



Youth Develop Life Skills in 4-H Shooting Sports

Impact Statement

The Problem/Issue:

Alabama's forests are home to 1.4 million of the nation's 18 million white-tailed deer and 350,000 of its 4 million wild turkeys. Hunting and fishing by 360,000 in-state and 30,000 out-of-state hunters generate over \$600,000 annually in taxes, license fees, hunting rights and sales of equipment and supplies. Approximately 12,000 Alabama youth take the hunter education course annually, but this course is classroom-based and does not focus on the practical skills involved in handling firearms safely.

What's Been Done:

Since the early 1990s, Alabama 4-H has been involved in a shooting sports program that has been implemented in all but a few states in the United States. This program is designed to:

- Encourage understanding of natural resource concepts through participants' interest in shooting and hunting
- Expose participants to the broad array of lifelong activities related to shooting sports
- Teach safe and responsible use of firearms and archery equipment at home, on the shooting range or in the field, including sound decision making, self-discipline and concentration
- Promote the highest standards of safety, sportsmanship and ethical behavior
- Complement and enhance the impact of existing safety and hunter education programs
- Provide 4-H training and certification in the various shooting sports disciplines for adult volunteers
- Maintain and expand a state level committee of nationally trained and certified 4-H shooting sports instructors

Since 1997, 20 Alabamians have been trained by the National 4-H Shooting Sports Committee to be state instructor-trainers in one of the following disciplines: archery, rifle, muzzleloading, pistol, shotgun, and program management. This training team conducts an annual weekend volunteer leader training workshop that emphasizes 4-H philosophy, techniques for teaching youth, safety and risk management and discipline certification. (To become certified in a discipline, a participant must practice-teach and pass a written test). To date, 131 volunteers have been trained. Collectively, these county volunteers reach approximately 3,500 4-Hers annually.

Why We Care:

The 4-H Shooting Sports Program is a youth development education program that uses a prevention education model that strongly emphasizes positive youth-adult interaction and peer leadership. It uses skills and disciplines of safe shooting to assist young people and their leaders in attaining knowledge and developing essential life skills. The program can enhance family communication and quality time together. It creates an environment for a caring relationship between a young person and a positive volunteer. These activities provide the opportunity for immediate gratification to the youth and satisfaction and self-worth to the adult/teen volunteer who acts as teacher and role model for younger 4-H youth members.