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**Title:** Georgia 4-H Environmental Education

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**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. Six 4-H facilities provide programs for public, private, and homeschool groups: 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 are aligned with the current state education standards and use hands-on approaches to put learning in the context of the real-world environment. Well-trained and college-educated instructors teach the classes at each facility. Not only does the program allow youth to learn rich content outside of their classrooms, it also helps to create and sustain bonds between teachers and students.

**Results/Impacts:** During the 2018-19 school year, the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Program reached 43,403 participants. Since its inception in 1979, the total program has served over 1,237,000 participants. Evaluation data collected throughout the year demonstrates a statistically significant increase in participants': (a) positive relationships with their classmates; (b) positive relationships with their teacher; (c) knowledge about the ecosystems of Georgia; (d) knowledge that their behaviors affect the environment; and (e) connection to nature. One middle school teacher commented, "I wanted to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you all for the wonderful experience our 6<sup>th</sup> graders and adult chaperones had while at your facility in February. Your staffers were so kind, helpful, and knowledgeable! The curriculum you presented within the classes was age-appropriate and engaging, while the hands-on experiences were fun and memorable! Our students returned to South Carolina having retained what they learned, and we are grateful for this."



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The University of Georgia 4-H program is the largest youth leadership organization in the state.

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