will be offered again and possibly expanded next summer.

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