

Title: From the Mountains to the Sea: 4-H Environmental Education Virtual Series

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Summary: From the Mountains to the Sea: 4-H Environmental Education virtual series offers students, teachers, and the general public the opportunity to connect with the Georgia 4-H facilities and programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Situation: Typically, each spring, thousands of K-12 students attend 4-H environmental education programs at Georgia 4-H facilities across the state from the mountains to the sea, including: Wahsega 4-H Center in the mountains, Fortson and Rock Eagle 4-H Centers in the piedmont, and Burton 4-H Center and Camp Jekyll on the coast. They hold snakes, hike through creeks and marshes, visit historic sites and enjoy nature; all with a goal of learning about science in the context of the environment and bringing learning to life using Georgia as a classroom without walls. Since the COVID-19 outbreak closed school buildings from mid-March through May 2020, portions of the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Program were shifted to a virtual format.

Response: Each 4-H facility provided a short program, either via Facebook Live or a pre-recorded video, on an assigned day of the week: Mondays at the Mound (Rock Eagle 4-H Center), Tuesdays on Tybee (Burton 4-H Center), Wahsega Wednesdays, Thursdays with Camp Jekyll and Tidelands, and Fortson Farm Fridays. The programs were offered each weekday afternoon from March 30 through May 22. The lessons covered a range of topics such as herpetology, entomology and beach or stream ecology, as well as highlight specific amenities at the 4-H centers including historic landmarks, salt marshes, tidal creeks, natural history museums and species exhibits. For those that couldn't join the presentation at the initial time of release, they were all also archived on YouTube for additional viewing.

Results/Impacts: From March to May, From the Mountains to the Sea series offered 40 different sessions, reaching more than 186,700 people. Due to the popularity and engagement of the initial virtual programs, a summer series is also planned. Ten more programs following a similar format (two from each center) are being provided from June 22 – July 31. To date, with the release of 8 of the 10 summer programs and the continued growth of the original series, the additional reach is more than 31,200, bringing the total reach of the program to more than 217,900. Following the launch, one teacher summarized the impact of the programs with the following comments: “Just wanted to let you know how much we LOVED the 4-H videos you posted last spring. We spent the last couple of weeks of sixth grade remote learning doing “Outdoors Atlanta” lessons and your videos were great starters/models for the students who then went outside to do their own tree walks, pond explorations, bug hunts, sunset watches, shelter building, etc. Thanks so much for making these available.