

STATE OF OHIO

Executive Department

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Columbus

Ohio Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

Today's children are losing their connection with our natural world and spend an average of 7 hours a day watching TV, playing video games and on the computer. The effects of this can be seen nationwide as childhood obesity rates are rapidly increasing and children are suffering from long-term developmental and social impacts.

Children who are in touch with their natural environment are healthier, do better in school, have increased creativity and improved concentration. Realizing these benefits, the State of Ohio, in partnership with the Ohio Leave No Child Inside Collaboratives (representing more than 100 organizations across the state), is committed to helping Ohio's children reunite with nature, live more active, healthier lives, and discover the rewards of becoming environmental stewards.

I encourage parents, educators and youth leaders to join us in this effort to ensure that Ohio's children have the opportunity to reconnect with nature – making them happier, healthier and smarter.

THEREFORE, I, TED STRICKLAND, Governor of the State of Ohio, recognize that every Ohio child shall have the opportunity to:

- Be physically active and play outside every day to grow up healthy
- Have access to safe, natural green spaces in their community
- Connect with nature, with free time to explore the outdoors
- Discover the wonders of plants and animals, large and small, using all five senses
- Explore the diversity of Ohio's natural habitats
- Understand the patterns and cycles in nature
- Experience the joys of splashing, playing and swimming in safe, clean lakes and streams
- Be fully immersed in nature by camping overnight
- Learn how to give back to nature

On this 15th day of September 2010



Ted Strickland
Governor

Ohio Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

The Ohio Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights is intended as a guide to enable children and adults of Ohio to develop healthy, active lifestyles by spending more time outdoors. Exploring the wonders of our natural world will help children learn to appreciate and care for Ohio's abundant natural resources. As the future citizens and leaders of Ohio, a state uniquely rich in natural resources, our children are entitled to:

Be physically active and play outside every day to grow up healthy.

Ohio's children should reap the benefits of outdoor activity for their mental/cognitive development, physical and emotional well-being. This should include access to recess every school day. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2007), states that every child should have at least one hour of free play outdoors each and every day.

Have access to safe, natural green spaces in their community.

Children should be able to safely explore their community and learn to appreciate their natural surroundings. They need to know the diversity of nature found in their own backyard and nearby parks. It is important that every child engages in physical activities including walking and biking around their neighborhood.

Connect with nature, with free time to explore the outdoors.

Children benefit from experiences and reconnecting with nature on a regular basis in backyards, creeks, and parks, spending leisure playtime immersed in self-initiated activities. Having unstructured time outdoors allows children to discover the restorative power of nature.

Discover the wonders of plants and animals, large and small, using all five senses.

Children have an innate curiosity. They need to discover paths that are new to them and follow trails that show them the wonders of the natural world; to watch bugs and hear birds; to touch and smell leaves and see creatures crawling on a log.

Explore the diversity of Ohio's natural habitats.

In order to understand and appreciate Ohio's rich environmental, historical, and cultural past and present, children need to have ongoing access to natural places. The varied ecosystems of Ohio offer opportunities for children to race through a prairie, wade in a stream, study the night sky or climb a tree, while learning about local culture and history.

Understand the patterns and cycles in nature.

Children can learn by observing plant and animal life cycles or watching the sun rise and set each day. They gain an understanding of the nurturing capacity of the Earth by digging in the soil, finding worms, and planting seeds and watching them grow into flowers and food.

Experience the joys of splashing, playing and swimming in safe, clean lakes and streams.

Water is essential to all life on Earth and is an abundant natural resource in Ohio. Children need to become familiar with water and how it plays a role in recreation and conservation, from skipping rocks and studying turtles to sloshing in puddles to fishing and boating.

Be fully immersed in nature by camping overnight, free of the distraction of electronics.

Children, perhaps with family, school or scouting groups, need to spend time in nature away from computers, television, cell phones and electronic gadgets to quietly reflect. Every child should have a camp-like experience in nature, well beyond the one-day field trip during his or her school-age years.

Learn how to give back to nature.

Children develop an appreciation and a sense of responsibility for preserving Ohio's natural resources by giving back and leaving nature undisturbed or better than they found it. They learn to value the natural world through involvement in activities like planting trees or gardening, picking up litter and recycling, taking part in stream cleanup, wetland and prairie restoration efforts.