

Alabama Forestry Camp: Ten Years of Introducing Youth to Forestry

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The main goal of Alabama Forestry Camp is to expose underserved and uninformed students about the field of natural resources, with a concentration in forestry. Students attending the camp are generally not familiar with the natural resources field. These children include minorities, those from limited-resources, and those that are living in an urban environment. Attending forestry camp gives these students an opportunity to explore careers in Forestry and Natural Resources that they may not otherwise receive.

Since 1997, Alabama Forestry Camp has hosted 25-35 students from across the state each year. This year the camp not only reached its 10-year milestone, but it also reached a record-breaking number of students, with 47 in attendance. Camp was held June 3-7, 2007 in Epes (rural Sumter County), Alabama at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives Rural Training Center. Students came from 14 different counties within the state, including: Limestone, Jefferson, Cullman, Baldwin, Wilcox, Sumter, Colbert, Mobile, Calhoun, Lee, Autauga, Marengo, Shelby, and Cleburne.

Sunday -- June 3, 2007

After the campers settled in, the first field trip was a visit to the Smith and Sons' TREASURE Forest in Greene County. The students toured the Smith Family land, and were familiarized with the unique and rich history of how the Smiths acquired their property, the

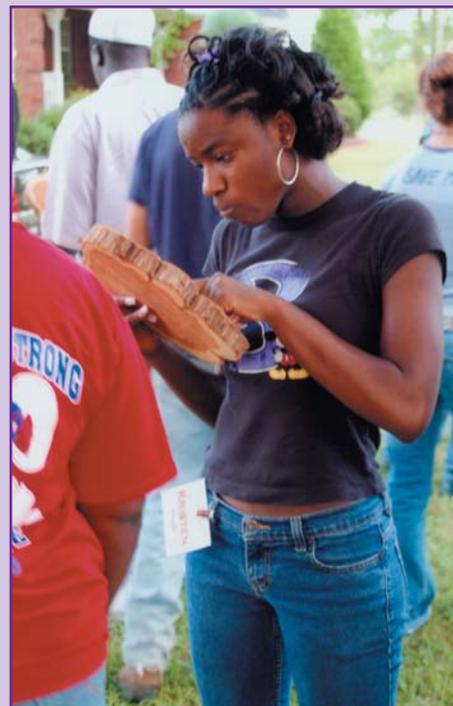
importance of land ownership, and most importantly, how to become good stewards of the land. The Smiths have diversified their 356-acre tract and are managing their property for timber, wildlife, aesthetics, and recreation. The family is definitely adhering to the TREASURE Forest mission of "Taking the land that God has loaned us, and making Him proud that He did."

Upon returning to camp, the students enjoyed Native American folklore as told by Charlotte Pierce of Tuskegee University and crafting clay medallions at sunset.

Monday -- June 4, 2007

The campers spent the morning at Lake Hollalah in Pickens County. The Westervelt Company staff informed the students about the importance of the forestry within our state. They talked about how we are dependent on trees for clean air, clean water, and many of the products that we use in our daily lives. The morning activities included information on tree identification, wildlife management, silviculture, and forest management. Students identified some of the many different tree species found throughout Alabama and became knowledgeable not only about the economic importance of trees in our state and economy, but also the recreational, economic, and conservation benefits of managing wildlife as well.

After lunch the campers visited the Tom Beville Lock and Dam in Aliceville (Pickens County). Allen Brewer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers spoke to the students about the value of the lock and dam system. The students also toured the historic Visitors' Center, a reproduction of a mid-1800s mansion that houses a museum focusing on the history and development of the Tombigbee River and waterway system. The students then explored the U.S. "Snagboat Montgomery" which is one



of the last steam-powered boats in the South, and they experienced a demonstration of the lock system.

That evening, local wood craftsman Barry Pfizer carved the campers' names into old pieces of wood for them to keep as souvenirs from camp.

Tuesday -- June 5, 2007

Up and out early, this is usually the most exciting day of camp for the students. They traveled to Oakhurst Farms for a morning of fishing. Maurice Jackson from the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division spoke to the students about the recreational and commercial opportunities of inland fish management. The campers learned many different knot tying, casting, and fishing techniques. They enjoyed the fishing so much that they caught six coolers of catfish: more than enough for their catfish dinner the next day!

After everyone got cleaned up from the fishing trip, the afternoon sessions consisted of Woodland Survival by Lynn



Washington (Alabama Forestry Commission), Pond Management by Claude Reeves (Alabama Cooperative Extension System), Compass and Map Reading by Ron Smith (Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program), Global Positioning Systems by Sarah O'Sullivan (Alabama Forestry Commission), and Fire Ants by Kathy Flanders (Alabama Cooperative Extension System).

College and Career Night was held that evening. Recruiters and professionals from various colleges and universities spoke about their academic programs, scholarships, and career opportunities for students that are interested in careers in forestry and natural resources. The presenters were as follows: the Alabama Forestry Commission by Otis French, Alabama A&M University by Rosalind Peoples, Auburn University by Sara Crim, Tuskegee University, Alabama Cooperative Extension System by Willie Lampley, US Army Corps of Engineers by Kenneth Day, the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, Lurleen B. Wallace Community College by George Showalter, and the USDA Forest Service.

Also, the campers heard presentations on important life skills such as Dress for Success presented by Greg Woods, Alabama Forestry Commission, and Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Skills by Tuskegee University.

Wednesday -- June 6, 2007

The students enjoyed a scenic bus trip to Moundville Archeological Park in Hale County. Park Manager Bill Bomar talked to the students about the history of the Native American settlement in Moundville and the significance of the archeological mounds. The campers enjoyed a nature tour near the Black Warrior River, as well as a visit to the park museum where they were able to view Native American artifacts.

That evening, Brian Darr of Southern Forest Industries gave the students an opportunity to learn about Urban Forestry and the importance of trees in an urban setting. The students toured the city of Moundville, learning that well-managed trees are a vital part of the urban environment, enhancing the quality of life in our communities and towns. They learned that the key to enjoyment is

having trees that are safe, healthy, plentiful, well placed, and attractive.

Thursday -- June 7, 2007

On the final day of camp, the students had the opportunity to visit Moundville Wood Products (Gulf States Sawmill). On the tour, led by Rick Powell, they saw the industrial side of forestry and how managing these precious resources land them products that they use everyday.

Also on the last day, a graduation ceremony was held for the campers who were joined by parents and camp counselors. The students received a graduation certificate and a photograph with this year's guest speaker, Linda Casey, Alabama's State Forester.



The Alabama Forestry Camp program has proven to be one of the most effective mechanisms for informing and recruiting students who were traditionally under-represented in the forestry and natural resources professions. Over the years, more than 250 students have bene-



fited from the camp experience. Publicity for the camp has also indirectly informed a large number of students, their parents, and their siblings, about forestry and natural resource opportunities.

During the past ten years, the Alabama Forestry Camp has been promoted and sponsored by professionals from 20 organizations including the Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, and Tuskegee University, as well as the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the USDA Forest Service, the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association, International Paper, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Livingston City Fire and Rescue, the Alabama Advisory Outreach Council, the Westervelt Company, Lurleen B. Wallace Community College, Gulf States Paper Corporation, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Moundville Archeological Park, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation, the Alabama Indian Affairs Commission, and Southern Forest Industries. 🌲

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