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New Orleans District

News Release

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Step Outside: outdoor activities day May 12

*Atchafalaya Basin program open to all but targeted toward special needs;
Neotropical Songbird Tour is a 2nd event nearby scheduled the same day*

KROTZ SPRINGS – The 2007 Step Outside Day—open to all children and adults but targeted to those with special needs—will be held Saturday, May 12, in Louisiana’s great Atchafalaya Basin.

Participate in diverse outdoor activities at the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area Headquarters, near Krotz Springs. It is located on La. 975 three miles south of U.S. 190 on the east side of the Atchafalaya River levee. Registration begins at 8 a.m. Activities run from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

A separate event the same day is the **Neotropical Songbird Tour**, with assembly from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. The Sherburne Wildlife Management Area, adjacent to La.975 between Interstate 10 and U.S. 190, offers one of the highest densities of nesting neotropical songbirds in North America. (More on the bird tour below).

Step Outside is a national program administered by the National Shooting Sports Foundation to increase participation in outdoor sports. Last year more than 550 registrants participated in the event. This year’s event will include fishing, archery, boating, target and trap shooting, wood crafts construction, nature photography, bird watching and decoy painting.

Also featured will be exhibits on adaptive equipment, water safety, Louisiana black bear information, turkey trapping demonstrations, trapping techniques, and turkey and duck calling. Be sure to stick around for the prize drawings to take place during the lunch hour near the registration tent.

No alcoholic beverages or glass containers will be allowed on the premises. Due to the nature of activities, liability waiver forms must be completed.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are the local sponsors. Step Outside Day is targeted to people with disabilities or those with little or no opportunity to engage in such activities, providing them with mentoring and safe, hands-on experience.

Pre-registration is encouraged. To register or get detailed driving directions to the Sherburne Headquarters, call the Corps of Engineers, Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System Project Office, 337-585-0853.

The Neotropical Songbird Tour will introduce participants to bird identification through their songs and chirp notes. These vocalizations, originating from the dense understory of the tall canopy of deciduous bottomland hardwood forest, are usually the first clues to the area's wealth of bird species.

Tour participants will be guided to two sites where facilitators will be available to assist them in bird identifications. At each site it may be possible to hear as many as 15 species of birds. Some birds are easily seen whereas others are elusive, so binoculars may be useful. Participants in the Neotropical Songbird Tour are asked to assemble from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. at the Whiskey Bay (Sherburne WMA) Exit on I-10. Look for a gravel pull-off just after turning onto LA 975.

Songbird tour stops are each estimated to last 30 to 45 minutes. The tour will include a mist-netting demonstration and conclude around 10:30 a.m. Participants are encouraged to continue five miles north from the last stop to the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area Headquarters to participate in Step Outside Day.

Links to Step Outside Day and its sponsors

<http://www.stepoutside.org>

<http://www.nssf.org>

Bird Checklist of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

http://library.fws.gov/Refuges/atchafalaya_birds03.pdf

Recreation in New Orleans District, Corps of Engineers

<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/recreation>