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Forest Service Announces Free Fishing Derbies Across the State

Already looking for some way to occupy those long, summer vacation days? National Fishing week will soon be here, and the Ouachita and Ozark-St. Francis National Forests will be co-sponsoring fishing derbies on many of the Ranger Districts in Arkansas and Oklahoma. These events, typically geared toward children, are a great way for families to have free fun in the sun together.

The Forest Service works closely with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. All of the derby sites are well-stocked with catchable size for the event. Other sponsors include local civic clubs, bass clubs and major and local retailers.

Each participant must be registered before casting a line. The registration consists of name, age, address, phone number, and the signature of a parent or guardian. Those interested can contact their local District office, or sign up during the registration time on the day of the derby.

Though some artificial catfish bait will be available, participants are encouraged to bring their favorite bait. In addition, each angler must have his or her own fishing pole and have a parent or guardian with them during the event.

Most of the derbies have contests for the largest and smallest fish as well as other prizes. Children are generally split into age groups of 4 and under, 5-8, and 9-12. One derby has even been designated strictly for seniors!

The following list of events will help you to choose the location closest to your home, or allow you to visit a new area of the Ouachita or Ozark-St. Francis National Forests:

Ozark-St. Francis National Forests

- **Boston Mountain Ranger District:** June 19; Shores Lake; 8:30-11:00; Ages 14 and under; restrooms, water, wheelchair accessible; 479-667-2191 for more information.
- **Buffalo Ranger District:** June 12; Deer Pond, Jasper; 8:00-11:00 am; Ages 12 and under; restrooms available; 870-446-5122 for more information.

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- **Magazine Ranger District:**
 - Spring Lake-Westside boat launch: June 12; 8:00-11:00 am; Ages 12 and under; Casting contest and weigh-in and prizes; 479-963-3076 for more information.
 - Cove Lake: June 12; 8:30-10:00 am; Register on or by June 10 at the district office; Ages 2-9; wheelchair accessible; 479-963-3076 for more information.
- **Pleasant Hill Ranger District:** June 12; Gillian Pond; 8:00-11:00 am; Ages 12 and under; 479-754-2864 for more information.
- **St. Francis Ranger District:**
 - Ranger District Pond: June 12; 8:00-10:00 am; Ages 6-12; 870-295-5278 for more information.
 - Storm Creek Lake: June 12; 8:00-12:00 am; Ages 6-12; 870-295-5278 for more information.
- **Sylamore Ranger District:** June 12; Mirror Lake (Blanchard Springs Recreation Area); 8:00-11:00 am; Ages 12 and under; 870-269-3228 for more information.

Ouachita National Forest-Arkansas

- **Caddo Ranger District:** June 12; 8:30 am-12:00 pm; Ages 12 and under; Little Missouri River (Albert Pike)
- **Jessieville-Winona Ranger Districts:**
 - Lake Sylvia: June 12; 7:00-11:00 am; 501-984-5313 for more information.
 - Jessieville Workcenter Pond: June 12; 7:00-11:00 am; 501-984-5313 for more information.
- **Oden Ranger District:**
 - Rifle Range Pond: June 12; 8:00-11:00 am; 870-326-4574 for more information.
 - Jansen Park: June 12; 7:30-11:00 am; Ages: Seniors; 870-326-4574 for more information.
 - Rich Mountain Community College: June 19; 7:30-11:00 am; Ages: Children; 870-326-4574 for more information.
- **Womble Ranger District:** June 12; 7:30-11:00 am; 870-867-2101 for more information.

Ouachita National Forest-Oklahoma

- **Kiamichi Ranger District, Talihina, OK:** Veteran's Center Pond; June 5; 7:00-11:00 am; Ages 16 and under; 918-567-2326 for more information

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has continued their tradition of declaring a Free Fishing Weekend within the state. From noon on Friday, June 11 until midnight on Sunday, June 13 anyone in Arkansas may fish without a fishing license. In Oklahoma, Free Fishing Weekend is designated as Saturday, June 12 and Sunday, June 13 by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Take advantage of this opportunity to catch some rays, and maybe even a few fish!