

Outdoor Expo Newsletter

"The Outdoor Expo—America's Outdoor Classroom"

www.weatherby-foundation.org

Editor:
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The Big MOE – Massachusetts Outdoor Expo

By Peter Mirick

It is hard to believe that what started out more than a decade ago as a simple "Field Day for Kids" with only a few hundred participants and a half dozen activity stations has evolved into the annual Massachusetts Outdoor Exposition (fondly known as "The Big MOE") which now draws almost 7,000 participants and offers more than two dozen hands-on activities free of charge to the public. Aside from the involvement of several very dedicated individuals (the most important factor in any undertaking), there are two factors that were probably the most crucial to our success.

The first of these was the formation of a small non-profit corporation dedicated to promoting public education about scientific wildlife management. Its founders were incensed by the ability of the Humane Society of the United States and its local animal rights allies to sponsor and promote -- with very graphic and entirely false television ads -- a 1996 voter referendum that banned most fur trapping in Massachusetts. The counteractive result was FAWNS: Facts About Wildlife & Nature Society. Formed in 1998, FAWNS raised enough money from local sportsmen's groups to incorporate as a 501(c)(3) organization. With "An Educated Public Is Wildlife's Best Defense" as a motto, it set out to get a goal of "wildlife literacy" into the public schools. It responded to the lies of the animal rights front in newspaper editorials and successfully removed animal rights propaganda from elementary school texts, but it failed, despite many and varied attempts, to get a wildlife agenda or conservation history instruction into the public educational system. In Massachusetts at least, that system is virtually unassailable.

Discouraged, FAWNS cast about for other ways to reach the public, and especially children. Encountering a group of other sportsmen who had been working for several years to develop a public "Field Day" event, they felt they had found their niche. Here was a way to reach the public with a variety conservation education messages while promoting all the traditional outdoor sports that have funded and driven the restoration of America's wildlife resources for the last century! FAWNS, as a nonprofit corporation, provided the organizers with the ability to apply for grant funding for promotion and equipment that was otherwise unobtainable, and it was crucial in establishing an annual event in a small state like Massachusetts because the state fish & wildlife agency -- though very supportive and enthusiastic -- simply did not have the funding base or personnel of larger states to launch an outdoor expo on its own. So, if you are one of those smaller states and want to start your own expo, we recommend initiating or partnering with a nonprofit organization that has related goals. It may be the only way to go in states lacking large and over-arching fish and wildlife departments.

The second crucial factor was Weatherby International Foundation's grant program. Without the initial and following grants, FAWNS could never have afforded the advertising budget and equipment

purchases that allowed us to draw ever increasing public attendance and a growing cadre of volunteer instructors and presenters. Thanks to Weatherby we have a dependable funding source that has allowed us to promote and expand our event every year, which in turn has allowed us to attract new funding sources for further expansion and improvement. It is a partnership for which we will always be grateful.

As we move into a full two day event in the 12th year of the Big MOE and contemplate the possibility of multiple events in various locations and at various times around the state, we are now wrestling with how to keep the event from getting swallowed up in commercialism. So far our Board has resisted any commercial sales at our event, but the possibilities for raising substantial new funding by allowing commercial enterprises in for on-site sales (or even just corporate name promotion) is very tempting. We would like to hear from other event organizers as to how they have dealt with this issue and what experiences they have encountered?

Editor's Note: Pete Mirick a board member and one of the founders of FAWNS also assists Gary Zima, Big MOE coordinator, in planning and production of the Big MOE event. The Big MOE event is a partnership between FAWNS and the Massachusetts Wildlife Division. Several states allow sales of outdoor recreation products at their events and have an area set up for retailers; however, maintain the primary focus of the event as "hands-on" outdoor skills and conservation education and with no or minimal charge to the public. Some of these states please respond to Peter Mirick or Gary Zima and let them know how you conduct your retail sales at the Expo.

The Outdoor Expo – making a difference !

Each year outdoor expo coordinators receive many responses from recent expo participants.

A response from Sarah of Kingsville, Texas following the 2007 Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo.

"I just wanted to say Thank You once again for such a great weekend! This is our 5th year going and we go as a whole family. My husband, daughter, my parents, and I loved the Expo! My daughter is now asking for an air gun for her birthday and my husband wants a Banelli gun. We have always had a great time, but it just seems to be getting better and better. Thank You so much for all of the great activities and wonderful information. God Bless, Sarah."

Re-printed from an article published in a September 21, 2007 issue of the TRADER'S an Advertising publication in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The TRADER'S contains a section from a local high school, called the "Triumph High School News". One of the High School students wrote this article following the Wyoming Hunting and Fishing Heritage Expo in early September, 2007.

Expo Experience

By Crystal Garcia

As the school year started, we began a Hunter's Safety course as part of our Outdoor Education Class. Our first trip was to Casper where about ten students were going to camp at the North Platte River. We departed Thursday before lunch, and immediately upon arriving at the camp site, we unloaded and set up camp. On the first night, we went fishing and just walked around. The fishing wasn't great because the fish weren't biting, and it was quite windy. Early the next morning, we headed for the Casper Events Center. Once we arrived, the required guns we were to shoot were the air rifle, rifle, shotgun, and a muzzle loader. We also were able to do archery. When we completed those activities, we were handed an orange card that was punched every time we completed a shooting activity, so that our teacher would know that we had completed the activity. Later we walked inside the events center where there were booths set up with brochures containing information. We had lunch in the parking lot, so it was pretty much a tailgating lunch. We then went into the Expo, and we were able to do what we wanted there. It was a tremendous experience, especially if you never had shot a gun before. My teacher was telling the staff at Triumph that I had outstanding ability even though I had never shot a gun before.

Status of Weatherby Foundation International Sponsored Outdoor Expo Events in 2007

By: Dave Lockman, Outdoor Expo Project Leader for WFI

The WFI Outdoor Expo program has been in existence since 1998, and started with the state of Wyoming. Since 1998, WFI sponsored events have totaled over one million participants of which about 450,000 have been youth less than 18 years of age.

Since 2003, Weatherby Foundation International has given 12 outdoor expo planning workshops and 5 presentations at national wildlife conferences and to individual states with representatives from all of the states and many national organizations having attended. As concern about today's youth not participating in outdoor activities, and the growing emphasis on "no child left indoors" more states and organizations are expressing interest in using the outdoor expo concept as a tool to help reverse this trend by reaching millions of families. Hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, and associated skills are outdoor activities stressed at outdoor expo events.

The following information was reported by Outdoor Expo Coordinators from Expo events held in 2007 by 16 states, 28 events, and 259,680 participants. Weatherby Foundation International has helped many of these events grow and has played an instrumental role in starting new events in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. In 2008 and 2009 South Dakota and Indiana will host their first Outdoor Expo Events, and Alabama will resume their Expos.

2007 SUMMARY OF OUTDOOR EXPO STATE REPORTS

<u>STATE</u>	<u>EVENTS</u>	<u>NO. PARTICIPANTS</u>	<u>YOUTH <18</u>	<u>Yrs. in Operation</u>
Alabama	cancelled in 2007 and plan on resuming in 2008			
Arizona	1	17,400	5,220	4
Arkansas	3	5,156	4,228	1
California	1	2,900	2,610	10
Georgia	5	1,859	930	5
Illinois	2	43,400	15,190	20+
Louisiana	4	7,700	5,005	4
Massachusetts	1	7,000	4,410	12
Nebraska	2	45,500	18,970	2
New Mexico	1	2,100	1,407	6
Oklahoma	1	40,000	15,200	3
South Carolina	2	2,500	1,386	6
Texas	1	42,569	21,710	15
Washington	1	5,500	2,250	1
West Virginia	1	17,000	5,100	34
Wisconsin	1	5,850	4,388	3
Wyoming	<u>1</u>	<u>13,246</u>	<u>6,226</u>	10
TOTALS	28	259,680	114,230	

**2008 Schedule of
Outdoor Expo Education Events in America**
Sponsored by Weatherby Foundation International

ALABAMA- “Outdoor Alabama Expos”. Alabama Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources. Two regional spring events and one statewide fall event.

Dates and locations to be announced. Jason Dockery, 256-737-7216 Jason.dockery@dcnr.alabama.gov

ARIZONA- “Arizona Game & Fish Department Outdoor Expo”.

Arizona Game & Fish Dept. Ben Avery Shooting Facility, Phoenix. March 28-30, 2008. Tristanna Bickford, 623-236-7241 tbickford@azgfd.gov

ARKANSAS- “Youth Outdoor Expos”. Arkansas Game & Fish Comm. Three regional events in 2008 – April 29&30 (Perryville), May 8&9 (Fort Smith), and Sept. 20 (Jonesboro). Eric DeVries, 501-224-1294 efdevries@agfc.state.ar.us

CALIFORNIA- “Youth Outdoor Safari Day”. Los Angeles and Orange Co. Chapters Safari Club International. Norco, CAL. July 19, 2008. Ron Mizrahi, 818-952-0404 scila@charter.net

GEORGIA- “Outdoor Adventure Days”. Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources-Wildlife Resources Div. Summerville, Helen, Thomson, Thomasville, and Richmond Hill. September 27, 2008. Mark Whitney, 770-918-6404. mark.whitney@dnr.state.ga.us

ILLINOIS- “National Hunting and Fishing Days”. Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources. Two events- South Illinois at Carterville and North Illinois at Yorkville. September 27&28, 2008. Gary Watson, 217-782-9990. gary.n.watson@illinois.gov

INDIANA- “Hoosier Outdoor Expo”. Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources, Div. of Fish and Wildlife. Fort Harrison State Park, Indianapolis. September 25-27, 2009. Amanda Wuestefeld, 317-547-2027. awuestefeld@dnr.in.gov

LOUISIANA- “Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Outdoor Expo”.

Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries. Four events- Minden, Monroe, Alexandria, and Baton Rouge. Sept.27, 2008. John Sturgis, 225-763-5448. jsturgis@wlf.louisiana.gov

MASSACHUSETTS- “Massachusetts Outdoor Expo”. Facts About Wildlife and Nature Society and Mass. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. Sturbridge. Sept. 27&28, 2008. Gary Zima, 508-389-6314. gary.zima@state.ma.us

NEBRASKA- “Nebraska Outdoor Expo and Missouri River Outdoor Expo”. Nebraska Game and Parks Comm. Two events – Kearney Events Center (April 17-19) and Ponca State Park (Sept.19-21, 2008). Sam Sidner,402-471-5539. sam.sidner@ngpc.ne.gov

NEW MEXICO-“New Mexico Outdoor Expo”. New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish. Albuquerque Shooting Range. May 17&18, 2008. Mark Birkhauser, 505-222-4733. mark.birkhauser@state.nm.us

OKLAHOMA- “Oklahoma Wildlife Expo”. Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation. Lazy E Ranch, Guthrie. Sept.26-28, 2008. Rhonda Hurst.405-522-6279. rhurst@odwc.state.ok.us

SOUTH CAROLINA- “National Hunting and Fishing Day-An Adventure in the Outdoors”. Two Events: SC Wildlife Federation (Midlands event at W. Columbia) and Upstate Forever Organization (Upstate event at Seneca). Sept. 26&27, 2008. Angela Viney. 864-327-0090. aviney@upstateforever.org and Whitney Robertson. 803-256-0670. whitney@scwf.org

SOUTH DAKOTA- “South Dakota Outdoor Expo-Explore the Outdoors”.

So. Dakota State Fair, Dept. of Agriculture and So. Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, & Parks. So. Dakota State Fair Grounds. May 17&18, 2008. Alison Kiesz. 605-626-3272. alison.kiesz@state.sd.us

TEXAS- “Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo”. Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. TPWD headquarters grounds-Austin. October 4&5, 2008. Ernie Gammage. 512-389-4472. ernie.gammage@tpwd.state.tx.us

WASHINGTON- “Washington Youth Outdoor Adventure Expo”. Go Play Outside Alliance of Washington and Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. Benton Co. Fairgrounds, Kennewick. May 16&17, 2008. Dianne Warrant. 509-628-1166. Lady.Dianne@verizon.net

WEST VIRGINIA-“West Virginia Celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Days”. W. Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources and W. Va Wildlife Federation. Stonewall Jackson Lake Resort State Park. Sept. 27&28, 2008. Jerry Westfall. 304-558-2771. jerrywestfall@wvdnr.gov

WISCONSIN- “Wisconsin Outdoor Education Expo”. Wisconsin Outdoor Alliance. Dodge County Fairgrounds, Beaver Dam. May 15&16, 2008. Heidi Hubble. 608-833-2040. heidihubble@tds.net
WYOMING- “Wyoming Hunting and Fishing Heritage Expo”. Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Casper Events Center. Sept. 11-13, 2008. Wendy Hayes. 307-777-4542. wendy.hayes@wgf.state.wy.us

Editor’s Note: In 2008, we will have 18 states producing 32 events and forecast over 320,000 participants. So far, in 2009 we will add Indiana to the list and expect an additional 4 new states in 2009 and 2010. That will bring it to 23 states by 2010, and our goal is 30 states by 2012 with over 500,000 participants.

The importance of hunter education and the early hunting experiences with a parent or mentor in a youngster’s brain development was conveyed recently by a University professor. He stressed that hunting is a good way to develop frontal lobe brain development in youngsters - “Hunters are taught at a young age to control impulses, abide by the rules, restrain behavior, and learn good judgement!” by Dr. Jim Rose, University of Wyoming, Dept. of Education.

A Preview of the West Virginia Expo

By Jerry Westfall, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

West Virginia’s Celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Days is a two day event and held at Stonewall Jackson Resort State Park and Wildlife Management Area. The event is cosponsored by the West Virginia Wildlife Federation and the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources with participation from Federal, sister State agencies and the community of wildlife enthusiasts who focus on a common goal: “preserving the future of our hunting, fishing and wildlife watching heritage; educating the public by providing opportunities for everyone to learn the skills, safety, ethics, respect, and stewardship important in the conduct of our outdoor pursuits; and encouraging people to get outdoors.

The Celebration provides an opportunity for the public to learn about the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources management activities and enforcement of wildlife laws, as well as learn about organizations, agencies, landowners, and businesses that have an important role in conserving West Virginia’s wildlife and preserving the hunting and fishing heritage. The Celebration emphasizes educational opportunities, skills, and stewardship necessary to ensure proper wildlife and land management through responsible hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching techniques.

Activities that are offered at the expo. With a few exceptions these events are free of charge.
Archery Alley for kids – Even with a steady drizzle, a line of eager children waited their turn on Saturday. Heavy rain and muddy conditions canceled the event on Sunday. Each participant receives a small prize.
Wildlife painting for kids – Large cutouts of several species of wildlife native to West Virginia as well small native species are provided for children’s creative painting. Children are allowed to paint them what ever color they choose and when finished, the cutouts are sprayed off and other children can paint them.
Outdoor Youth Challenge – 95 youths participated in the 2 day event which is divided into two categories; Junior Challenge for ages 10-13 and Senior Challenge for ages 14-17.
Sporting dog demonstrations – All persons participating in this event must sign an Agreement to participate.
Kids Fishing – A section of Stonewall Jackson Lake is fenced off and stocked with catfish. Staff/volunteers provide instruction, equipment and bait.
Others activities offered included:
.22 rifle shooting, air rifle shooting, sporting clay shooting, fly fishing demos, care & cooking of fish and game, fish filleting demo, deer calling & rutting seminars, deer field dressing & skinning demo,

live fish displays, 3-D archery competition (pay event), wild game and fish taste sampling, primitive camping, knife & tomahawk throwing, Lions Club sight screening, Stonewall Jackson Lake boat tours, coyote calling seminar, educational exhibits, electro-fishing demo, and others.

Many organizations help to round out the event in an effort to educate the public of the wonders offered in outdoor recreation. These include the National Rifle Association, WV Wildlife Federation, WVU Extension Service – 4H Shooting Sports, Isaac Walton League, Raptors Up Close, Local Chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Nicholas County Beekeepers, Taxidermy Association, WV Bear Hunters Association, WV Chapter Ruffed Grouse Society, US Army Corps of Engineers, WV Aquaculture Association, WV Trappers Association, WV Division of Forestry, WV Hunters Education Association, Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited, private landowners, and others.

Two teams of paramedics, each with an ambulance, are at the event each day. One team with an ambulance remains at the park and one team with an ambulance remains at the Youth Challenge.

The Division of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Section leads the Security and Parking Committee, reviews and updates, as needed, the Emergency Evacuation Plan. Range officers are provided for all shooting events as well as secure the grounds at night.

At public shooting events, the public is provided free of charge; instruction, ammunition, hearing protection, shooting glasses, shooting benches and clay targets. Shooting areas are provided porta-potties, and bleachers.

The quality of Seminars continues to receive positive comments. From the archery skills of Bryan Ferguson; Fly Fishing with Jack Bell and Joe Messinger; WV Snakes Seminar with Roy Moose; our seminar tents are nearly always full.

Vendors and Presenters are required to sign a policy, *National Hunting and Fishing Day Celebration Policy for Exhibitors and Presenters* that set guide lines that they are expected to follow.

A survey of participants was conducted with 2064 responses in 2007. As an incentive for participants to complete the survey a two day, two night trip to a state park in West Virginia as well as other valuable prizes were given.

Editor's Note: The West Virginia event was started 33 years ago and today has over 15,000 participants, annually. It may be the longest-running outdoor expo education type of event in the U.S.

Visit our website and learn more about we can help you start an outdoor expo in your state.

www.weatherby-foundation.org

Or contact Dave Lockman at [wyodave@gwestoffice.net](mailto:wiodave@gwestoffice.net)