

## Outing day at Duke gives youngsters chance to connect with nature

Staff Reports

Friday, September 30, 2011

SENECA — Nature faces stiff competition from the latest video game, according to teachers, but events such as the annual outing for National Hunting and Fishing Day at Duke Energy's World of Energy can score a win for the outdoors.

Friday, about 175 fifth-graders from Clemson and Tamassee-Salem elementary schools got a preview of the events that will be open to the public Saturday.

This year is the fifth time Duke Energy has hosted the annual Outdoor Family Adventure as homage to families and the great outdoors.

Every year, the fifth-graders of two local schools get a first look at the events, said Sandra Magee, Duke Energy spokeswoman.

"The whole idea is to get kids back outdoors," said Angela Viney of Upstate Forever, one of the event's sponsors. "If they learn to love the outdoors, they'll want to preserve the outdoors, and we'll have conservationists for the future.

She said, "For many of them, these are new experiences. They learn how to bait a hook, and they learn what it's like to have a fish on the other end of the line. Those are things you can't teach any other way."

Fishing, both actual and in a fishing simulator, is just one of the activities. Kayaking, air rifle shooting, hide-and-seek camouflage games, fly tying, campsite safety, retriever demonstrations, hands-on experience with wildlife and learning about boating and hunting safety are also part of the program. And there are some conservation messages.

"We try to reach out to youth so they'll appreciate our natural resources," said Cathy Reas-Foster of the Pickens County Clemson Extension Service.

Reas-Foster makes presentations about the relation of environmental conservation principles to landscaping.

"Here, I'm helping them better understand watersheds and how water runoff can cause pollution," she said.

More than three dozen conservation agencies will be on hand Saturday with

presentations on protecting Upstate South Carolina's natural resources.

Kim Farley, a fifth-grade teacher at Clemson Elementary, said the preview day for school kids gives many a chance to experience things they might not otherwise.

"About half of our kids might have a chance to come with their families tomorrow, but the other half probably wouldn't," Farley said. "And the kids love it. They give them their targets from the BB gun shooting, and some of them say, 'We're going to keep these forever.' It's wonderful."

Robert Cook, Duke Energy's chief organizer for the event, said response to Friday's preview for the children bodes well for a good turnout Saturday.

"We just want to get people engaged in the outdoors," Cook said. "We invite people to come out and have fun. It's free, and it's fun."

Last year's event drew about 3,000 people.

The Outdoor Family Adventure will run from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Saturday at the World of Energy center and the adjoining park off S.C. 130 north of Seneca. All activities and parking are free with a shuttle service provided from the event parking area off S.C. 130. Guests can take their own picnic lunches or purchase food from the on-site vendor.

National Hunting and Fishing Day has only been observed since 1972. But according to the event website, the roots go back more than 100 years. Hunters and fishermen joined with conservationists, informally led by avid hunter and conservationist President Theodore Roosevelt, calling for conservation measures that would preserve wildlife while promoting outdoor activities making use of natural resources.

This year's event is sponsored by Duke Energy, Upstate Forever, Trout Unlimited, Clemson University Extension, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Clemson University 4-H Shooting Sports, Trout Unlimited, Clemson Extension 4-H, South Carolina Wildlife Federation, Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, The Weatherby Foundation and Calm Water Kayak Tours in Ware Shoals.

