

Rachel Carson Centennial

Family Fishing Festival

Rachel Carson loved exploring the outdoors at a very early age and attributes this love to her mother's influence on her. During her career, she wrote an article for the *Woman's Home Companion* magazine entitled *Help Your Child to Wonder*. Shortly before her death in 1964, she began developing the article into a book. Published after her death, *The Sense of Wonder* allows her to share with us her experiences exploring nature with her grand-nephew when he was just a few years old. It reminds us that opening our eyes and hearts to nature is a very natural thing for curious children and inquisitive adults.

This activity is designed to help families enjoy the natural world together. Hosting a family fishing event will foster stewardship for local aquatic resources, promote betterment of the environment in your area, and show your community that you care about what happens to the resources upon which fishing and boating depend.

As part of our partnership with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council, the Service is dedicated to increasing public participation in recreational angling as an avenue to increase public awareness and appreciation of the need to protect, conserve and restore this nation's aquatic natural resources.

Hosting a Family Fishing Festival

Festivals usually encompass a range of activities that appeal to a diverse audience. A great way to begin the day is with a kickoff rally featuring local dignitaries, local personalities, steering committee members, sponsors, partners and media. After your invited guests finish speaking, start the festivities with educational skill-building where participants can learn

best practices from local anglers. Have environmental experts available to explain facts about the local area. Then, feature hands-on fishing activities where participants can put their newly acquired skills to use. Invite state agencies, clubs and other organizations to display their materials so participants can learn how to maintain their interest well after your event.

Helpful Planning Tips

Selecting Your Site

Whether you are considering water- or land-based venues for your event, there are a number of logistical considerations to keep in mind:

- space requirements (for storage, educational, hands-on, and food service areas);
- safety considerations (preferably no steep embankments, adequate guard rails on piers, no open construction sites, etc.);
- adequate parking facilities;
- space and access for buses;
- boat access to the water's edge;
- fishing quality, if applicable, and/or possibility of stocking fish;
- safe participant access to the water and docks, if applicable;
- availability of restrooms (or space for port-a-potties);
- area for staging event kick-off;
- overall appearance of area
- public address system or other electrical requirements;
- Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, ensuring that those with physical challenges can participate in your event; and
- directional signs and/or volunteers placement.

Land-Locked? Ideas for Land-Based Activities:

- Focus on the educational components of your program.
- Hold your event at a school, field, park or other large grassy area.

- Include a casting pool or casting lessons with hula hoops.

Remember to make sure there is plenty of parking, and that instructional sites, fishing sites and picnic areas are accessible and free of hazards. Once you have selected a site, consider preparing a diagram of the event layout with each of the above areas considered. Your site map should show where all activities will be, and allow ample room for crowds. Prepare instructions for vendors, volunteers and other supporters working with you.

Registration and Check-in

If you have planned a Family Fishing Festival based on small groups and/or one-on-one teaching, you may need to conduct pre-registration to determine how many instructors you will need. You may also need to prepare a master list of groups, group members and boat assignments if applicable. Depending on the size of your Festival, allow 30-45 minutes for check-in. Don't forget to distribute rods and reels at check-in. You might not want to distribute tackle until the actual fishing component of your festival starts.

Instructional Sessions

If your event moves families along in a group, allow approximately 20 minutes at each station or with each instructor.

Food: You may want to provide lunch for the participants. During lunch, have a local pro or celebrity speak to the families about their experiences fishing and boating, and the contributions they can make to family interactions. Before the event, identify food sources (grocery stores, fast food vendors, restaurants, etc.), and coordinate delivery and preparation on the event day.

Clean-up: Make sure you leave the event site and water as clean or cleaner than you found it.

Giveaways: Distribute tip sheets, prizes, souvenirs, goody bags, and handouts at the close of your event to avoid cluttering the area. Consider distributing goody bags containing fishing and boating supplies, conservation information, details on local fishing/boating opportunities, special interest groups, food and other items needed for a day on the water. This can be a great way to get local organizations to support your efforts – while providing resources to participants to encourage them to stay involved!

Photos: Have a photographer take instant photos of participants catching their first fish or enjoying their first boat ride. Post pictures at your event on a bulletin board, and then let participants take their picture home at the end of the day to remember the great time they had.

Equipment: Every event will need equipment. This could include everything from tents, public address systems, fishing equipment, boats and life jackets to picnic tables, grills and port-a-potties. Contact the Future Fisherman Foundation at <http://www.futurefisherman.org/> for discounted fishing equipment (rods and reels, bait, tackle) for your event.

Volunteers: If you recruit volunteers to help coordinate the logistics of the event, you will need to clearly define the roles, responsibilities and schedules, and conduct a briefing so they understand what is expected.

Partners and Sponsors: Engage your partners earlier rather than later! There are many organizations in your community that can benefit from partnering with your event—they include for-profit, non-profit, as well as Federal, state and municipal entities. Think about organizations that work primarily with boating, fishing and aquatic stewardship/conservation in your community, as well as organizations that can support boating, fishing and aquatic stewardship/conservation. One important point is that working through any type of membership organization is an efficient way to reach a large group of potential supporters in your community. Acknowledge your partners and sponsors at the event, on all materials, signs, in advertisements and newspaper articles, on your Web site, and with a thank you letter after the event. Get their feedback, and lock them in again for next year as soon as possible following your event.

Publicity and Media Outreach: In order to ensure that all your hard work draw in your target audiences, you'll need to publicize the event to build event awareness and attendance. One idea is to ask a local radio station to provide an on-air personality to act as emcee for the day, and broadcast live from your event. This provides support, excitement and, of course, publicity!

Permits: If you are planning an activity at a lake, pond, river, pier, or park, the local authorities may require you to secure a special permit.

Fishing Licenses: Unless your event is planned on one of your state's "free fishing days," you may need to make sure that all participants have licenses. You may be able to work with an appropriate organization to provide on-site permitting at your event. Check with your state fisheries agency contact to be sure of the regulations.

Tips for Incorporating Fishing into Your Festival

- Include sessions on fish identification.
- Highlight local places to fish.
- Discuss which lures and bait work best for the fish in your area.
- Teach safe casting techniques, introduction to hook safety, and knot tying.
- Teach angler ethics. The ethical angler
 - cares about aquatic habitats;
 - keeps only fish they will eat, and properly releases the rest;
 - is respectful of other anglers and non-anglers alike;
 - leaves no trash, even if left by others;
 - shares expertise with less experienced anglers;
 - cooperates with authorities;
 - fishes and boats safely; and
 - preserves the sportfishing tradition.

Environmental Stewardship Ideas for Your Festival:

Feature hands-on art stations where children can depict their favorite outdoor experiences.

Work with local schools to conduct environmental education sessions leading up to your event. Encourage teachers to have students write an essay about a favorite outdoor experience. Display these at the event.

Get a local environmentalist to participate in the day's event and act as the emcee. Weave in stewardship messages throughout the event.

Keep It Clean

Reduce the potential for litter by removing unnecessary packages and wrappings, and bringing reusable containers to the boat.

Teach everyone onboard your boat that tossing anything into the water, other than ice cubes, is just not done and that everything we bring on board must be brought ashore when we return. When trash accidentally falls overboard, go back and get it.

Empty all trash bags on shore in garbage cans or take them home.

Plastic litter doesn't degrade, so dispose of it onshore to protect fish and wildlife.

Recycle when possible, and encourage marinas to recycle.

Make a daily practice of picking up floating trash wherever you dock or anchor; don't let it drift by; keep your slip litter-free and ask your neighbors to do the same; feel good about leaving the water a bit cleaner.

Clean fish as they are caught offshore, and toss fish waste only in open unrestricted water or at sea (if your State allows), never in a marina basin.

Recycle fish parts by composting with peat moss, or burying in garden as fertilizer.

Avoid releasing bait either dead or alive into the water; this can introduce foreign species to fresh water lakes.

For more, visit the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation webpage at <http://www.rbff.org>.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>

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