



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chicago
Wilderness

CONTACTS: Chris McCloud (IDNR)

217-785-0075

Lucy Hutcherson (Ch. Wilderness)

312-285-4178

Nancy O'Shea (The Field Museum)

312-665-7103

**IDNR, Chicago Wilderness, City of Chicago Department of Environment,
Openlands, Chicago Park District and The Field Museum
to Host Forum on Parks, Open Space and Nature**

August 30 session will let Federal officials hear ideas from the public on open space, recreation, conservation, and ways to link children and adults with nature and the outdoors.

CHICAGO, IL - The public is invited to participate in a dialog with federal officials at 5:30 p.m. on August 30 in the Field Museum's Simpson Theater to inform the Obama Administration's development of an enduring 21st century conservation agenda. Community representatives will join a public forum hosted by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Chicago Wilderness alliance, the City of Chicago Department of Environment, Openlands, Chicago Park District and The Field Museum. The focus will be to help federal officials better understand the success stories and challenges in local conservation efforts and what role the federal government can play in conserving our natural resources for the benefit of people and nature.

"This is a great opportunity to help Washington understand the important work that's being done here in Illinois through conservation partnerships and opportunities that will shape the lives of both children and adults for generations to come," said IDNR Director Marc Miller.

"These sessions are critical opportunities for the people of this region to make their voices heard," adds Melinda Pruett-Jones, Executive Director of the Chicago Wilderness alliance. "This is our chance to contribute to our children's future quality of life by ensuring their continued access to nature and all the benefits that healthy natural systems provide."

In April at the White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors, President Obama signed a memorandum establishing the America's Great Outdoors Initiative to develop a conservation agenda worthy of the 21st century. President Obama directed the principal leaders of the initiative to travel across the country to listen and learn from people directly involved in finding grassroots solutions to reconnect Americans to the outdoors.

This forum is an opportunity for the public to share ideas with Amelia Salzman, Associate Director for Policy Outreach, White House Council on Environmental Quality; Will Shafroth, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior and other federal officials on the four questions guiding the America's Great Outdoors initiative:

- What obstacles exist to conservation, recreation, or reconnecting people to the outdoors?
- What are the most effective strategies for conservation, recreation and reconnecting people to the outdoors?
- How can the federal government be a more effective partner in helping to achieve conservation, recreation or reconnecting people to the outdoors?
- What additional tools and resources would help make these efforts even more successful?

Participants will have the opportunity to submit brief verbal or written comments and suggestions on any of the four questions during the session. Those who cannot attend can learn more about the AGO and join the online conversation at <http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/>.

Information for the Monday forum is below:

FORUM ON PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND NATURE.

MONDAY AUGUST 30, 5:30 p.m. (Registration begins at 4:30)

The Field Museum, 1400 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago

Simpson Theater (entry through West door)

There is no cost to attend this event.

On Tuesday, there will also be two separately organized listening sessions that focus on health in the outdoors:

LISTENING SESSIONS ON HEALTH IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Tuesday, August 31st

General Listening Session: 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Northwestern University School of Law

Youth Listening Session: 5:00 - 7:00 p.m., Prentice Women's Hospital

On Tuesday from 3 - 4 p.m., federal dignitaries will also tour Eden Place Nature Center in Fuller Park. The tour will include brief remarks by Harris Sherman, Undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Dr. Susan Hedman of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and Dr. J. Nadine Gracia of Health and Human Services.

**** Media are welcome to join the Monday forum, Tuesday listening sessions, and the Eden Place event. To join the Eden Place tour, meet at 3 p.m. at the southwest corner of W. 43rd and S. Shields. ****