Oneida County Success from the Field
Family Fishing Day Promotes Conservation Education

Background

Family Fishing Fun Day was a huge success in 2016 at Hodag Park Boat Landing in Rhinelander, Wis. Over 250 visitors were in attendance to learn about fishing and conservation. Of these individuals, 150 youth participated in the event. The Family Fishing Day was hosted by Oneida County 4-H Leaders’ Association in cooperation with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Wis. Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), and other partners.

Program Successes

The event featured multiple learning stations led by volunteers from NRCS, 4-H, civic organizations, and the community. More than 45 volunteers worked the event. Volunteers used an NRCS poster to educate participants about the water cycle. Visitors were able to make bracelets with each bead representing a different part of the water cycle. Educating youth about the continuous movement of water on, above, and below the surface of Earth and that the cycle is essential for maintenance of most life and ecosystems on the planet is key to understanding the importance of conservation. “Hopefully these activities provide a take-home message that will be remembered as adults.” said Tom Melnarik, NRCS Rhinelander Service Center, Soil Conservation Technician. Participants also enjoyed the activities in the NRCS Sammy Soil coloring book and were able to take a copy home. Sammy Soil promotes soil health, explains how water infiltrates the soil when it rains, and educates about other conservation concepts.

Participants were also able to learn about boat safety, depth finders, leeches and live bate, fish identification, knot tying, fish cleaning, casting, reading fish maps, WDNR fish surveying, artificial bait and spinners, aquatic invasive species, water safety and life jacket demonstrations, lead safety and wildlife, and fire department water rescue demonstrations. Pontoon boat rides, provided by the local Lets Go Fishing organization, were available for family fishing and demonstration.

Tom Melnarik, NRCS Rhinelander Service Center, Soil Conservation Technician displays the NRCS Sammy Soil coloring book available to children learning about the water cycle.

Events and hands-on experiences, like the Family Fishing Day in Rhinelander, promote conservation education and get children interested in conservation concepts at an early age. Families become advocates of conservation and soil health by attending and participating. NRCS is the leader in helping people make sound choices for healthy land and water. Through these interactions, participants recognize the importance of clean air and water, wildlife, and healthy soil. We’re Helping People Help the Land, one event participant at a time!

Youth participants at Family Fishing Fun Day gain hands-on experience learning how fyke nets can be used to sample for fish. Photo courtesy of Nick Olcikas.

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