



www.FocusOnFishHealth.org

Monday, September 13, 2010

For Immediate Release

Focus on Fish Health Photo Contest Winners Announced

All Are Committed to Preserving their Waterways for Future Generations

Families sharing the fishing experience is the overriding theme of August's winners of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (USDA/APHIS) Focus on Fish Health photo contest. Michael Ruchalski of University Heights, OH; Heidi Stark-Klebs of Mayville, WI; and Brandie Garrett of Springfield, IL each won in one of the three categories.

Focus On Fish Health is a public awareness campaign targeting recreational fishing and boating enthusiasts with information to prevent the spread of fish diseases and other invasive species in our nation's waterways. The photos will be featured on the www.FocusOnFishHealth.org website until mid-October when the September winners will go up.

Veteran fisherman and financial advisor Michael Ruchalski, 34, regrets not weighing the small mouth bass pictured in his winning snapshot before tossing it back into Ohio's Grand River. "I think that one might have been a state record, he says ruefully. "I believe it weighed more than the record of nine and some odd pounds, but there's no way to know now." His photo won in the *Most Impressive Catch* category. His wife Tina, 34, also loves to fish. Recently married, the couple hopes one day to be able to encourage a new generation of Ruchalskis to love fishing. And, they want the lakes and reservoirs where they fish to stay clean and healthy for the future.

Heidi Stark-Kleb's snapshot of the shining face of her niece 8-year-old Autumn Zuhoke as they canoed on Crooked Lake in the Michigan's Sylvania Wilderness Area won in the *Happiest Boater on the Lake* category. The Klebs, who live in Mayville, WI, visit the camping area near Waters Meet in the upper peninsula of Michigan, every year. Autumn, who is one of four girls, is always invited to go with them. "She's the only one of her sisters who loves the outdoors as much as we do," Ms. Stark-Klebs says.

The Garrett-Agon family --dad, daughters, grandfather and cousin -- gathered from Ohio, Michigan and Illinois to boat and fish in Lake Michigan this summer. The family showed off the four Great King Salmon they caught during an early morning fishing trip. The photo featuring Aaron Garrett, 42 and his daughters Baylie, 14 and Olivia, 10 with their grandfather, Roger and cousin Ben Agon, 12 was snapped by Ben's dad, John Agon, and submitted by the girls' mother, Brandie Garrett. It won in the *Family Fun Fishing and Boating* category.

All said they were interested in the USDA- sponsored Focus On Fish Health campaign because they are concerned about preserving and protecting the environment where they enjoy their sport. None would ever transfer fish or plants from one body of water to another and all wash their boats and equipment after use.

Boaters and fishermen/ women have until September 30 to submit photos at www.FocusOnFishHealth.org and enter the contest. All winners will receive a Focus On Fish Health duffle bag and their photos will be displayed on www.FocusOnFishHealth.org.

-30-

Media representatives may contact Madelaine Fletcher at Madelaine.Fletcher@aphis.usda.gov, 301-734-6125 or Charlotte Roy, Public Relations Director, at croy@diversitymc.com , 404-531-6777 or 404-313-2860