
Title: Georgia 4-H Environmental Education

Summary: The Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Program provides a network of learning experiences across Georgia that allows youth to learn science and other content in the context of the real world environment.

Situation: As raising awareness of science and the environment is more valued than ever, teachers are seeking out meaningful and educational field studies to enhance and complement the learning that occurs in the formal school classroom.

Response: The Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Program offers day and residential field studies at sites from the mountains to the sea. The locations are Wahsega 4-H Center in Dahlonega, Fortson 4-H Center in Hampton, Rock Eagle 4-H Center in Eatonton, Burton 4-H Center on Tybee Island, Georgia 4-H at Camp Jekyll, and 4-H Tidelands Nature Center on Jekyll Island. The programs use the outdoors as a classroom without walls, are aligned with the current state education standards, keep students active and engaged in classes for up to eight hours a day, are taught by well-trained and college-educated instructors, use hands-on approaches to put learning in the context of the real world environment, and help to create and sustain bonds between teachers and students.

Results/Impacts: During the 2017-18 school year, the 4-H Environmental Education Program reached 42,752 participants and since its inception in 1979, the total program has served over 1,193,000 participants. Evaluation data collected throughout the year demonstrates a statistically significant increase in participants' (1) positive relationships with their classmates, (2) positive relationships with their teacher, (3) knowledge about the ecosystems of Georgia, (4) knowledge that their behaviors affect the environment, and (5) connection to nature.