



**Get Outdoors Florida!** is a coalition promoting outdoor experiences to help Floridians have healthier lifestyles and develop an appreciation for our abundant natural resources.

For more Get Outdoors Florida! destinations and activities, visit [www.getoutdoorsflorida.com](http://www.getoutdoorsflorida.com)

# Get Outdoors Florida!

By Liz Sparks

**G**et Outdoors Florida! – is a high energy coalition with the mission of “Engaging communities, families and individuals in outdoor experiences to achieve healthier lifestyles and sustain Florida’s natural resources.” It brings together state and federal conservation and land-management agencies, state and county health organizations, non-government organizations dealing with youth, conservation education or health organizations, universities, and commercial businesses. These groups recognize that by reconnecting communities, families and individuals with nature, they also address a variety of health and societal issues.

Gov. Charlie Crist and his Cabinet signed a resolution March 24, 2009, encouraging families to Get Outdoors Florida! The resolution recognized the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights, which proclaims that each Florida child has the right to enjoy specific nature-based activities. These include activities many of us take for granted - swimming in a healthy lake, building a sandcastle or fort, camping out under the stars, hiking, tree climbing and fishing watch a bird, listen to a cricket, bird or frog, catch a fish, smell a wildflower, volunteer to help wildlife, explore nature, and celebrate Florida’s heritage



Richard Louv, in his seminal book “Last Child in the Woods,” termed the growing disconnect between people and the outdoors and the resulting mental and physical health problems “Nature Deficit Disorder.” Studies have shown that children who spend more time outdoors perform better academically, play more creatively, have less stress and display more active imaginations. They are in better shape and leaner, show fewer symptoms of ADD, have healthier immune systems and express more respect for themselves, others and the environment

Many of the groups and individuals most excited about the coalition have been actively creating programs to get Floridians back to nature, including developing a website that promotes a wealth of outdoor activities: <http://www.getoutdoorsflorida.com/>

Each week in Thursday’s ‘Living and Outdoors’ section of the Tallahassee Democrat, local experts will share prime destinations for outdoor adventure within an hour’s drive of Tallahassee amidst some of the nation’s most scenic and unspoiled natural areas. Invite some friends to join you in creating a family nature club then pack a picnic and escape to the wonders of Florida’s natural ‘play station’ – Get Outdoors Florida!

*To learn more about developing your own family nature club, visit this website: Children & Nature Network – toolkit for family nature clubs: [http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/NCFE\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/NCFE_toolkit.pdf)*

