

Mentoring & MinnAqua

Helping Nature Take its Course

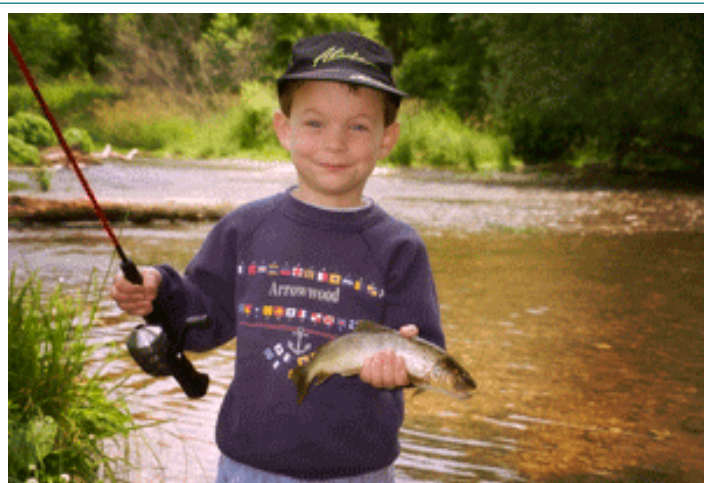
by Michael Kurre, Mentor Coordinator

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A sure sign of spring is open-water fishing and, in this month's Mentoring and MinnAqua, independent outdoor writer and trained outdoor mentor Mark Strand shares his expertise and words of wisdom on mentoring and angling in the outdoors.

Mark's body of work includes the book, *Paint the Next Sunrise*, where he asks the question: "Are fishing, hunting, and shooting destined to gradually die away, victims of modern society and an altered landscape?" In *Paint the Next Sunrise: A Future for Hunting and Fishing*, the founder of the "School of Outdoor Sports" (an online school that teaches the secrets to success in fishing, hunting and shooting) suggests that we have two choices: preside over the sunset of these great outdoor traditions, or paint the next sunrise for them...



Proud young Willie and his trout

Helping Nature Take its Course

by Mark Strand

The march of civilization and tide of technology have combined to cram people close together and pin them indoors, more all the time, to the point that participation studies tell us we don't go fishing enough. Like we need a study to tell us that.

We are worried, and rightly so, that today's kids are growing up without a connection to the natural world, to waters and fishing. But in predictable modern fashion, we tend to focus on what we have to do to "hurry up and fix the situation," rather than helping nature take its course. Kids are naturally curious, they love to explore. They become anglers—if it's meant to be—when they catch fish early on, then are allowed to make their own connections, on their own timetable.

At the risk of sounding like a wedding ceremony, outdoor mentoring is selfless, and kind.

It's easy to lose control over our own love of fishing, to let our hopes that others will love it trample what should be a natural process between fish, water, and kids. Lead youngsters to the water, but don't coerce them into a relationship with it that's a mirror image of yours. There's too much talk about "what we have to do to get kids into fishing," when the answer is simple.

Take them fishing, help them catch fish, then get out of the way. Let them come to it on their own, and the bond will be genuine and everlasting.

The degree of instant connection, the amount of self-propelled drive, varies greatly from one child to the next. As mentors, we have to focus on each newcomer or we'll miss the signs that tell us what approach would be best.

Fishing can have a bright future, but we have to teach kids how to catch fish, while at the same time resisting the temptation to cram the hook down their throats.

Mark Strand is president and founder of the nonprofit "School of Outdoor Sports," where beginners and mentors learn the basics of fishing, for free. Visit <http://www.learnoutdoorsports.org/> for more information.

P.S.

- Don't forget **Take a Kid Fishing** weekend is June 10-12, 2011. The idea behind these three "free" days of fishing is to introduce children and even some adults to one of the state's most popular outdoor activities. During **Take-A-Kid Fishing Weekend**, anglers 16 and older do not need a license if they are accompanied by a child younger than 16 and are actively participating.
- **DNR Outreach** is the site for more information on outdoors opportunities for youth.
- Email **Mike Kurre** if you are interested in a monthly update of activities that are happening in the outdoors across the state like the following:
 - Outdoor organization's seminars, clinics, expo's and contact information
 - Fishing and other outdoors season openers
 - Minnesota State Parks hands-on programs and special events
 - Where to find outdoors programming and educational information on TV, radio, magazines and web sites
 - Outdoors mentoring organizations and youth camps
 - You can always "drop me a line" to help you find area experts in outdoor recreational activities to help you in the classroom.