

Action

PUBLIC ISSUE INFORMATION FOR ALABAMA CITIZENS

FROM THE EDITOR

Environmental Education

Economic growth is essential to community development, but it is not the only critical component. Sustainable communities are those that are able to achieve a balance between economic development and their environment. **Environmental education** is one of the tools available to communities as they strive to attain this balance. Your community should not only be a good place to make a living, it should also be a great place to live.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System Community Resource Development (CRD) unit publishes *Action* once each quarter. The goal of the CRD unit is to help people solve community problems, take advantage of opportunities and build on their assets. To accomplish this, the CRD unit provides educational and technical assistance in economic development, leadership development, strategic planning, environmental education, community health and public policy education. *Action* is a tool we use to link community groups to Extension's resources. This issue represents collaboration among Extension and Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Legacy, Inc., Alabama Wildlife Federation and Alabama Pulp and Paper.

Extension's involvement and collaboration with others involved in **environmental education** is the focus of this Winter 2005 issue of *Action*. Doyle Keasal, Extension Specialist, Environmental Educator, is the coordinator for this issue. Other contributors are Jason Dockery and Lynn Garris of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Paige Moreland of Legacy, Inc., April Lupardus Waltz of the Alabama Wildlife Federation, and Rick Oates of Alabama Pulp and Paper.

The next issue of *Action*, Spring 2005, will highlight **regional tourism organizations**. Travelers are unaware of city and county boundaries, and one of the most effective methods we have for attracting tourists is marketing regions of Alabama, not just one specific location. For more information on these topics or suggestions for additional topics, contact the editor at (334) 844-3517, FAX (334) 844-9022, or e-mail jchesnut@aces.edu.

J. Thomas Chesnutt
Editor

Extension Tourism Specialist

Discovering Our Heritage- A Community Collaborative Approach

Education across America today must meet a greater range of needs and serve a larger number of students than ever before. In addition, events in today's world present new concerns for our nation and its citizens. Our schools must be prepared to address these issues even though they present an ever increasing array of difficulties, many of which are complex and closely intertwined with the changing conditions of society at large. These are compounded by the ever increasing demands and responsibilities made on teachers and administrators as well as the conflicting pressures that often beset local school boards. Any educational program seeking long-term success must recognize this reality.

There may be no simple solution fitting every educational need in the nation, but Alabama educators have worked together in designing **Discovering Our Heritage (DOH)** as a model for addressing many of these needs in Alabama schools. Central to this design is the philosophy that the realm of nature is an exceptional laboratory for learning. Environmental education, done correctly, provides students with meaningful connections between academic learning, applied problem-solving, civic participation and the development of personal character and individual responsibility. DOH is recognized as an effective means in demonstrating these multiple values of environmental education.

A key component to this program is highlighted in its subtitle. Through the development of the community collaborative, schools can encourage greater local involvement and understanding of the challenges facing education and strengthen local support for schools and the needs of teachers, students and the classroom.

DOH was created as the result of a statewide initiative involving many diverse interest groups and their resources. This project was undertaken in response to the requests of Alabama teachers for the development of a model environmental education program organized sequentially to support requirements of the Alabama Course of Study. Correlations have been made between the program and the Alabama Course of Studies that creates a coherent framework linking people to the land, learning to the real world, and the school to the community. The framework accommodates a teacher's preferences with respect to specific objectives and plans for all subject areas including social studies, geography, science, mathematics and language arts. Ultimately, DOH is a program and a process that facilitates active discovery and meaningful understanding of our remarkable American heritage through environmental education.

DOH is a model social studies program that integrates environmental education throughout the curriculum in grades K-12. Program manuals have been developed for grades K-5 while

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direct program support and planning are available for grades 6-12. Training for DOH is free, and it also includes training in a variety of other environmental education programs, such as Project Learning Tree, Project WILD, Project WET, Aquatic WILD and the Legacy educational resources. Some of these other programs are described further in this newsletter. If you would like to find out more about the Discovering Our Heritage program and summer workshops, or to schedule training at a local site in any of the programs included in this newsletter, please contact Doyle Keasal at (334) 844-6398 or the Alabama Wildlife Federation at (800) 822-9453.

Doyle E. Keasal
Extension Specialist,
Environmental Educator
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Wanted: Wet and Wild Teachers!

A fun day in the classroom or outdoors does not have to be a day without learning. It can be just the opposite. Teachers using Project WET and Project WILD activities to supplement their curriculum have found amazing results, such as increased interest in school, better retention of learned concepts and improved discipline. These nationally-acclaimed materials use exciting, hands-on activities that help students learn “how, not what, to think about their natural world.”

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources provides conservation education training without charge for both formal and non-formal educators. The curriculum and training uses the holistic approach to teach K-12 students about animals, their habitats and water as a limited, renewable resource. These workshops are conducted throughout the state during teacher in-service days or in conjunction with teacher training at the college level. Experienced teachers write all the materials, which are easily correlated to the Alabama Science Course of Study.

The introductory workshops provide participants the training, the curriculum guides and supportive resource materials without charge. These workshops include the following:

PROJECT WILD: These activities focus on wildlife and wildlife habitat; students learn about conservation of wildlife and ecological systems. The educational activity guide contains more than 100 activities.

AQUATIC WILD: This activity guide contains more than 40 activities designed to teach youth about conservation of aquatic habitats and ecological systems.

PROJECT WET: Containing more than 100 activities, Project WET is designed to teach youth about timely topics, such as water chemistry, hydrologic cycles, water uses, watersheds, and water conservation.

For information on workshops already on the calendar or on the possibility of scheduling a workshop in your area, please contact the conservation education specialist nearest you.

- North Alabama—Jason Dockery, (256) 737-7216
- Cullman, Alabama
jdockery@dcnr.state.al.us
- South Alabama—Lynn Garris, (251) 626-5962
- Mobile, Alabama (Spanish Fort, District V Office)
lgarris@dcnr.state.al.us

Jason Dockery
Conservation Education Specialist
Alabama Department of
Conservation and Natural Resources

Lynn Garris
Conservation Education Specialist
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Legacy, Partners in Environmental Education

Legacy, Inc., Partners in Environmental Education, is an Alabama-based, not-for-profit organization that was established in 1992 with the mission of creating environmentally responsible citizens through balanced,

fact-based education that considers diverse environmental views. Legacy achieves this mission through partnerships with representatives from academia, industry, citizen action groups, regulatory agencies, associations and other interested parties. A key focus of Legacy is the provision of hands-on environmental education teaching tools for Alabama’s K–12 classroom teachers. These tools are designed to provide students with an increased awareness of the environmental issues in their communities and provide them with the skills needed to make informed decisions. Legacy offers numerous educational resources for teachers.

“Learning Through Legacy: Alabama’s Environmental Education Guides” is a set of four grade-specific volumes of hands-on activities that serve as a tremendous educational tool for teachers. Each activity guide includes age-appropriate learning activities that classroom teachers of grades K–12 can use to teach about ecology, pollution prevention, waste management and natural resources. The learning activities are Alabama-specific and contain many ideas for engaging children in learning about protecting our environment. The guides are correlated to the Alabama Course of Study, the SAT-9 Exam, the National Science and Geography Standards and the Alabama Graduation Exit Exam. The guides are available in print at a cost of \$20 per version.

The Summer Teacher Institute is an annual week-long program that allows teachers to participate in field trips, content lectures and teaching presentations on the subjects of ecology, natural resources, pollution prevention and waste management. The format includes action-packed days and activities at night to obtain 50 hours of professional development. Teachers receive free materials for their classrooms and exciting door prizes donated by vendors from across the country. The goals of the institute are to educate teachers on environmental topics that affect Alabama, and to give them the resources required to integrate environmental education into their existing curriculum.

Legacy’s annual EnviroBowl competition provides an opportunity for high

school students to test their knowledge of the environment and gives them the chance to interact with professionals from a variety of environmental backgrounds. EnviroBowl offers students a fun way to compete for awards and prizes. Six regional competitions are held throughout Alabama, with the top three teams from each region competing at the state playoffs.

Legacy also offers numerous environmental education publications and posters, which are free to teachers in Alabama. All of these projects and materials are funded primarily through the sale of Alabama's "Protect Our Environment" license tags. For more information about Legacy and its programs, contact the Legacy office or visit our Web site.

Paige Moreland
Executive Director
Legacy, Inc.

The Alabama Outdoor Classroom Program

Numerous schools across Alabama are using outdoor classrooms on their school grounds to provide hands-on,

conservation education opportunities for their students. Each outdoor classroom is different and can include a wide variety of features, including raised bed gardens, butterfly gardens, wildflower meadows, forest communities, aquatic studies areas, nature trails, animal tracking boxes, weather stations and much more. No matter the shape or size, each outdoor classroom provides a new, exciting environment where educators can use creative, hands-on activities to teach students about wildlife and the environment with a wide variety of multiple-disciplinary skills from mathematics to language arts.

Peggy Long, special education teacher at University Place Elementary in Huntsville, explains, "Our students assist with planting, maintenance and care of the butterfly gardens, vegetable gardens, frog pond and bird feeders throughout the outdoor classroom in addition to feeding the fish in the fish pond. The students have learned to identify various forms of flora and fauna, use mathematical skills for measuring and graphing and use problem solving skills involving mapping and reading. The outdoor classroom also provides great inspiration for process writing activities."

The Alabama Outdoor Classroom program provides on-site assistance and support to educators like Peggy Long who wish to create an effective, sustainable outdoor classroom on their school grounds. To participate in the program, a school must submit an application, follow the steps discussed in the Outdoor Classroom Planning Guide, and certify their outdoor classroom through the Alabama Outdoor Classroom program.

Schools receive multiple benefits for participating in the outdoor classroom program:

- Six Outdoor Classroom Planning Guides
- Technical and organizational assistance throughout all phases of development
- Free tree seedlings donated by the Alabama Forestry Commission
- Free in-service teacher training workshops to equip teachers with cross-curriculum activities and materials that can be integrated into their

daily lesson plans and used in the outdoor classroom

- Alabama Outdoor Classroom Certification including a personalized certificate recognizing the school as an official Alabama Outdoor Classroom and an Alabama Outdoor Classroom sign to post on the school grounds
- National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitats® Certification

If you would like to learn more about the Outdoor Classroom program, please visit the Conservation Education section of the Alabama Wildlife Federation's Web site at www.alabama-wildlife.org. If you would like to assist a school in developing an outdoor classroom or if you would like to receive an information packet about the Outdoor Classroom program, please contact April Lupardus Waltz at (256) 882-9322 or the Alabama Wildlife Federation at (800) 822-9453.

April Lupardus Waltz
Conservation Programs Specialist
Alabama Wildlife Federation

Alabama Forestry Foundation Education Programs

Project Learning Tree (PLT) is an international environmental education program for educators and students in grades preK-12. More than 200,000 educators turn to PLT to teach about topics, such as forests, wildlife, water, waste management and energy. PLT activities are designed to teach students how to think, not what to think about environmental issues.

PLT activity guides contain more than 175 interdisciplinary instructional activities that increase students' understanding of our complex environment. Students develop skills in creative problem solving, critical thinking, evaluation and research. These activities are correlated to both state and national standards.

Teachers that attend a PLT workshop receive the Project Learning Tree activity guide, tree identification books, posters and other classroom resources as well as professional development credit.

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Action

Alabama
Communities
in Transition

Editor

J. Thomas Chesnutt
Extension Tourism Specialist



Action is published once each quarter by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

We would like you to share success stories in your community for inclusion in future issues of Action. Send to: J. Thomas Chesnutt, 218 Extension Hall, Auburn University, Alabama 36849.

To schedule a free 6 hour professional development day with Project Learning Tree, contact Chris Erwin with the Alabama Forestry Foundation at (334) 265-8733 or cerwin@alaforestry.org.

Alabama Forests Forever is a multifaceted outreach program that promotes healthy and productive rural and urban forests, clean water and abundant wildlife, and educates the citizens of Alabama about the contribution forests make to the environmental quality and economy of the state. Forests Forever sponsors grassroots education programs through a competitive grants process. The maximum award is \$10,000 totaling approximately \$150,000 awarded each year. Anyone that promotes the objectives of the Foundation is eligible for this grant and is encouraged to apply. Applications can be downloaded from www.alaforestsforever.org or call (334) 265-8733. The program is funded by the sale of the Forests Forever vanity license plate that features Alabama's state bird, the yellowhammer. The plate costs \$50 more than

a typical license plate, but the same as a personalized license plate. The \$50 cost is considered a charitable contribution and is tax deductible.

The Teacher's Conservation Workshop (TCW) is held each year in Auburn and accepts up to 65 teachers. The primary goal of this workshop is to make teachers aware of the abundant forests and other natural resources our state offers and the need to manage them in a sustainable way. By providing teachers with fact-based information about our forests, water and wildlife, we hope they will be better educated on environmental issues and, in turn, be willing to share that information with their students who will one day become consumers and voters. The Alabama Forestry Foundation, the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University and members of the forest products industry sponsor the workshop.

Participants learn about forest management, tree identification, wildlife and

many other topics. They also hear motivating speakers about the importance of teachers and receive a considerable amount of materials to use in the classroom. All this is, including hotel rooms and meals, paid for by the workshop sponsors. For information about the 35th Teachers Conservation Workshop on July 11-15, please contact Rick Oates at tcw@alaforestry.org or (800) 206-0981.


Rick Oates
Executive Director
Alabama Pulp and Paper Council

Visit the Community Resource Development home page at www.aces.edu/department/crd/



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J. Thomas Chesnutt, *Extension Tourism Specialist*

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