




Michigan State University Extension outdoor education programs in south-eastern Michigan are designed to reconnect Michigan citizens, especially those living in predominantly urban areas, with the land. Through fishing, archery and other outdoor programs, youth and adults across the state are increasing their experiences with Michigan's natural resources.


Why Urban Outdoor Education Is Critical

 According to researchers at MSU, anglers from urban areas reported having fewer immediate family members who fish giving youth less exposure to outdoor recreational mentors. Of the most active anglers, 45 percent reported that they fished before age 5 with family members as mentors. (*MSU Panel Study of Michigan Anglers, Tomesi and Hoehn, 1994*)



 Researchers at MSU and Cornell University have found that increasing awareness of hunting and fishing opportunities while providing hands-on exposure causes people to take advantage of natural resources. (*Hunting and Fishing Heritage Task Force Report, 1996*)

 Fishing involvement, mentorship and apprenticeship experiences at a young age are the most influential factors in promoting long-term participation in fishing. (*MSU Panel Study of Michigan Anglers, Tomesi and Hoehn, 1994*)

 MSU Extension research shows that giving young people opportunities to build strong adult and peer relationships in out-of-school activities increases their likelihood of being productive while reducing the chance for risky behavior. (*MSU Extension Youth Development out-of-school time white paper, Nelson et al., 2001*)



"With the advent of urban/suburban society, we, as a public, are becoming increasingly distant from the land. We are becoming removed from a realistic understanding of our relationship with wildlife and our role in natural processes."

—Hunting and Fishing Heritage Task Force of Michigan Report Michigan Department of Natural Resources, 1996

How do I find out more?

For more information on MSU Extension southeast region outdoor education programs, contact:

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MSU EXTENSION Outdoor Education Programs



Michigan State University Extension Outdoor Education Programs



Since the 1996 Hunter and Fishing Heritage Task Force of Michigan report was established it continues to support and back the idea that children and urban residents need to be more familiar with Michigan's outdoor heritage. The program accomplishes this goal through the following activities:



Stepping Stones Nature Exploration Program:

This one-day workshop for youth ages 9 and older takes place at various Michigan Department of Natural Resources state parks and introduces youth to fishing, camping, archery, water studies and nature exploration. This program helps youth develop new outdoor recreation skills and important life skills such as responsibility, decision-making, team work and respect for our natural resources.



Angler Education:

This in, and out of, the classroom experience trains adults and youth how fishing is a valuable experience, a method to improve family

communication and increase quality family time. Youth and adults will develop fishing skills while increasing their knowledge. Participants have also become stewards of natural resources, the environment and fisheries.



Archery Education:

Youth develop concentration skills, discipline and responsibility in these Michigan 4-H and MDNR-sponsored programs. For youth and their families, they will learn the safe and appropriate use of archery equipment for recreation and outdoor enjoyment.



Great Lakes Education Program:

This program received a distinction award by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National 4-H Council. It is an educational experience about the Great Lakes and Detroit River resources. The program covers topics including history, geography, physical and biological sciences, math, literature, and the arts to increase student interest in becoming environmental stewards. It also introduces local natural resources such as Belle Isle, the Detroit River and Lake Erie.



"This is one of the best activities these kids have experienced. We cannot wait to come again."

—Herman Academy, Detroit



"I feel this was an excellent experience for the students. For most of them, it was their first time fishing! We need more of these programs."

—Detroit Academy of Environmental Science

Making A Difference With Outdoor Education

Between 1999 and 2013, MSU Extension outdoor education programs in southeast Michigan involved over 102, 500 youth and adults in fishing, archery, camping, nature studies and Great Lakes environmental education. Approximately 51 percent of these participants were African American, Hispanic, Arab American and Native American.

91 percent of youth participants said they would come back to a Michigan state park with their family to participate in more outdoor education programs.

Additional results from a program survey include:

- 99 percent of participants learned how to shoot a bow and arrow
- 99 percent learned how to use a rod and reel when fishing
- 98 percent learned how to be safe on a trail