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Contacts:

Christina Batcheler

703-438-6098

batchelerc@nwf.org



OUTDOORS ALLIANCE FOR KIDS (OAK) SUPPORTS HEALTHY KIDS OUTDOORS ACT TO RECONNECT KIDS WITH NATURE

New Legislation Aims To Improve Kids' Physical, Mental and Social Health

WASHINGTON (May 21, 2014) – Today, Congressman Ron Kind (D-WI) and Senator Mark Udall (D-CO) introduced legislation aimed at connecting children, youth and families with the outdoors. Supported by the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK), the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act would support state, local and federal strategies to reconnect Americans with nature, improve children's health, and support future economic growth and conservation efforts.

This legislation will encourage kids and families to be active outdoors through unstructured play; outdoor recreation such as camping, hiking, hunting and fishing; public health initiatives; outdoor learning centers; service learning and other programs.

“Coloradans know our mountains, parks and open spaces are essential to our special way of life. But as study after study shows childhood obesity rates are increasing, we must do more to connect our kids with opportunities for outdoor adventure,” Senator Mark Udall said. “The Healthy Kids Outdoors Act supports local initiatives across the United States to ensure our kids everywhere have access to outdoor recreational opportunities and they can reap the numerous benefits of an active lifestyle.”

“Young people today spend less time engaged in outdoor activity than any other generation in history, which takes a serious physical and mental toll on them at a critical time in their development,” said Congressman Ron Kind. “This bill provides tools for our state and local leaders to find new opportunities to promote active, healthy outdoor lifestyles to our kids. And by starting early in life, young people are more likely to care for their health and their natural surroundings as adults who will then pass those values on to future generations.”

Studies indicate that outdoor play increases fitness levels and improves physical, mental and social health and well-being. The Healthy Kids Outdoors Act would provide incentives for states to develop dynamic five-year strategies to reconnect children and families to the great outdoors. The act would also compel the President to involve federal agencies and national partners to create a similar plan at the national level and support further research documenting the health, conservation and other benefits of active time spent outdoors in the natural world.

“Our nation's kids are out of shape, tuned out and stressed out, because they're missing something essential to their health and development – a connection to the natural world,” said Kevin Coyle, vice president for education and training for National Wildlife Federation. “We

applaud Congressman Kind and Senator Mark Udall for introducing legislation to reverse this trend by getting kids and families outside on a regular basis.”

“By supporting strategies that will result in more kids spending more time outside, the Healthy Kids Outdoor Act promotes the health and development of our nation’s children,” said YMCA of the USA president and CEO Neil Nicoll. “Outdoor play improves children’s physical, social and emotional health. It engages their senses, develops curiosity and creativity, reduces stress, and fosters a lifelong sense of connection to and concern for the environment. The Y is excited to work with Congressman Kind and Senator Udall on this important effort to enrich the health and well-being of children across the country.”

“As the father of three young children, I know just how important it is for them to get outdoors and connect with nature,” said Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club. “I also know that nature is not in everyone’s backyard, which is why Sierra Club supports the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act to make the outdoors more accessible to kids and families everywhere.”

“A life-long passion for conservation, hunting and fishing, and active outdoor recreation begins at a young age,” said Scott Kovarovics, executive director of the Izaak Walton League of America. “The Healthy Kids Outdoors Act will help children and families to get outside and experience the natural world around them.”

About the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK): OAK is a national strategic partnership of organizations from diverse sectors with a common interest in connecting children, youth and families with the outdoors. The members of OAK are brought together by the belief that the wellness of current and future generations, the health of our planet and communities and the economy of the future depend on humans having a personal, direct and life-long relationship with nature and the outdoors. OAK brings together more than seventy businesses and organizations including the American Heart Association, Children & Nature Network, Izaak Walton League of America, National Association of State Park Directors, National Recreation and Park Association, National Wildlife Federation, The North Face, the Outdoor Foundation, Public Lands Service Coalition (a program of The Corps Network), REI, Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and the YMCA of the USA to address the growing divide between children, youth and the natural world. For more information: <http://outdoorsallianceforkids.org>.

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