



CONSERVATION EDUCATION — Success Story
Fish Tales

INTRODUCTION -- Fish Tales is a conservation education program targeting underserved young people ages 7-12. Partial funding for the program was through a Forest Service conservation education grant. The program has three objectives:

- Provide a recreational opportunity by teaching children how to fish.
- Use fishing as a means to teach children natural resource conservation concepts, specifically related to aquatic ecosystems.
- Provide a positive experience and memories for a lifetime.

Partners in this program include USDI Fish and Wildlife Service Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Shawnee Community College and Southernmost Illinois Delta Empowerment Zone (SIDEZ.)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION -- Recruitment of students was coordinated with the five schools serving children in our target age group in Alexander and Pulaski counties. The program was delivered through four, three-day fishing camps. Transportation was provided by SIDEZ. Children were picked up in their communities and transported to a pond at Shawnee Community College. Schools were visited and presentations explaining the program to the children were given. Appearances by the clown angler “Fannie Finn” were highly effective in generating enthusiasm. During the camps story telling, singing, and arts and crafts classes were used to enhance the recreational fishing experience and to reinforce the aquatic resource stewardship message.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS -- Important accomplishments of the program include:

- Last year 102 children were served in the four fishing camps.
- A “Fishing Olympics” and an awards ceremony celebrating the end of camp. Dozens of parents and even ministers from local churches attended.
- Relationships with our partners in this project were cemented. Each of them intends to continue in the partnership next year as we expand the program to reach more children in additional counties.
- We were approached by another county school system that had heard about the program and wanted us to expand into their district next year.
- The County Extension Service who had heard about the program also approached us. They have offered to provide meals and snacks for the students next year.



CONCLUSION —Future plans for Fish Tales include:

- Expand to increase the number of children served.
- The Regional Office of Education is now a partner. Through this partnership, Fish Tales will be part of their “Summer Bridges” program.
- The Illinois Department of Natural Resources wants to increase their level of participation in the program.
- Work with the County Extension Agent in providing meals and snacks for the students.
- Apply for additional funding through philanthropic organizations such as the Kellogg Foundation.

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