



Olympic hopeful pro skaters promote fishing and the outdoors while visiting Iowa

DES MOINES—The Iowa DNR and Takemefishing.org hosted a restoration event on Tuesday, May 18 for recreational fishing, paddling and conservation at Gray's Lake in Des Moines. Pro skaters TJ Rogers (CAN) and Alana Smith (TX, USA) worked alongside DNR staff, Des Moines Parks and Recreation staff and community volunteers to remove litter and invasive species, sink infrastructure for fish habitat and to practice their angling skills. They even took some time off to kayak.

The duo also helped promote fishing, litter removal and the importance of being outside in video interviews to help promote the outdoors and conservation to legions of fans.

It was all part of the lead-up to the World Skate sanctioned men's and women's Dew Tour skateboarding competitions, serving as the only U.S.-based global Olympic skateboard qualifying events for 2021. Skateboarding will make its Olympic Games debut this summer in Tokyo. The brand new Lauridsen Skatepark in Des Moines is an approved Olympic-level competition venue and is the largest skatepark in the nation. Competition takes place Thursday through Sunday.

"I personally love being outdoors," says Rogers. "Being outside is so essential. The one thing we can always do is go to a lake. I personally think being outside fishing or doing some hikes is really good for your mental health and lowers anxiety and stress," he says. "If you love time outdoors, I highly recommend trying fishing," says Rogers, who hails from Canada and fished while growing up with friends and family.

For skater Alana Smith, being outdoors also reduces stress. "Its like your own little refresh or restart," she says. For her, fishing and being outdoors is a "really good bonding experience with friends and family." She also enjoys stand up paddle boarding on lakes. "I love being on the water," she says, noting it is important to "love and enjoy your environment" outside.

Skaters, volunteers and DNR staff removed litter from around the lake. "I personally love being outdoors...we just really wanted to come out and try and do our part for the community and clean up some trash and just help out. I'm really excited about it," says Rogers.

The DNR also built a fish habitat structure from wooden pallets and lowered it underwater within casting distance from shore.

The skaters and DNR staff suggest Iowan's can help when outdoors by bringing re-useable water bottles to reduce waste, carrying a litter bag to pick up refuse left by

others and to remove any discarded fishing line which can ensnare wildlife. That old line can be recycled.

“There are so many ways to help the environment these days,” says Rogers. “I think that it’s really an important thing for people to acknowledge”—fishing license money supports and enhances aquatic areas. To help, “You can always go to gooutdoorsiowa.com to purchase fishing licenses,” he says.



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