

Environmental Education: Opportunities for Kentucky's Youth

by Lynn Brammer and Jennifer Turner

Kentucky offers a variety of opportunities in environmental education ranging from instructional materials to organized programs. Although most educators are familiar with these opportunities, many would like more information to determine whether or not the activity would benefit their students or children. One of the best sources for locating environmental materials, programs, and information is through the Kentucky Environmental Education Council (KEEC). KEEC provides a network for these types of resources on its Web site that can be viewed at <http://keec.ky.gov/index.htm>. The site includes several links to forestry education resources that promote forestry in a fun, kid-friendly way.

Envirothon, Forestry Leadership Program, Future Farmers of America (FFA), and 4-H are a few of the programs in Kentucky that help students learn more about forestry. Canon Envirothon is an annual competition in which winning teams compete for recognition and scholarships by demonstrating their knowledge of environmental science and natural resource management. The teams, each consisting of five high school-aged students from participating U.S. states and Canadian provinces, exercise their training and problem-solving skills in a competition centered on four universal testing categories such as forestry, aquatic ecology, wildlife, soils/land use, and current environmental issues. Kentucky has been participating in Envirothon since 1999. Check out the national Web site at www.envirothon.org/about/what.php or the Division of Forestry's Web site at www.forestry.ky.gov/programs/education/kyenvirothon.

A similar opportunity to Envirothon is through the Kentucky Future Farmers of America (FFA). The FFA sponsors a competitive event that tests students' skills and knowledge in the area of forest management. This event helps FFA members apply the lessons taught in the high-school agricultural education/agribusiness class to real-life situations. To find out more about Kentucky's FFA program, visit its site at <http://kyffa.org>.

The Kentucky Forest Leadership Program, which began more than 50 years ago, is perhaps the most comprehensive forestry program offered to high-school students. The program is designed for students completing their sophomore and junior years. This camp provides hands-on training in surveying, soil sciences, wildlife habitat, wood products, and overall forest management. During the week, students are assigned an 80-acre forest in which they must determine land use and proper management. Professional forest and natural resource managers from the University of Kentucky, Kentucky Division of Forestry, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, USDA Forest Service, and private forest industry provide training and support. For further information on this program, contact Doug McLaren at 859.257.2703 or e-mail dmclaren@uky.edu.

Kentucky 4-H Youth Development offers programs for students from elementary to high school and is specifically designed for students ranging from ages 9 to 19. There are 4-H forestry projects for both juniors and seniors that may result in materials for county and state fair judging—leaf collections, leaf prints, and educational displays of several types. Forestry field days are also held for junior 4-H'ers. The field days offer instruction and testing in tree identification, tree measurements, and compass and pacing. These field days usually occur in September and are located all over the state. A similar instructional program is held for senior 4-H'ers in which a three- or four-person team is selected for the National 4-H



Students learn to determine their pace for measuring distances in the forest.

Photos courtesy: Renee Williams



Students learn how to measure the height of a tree by using a Biltmore stick.

Forestry Invitational, held every summer at the Jackson's Mill 4-H Camp in Weston, West Virginia. In addition to the three topics given to the juniors, the seniors are also tested in forest health (insects and diseases), forest evaluation, topographic maps, and a forestry quiz bowl. Instructional materials for the senior program may be obtained from the Department of Forestry at the University of Kentucky, or on the Invitational Web site at www.aces.edu/n4Hfi/. Information on forestry 4-H programs is available at any county Cooperative Extension office. Teachers might also be interested in the 4-H Virtual Forest. This program, created by Virginia Cooperative Extension, provides youth with an interactive Web-based learning experience that introduces the concepts of forest management to youth ages 9 to 13 (www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/virtualforest/).

A final recommendation for teachers is one of the best-known forestry programs available. The program, which can be used by formal and non-formal educators, is Project Learning Tree (PLT). PLT is designed for and by educators working with students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. PLT helps prepare students to make informed decisions about conservation practices and natural resource use by practicing problem solving and critical thinking skills. For more information on PLT workshops and programs, visit the Kentucky Division of Forestry's Web site at <http://www.forestry.ky.gov/programs/education/plt/>. Teachers should also encourage their students who show an interest in forestry to visit the "Just for Kids" Web page at www.forestry.ky.gov/kids/.

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Photo courtesy: Kentucky Forest Leadership Program

A student learns how to measure a tree using a Biltmore stick.



"Win with Wood" Reveals a Forest of Possibilities to Youth

Photo courtesy: Carroll Fackler

by **Katie Pratt**

The University of Kentucky Robinson Station's "Win with Wood" day-long program provides east Kentucky youth an opportunity to explore the area's forest industry and possibly earn money for college.

Carroll Fackler, UK forestry research specialist, began the program several years ago as a recruitment tool for the Hazard Community and Technical College's forestry program. When that partnership ended, many area 4-H agents remembered the competitions and asked Fackler to revamp the program for youth. He said young people do not realize forest industries are one of the top industries in the state and vital to the economy of eastern Kentucky, which largely depends on natural resources, such as coal and forestry, to generate income.

The day includes an assortment of contests, demonstrations, and information for youth ages nine to 18. Young people from area 4-H clubs, FFA, and agriculture classes compete in events such as compass and pacing, wood identification, tree identification, soil judging, and identification of invasive plants. Youth can submit individual and team wood-working projects for judging. The program not only exposes young people to the industry but also provides a chance for industry members to learn about the skills area youth possess. Representatives from major and area forestry companies are on hand to speak with students during the event about careers in forestry and ways the industry affects their lives.

While this program is in eastern Kentucky, individuals from other areas of the state who are interested in forestry and the program are invited to participate. There will be hands-on demonstrations, games, and prizes. The Kentucky Forest Industries Association and its members sponsor a \$500 UK College of Agriculture scholarship to the individual who accumulates the most points in the competitions. "Win with Wood" events begin at 9:30 a.m. Oct. 16 at the Wood Utilization Center at Robinson Station.

For more information on "Win with Wood," contact Carroll Fackler at 606.666.2438, ext. 235, or visit the UK Wood Utilization Center's Web site at www.ukwoodcenter.net.

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