

MG class field trip sees green

Winter 2011 Interns learn about conservation, water quality, local research

Some members of the Winter 2011 TriCounty Master Gardener Class Interns toured a local conservation facility that works to improve the water quality of the Flint River, researches ways to collect and re-use rain water, and conducts field trips for local schools and groups such as ours.

Twelve of us, including **Class Coordinator Alice Lawler and Regional Extension Agent Ken Creel**, took our field trip on July 21, 2011, to the Alabama Mountains, Rivers, and Valleys, Resource, Conservation & Development Council (AMRVRCD) facility in Hartselle. The field trip was postponed from April because of the storm and tornadoes that devastated our area.

Interns included **Suzanne Lai, Jill Nohrstedt, Karen Haff, Ortive Haff, Sarah Evans, Beth Joa, Shelly Miller, Sherry Miller, Doborah Youngs and John Youngs**.

This facility is run in the old Hartselle water treatment plant which the group purchased three years ago from the city for just \$10. They named the facility Water Works Center for Environmental Education and operate with money from grants since it is a nonprofit organization.

To help in conservation of natural resources, they use energy from solar panels constructed above the parking area, have an on-property septic system made with rocks and garden plants, and a parking lot made with gravel and stone which absorbs all water leaving no need for a “run off” lake/pond. They have a compost pile they fill with all the paper waste from the facility and they also have a roof garden. When

they conduct field trips for school children, the children learn in a “hands-on” environment.

The project managers at the facility come up with ideas to help farmers use rain water for watering crops and ideas for using excess poultry manure so it does not end up in the Flint River. The facility draws water from the river, has it travel through a series of treatment pools filled with sand and plants and eventually pumps it back into the river through an easement on the property that connects to the river.

They mentioned that they don't make that much of a difference in the water quality of the river, but they do provide a great experimental and learning area. For more information on AMRVRCD, you can visit their Web site at www.amrvrcd.com.



ABOVE: AMRVRCD Projects Manager Jay Grantland explains to Winter 2011 Master Gardener Class Interns about the self-sustaining septic system at the facility.

BELOW: Grantland explains the history of the facility and the projects they are working on. Behind him is a self-sustaining fish tank.



Story by Intern Beth Joa • Photos by Mike Roden of the AMRVRCD TriCounty Master Gardener Web site www.aces.edu/counties/Limestone/TriCounty/



formerly known as Tennessee Valley Resource Conservation & Development Council

Alabama Mountains, Rivers & Valleys

RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL