

FEATURE – USDA ENCOURAGES CHILDREN TO CONNECT WITH NATURE

INTRO: A mural painting exercise at U-S-D-A headquarters was part of a national effort to help children understand the fun and importance of the outdoors. The U-S-D-A's Bob Ellison has more. (1:33)

THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S FOREST SERVICE CELEBRATED NATIONAL GET OUTDOORS DAY TO RECONNECT CHILDREN WITH NATURE. IN WASHINGTON D-C, CHILDREN PAINTED OUTDOOR ART AND MURALS. THE THEME WAS HOW FORESTS AFFECT US AND THE PLANET.

Tom Vilsack, Agriculture Secretary: Even if you live in the middle of the largest city in the middle of this great country. It is affected by what we do with our forests. Even you live in the middle of an urban neighborhood and don't necessarily have a tree on your block it is affected by every single aspect of this globe that is depicted here.

ARTIST ROBERT WYLAND WAS ON HAND TO TOUT USING ART TO TEACH ALL CHILDREN ABOUT SCIENCE.

Robert Wyland, Marine Life Artist: Art is the one thing that doesn't need any language.

RETIRED FOREST SERVICE CHIEF GAIL KIMBELL SAID THE THEME OF CONNECTING FORESTS WITH THE OCEANS HELPS PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEAN WATER.

Gail Kimbell, Forest Service Chief 2007-2009 : Forests and oceans are the two largest carbon sinks we have on the planet. And the connections between forests and oceans is really very clear to those who study the science, we just want a way for the kids to be able to connect it a little easier than maybe they can right now and art is a wonderful way to do that.

AND A FAMOUS FOREST SERVICE SYMBOL PLAYED A BIG ROLE IN THE THEME OF THE DAY.

Kimbell: Smokey is a very important player in this business of protecting water quality in forests to be able to deliver clean water to the oceans. And we're just thrilled to have Smokey represented this way demonstrating this connection between forests and oceans.

IN WASHINGTON D-C FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.