



Alabama 4-H Focuses on Forestry

Impact Statement

The Problem/Issue:

In a comparison of state natural resources, Alabama is second in total area available as timberland and fourth in pulpwood harvested. The forestry industry directly or indirectly employs 10% of Alabama's total workforce, has a \$4.2 billion payroll and produces \$13.2 billion in products. According to the Alabama Forestry Commission, the value of forest products shipped abroad in 1995 was \$1.25 billion, or 23 percent of all exports. As human populations continue to grow and expand into rural areas, we place increasing demands on Alabama's natural resources. Therefore, there is a need for youth to understand their link to the natural environment and the need to conserve and manage these resources.

What's Been Done:

4-H forestry programs are designed to help young people explore their interests and expand their awareness of the world in which they live so they will grow up to become responsible adult decision makers. Currently, approximately 5,000 youth participate annually. An additional 2,300 from 105 schools participated in the Arbor Day poster contest.

A major aspect of the state-level program is forestry judging. Youth learn to evaluate forest stands, measure standing timber, identify trees, identify insects and diseases and demonstrate compass and pacing skills. Typically 150 youth participate in the regional and state contests. During the contest, training is conducted for Extension agents and volunteer leaders interested in coaching teams. Since 1984, Alabama's teams have won the national invitational 12 times and have consistently placed in the top five.

This year youth participated in local Classroom in the Forest: Forest in the Classroom activities. This program, conducted with cooperating landowners, helps youth apply classroom theory to practical applications in the forest and discusses the:

- Three essential components of habitat: food, water and shelter
- Importance of keeping forests healthy
- Relationship of space as it pertains to forestry

- Necessity of harvesting trees to provide resources for society
- Care for property.

Local Forestry Awareness Week Now programs also provide education about forest management, wildlife habitat and environmental history for several hundred youth annually--often in conjunction with Classroom in the Forest experiences.

Why We Care:

A quote in the Fayette Times-Record sums it up: "The forests of Alabama are important to our well-being and future growth . . . We hope to promote better understanding of forestry as well as the wise use and conservation of our woodlands among young people. These students will be landowners and decision-makers in the future, so we want them to be prepared to make sound decisions." In addition to learning what the adults wanted them to learn, 4-H'ers participating in local activities reported that they developed feelings of pride and respect for land and landowners. Those participating in regional and state contests:

- Developed appreciation of the need and importance of conserving natural resources as sources of products and services necessary for quality living
- Acquired information and understanding of practical forestry skills
- Developed citizenship and leadership knowledge and skills
- Demonstrated knowledge and skills by participating in district and state-level forestry judging activities