Responses to the Questions Received during *4H & Water: How to Empower Youth to Protect Water Resources* Webinar (February 15, 2011)

Southern Region 4-H2O Ambassador Program
(by Ashley Osborne, University of Kentucky, arich2@email.uky.edu)

*How can we tell what impairments exist in our watershed?*

EPA’s Surf Your Watershed website [http://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm](http://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm) allows individuals to access information about their watershed. In Kentucky, each of our major watershed basins has a watershed basin coordinator. This individual is an excellent contact for Kentuckians regarding watershed impairments. The KY Division of Water’s website has information about the major basins and the watershed basin coordinator [http://water.ky.gov/watershed/Pages/Basins.aspx](http://water.ky.gov/watershed/Pages/Basins.aspx). I am not sure if other states have watershed basin coordinators, but I would suggest contacting the state’s division of water and asking to speak with someone regarding watershed impairments. You might also contact your state’s water quality coordinator if you are unsure of whom to contact at the state’s division of water. Water quality coordinator contact info: [http://srwqis.tamu.edu/program-information/contacts](http://srwqis.tamu.edu/program-information/contacts).

*How long were the two days of activities with the elementary school - all day or a limited time?*

The camping program started after lunch on the first day. We ended about 5pm. The students then spent the evening doing “traditional” camping activities (e.g., night hike, and campfire). The next morning we started after breakfast, around 8am, and did water-related sessions until lunch. However, before and after the camping program, my colleagues and I went into the classroom around 3-4 times doing water related activities. We also spent one morning doing a watershed tour and a community cleanup event.

*Can you remind us how to access the 4-H2O water material?*

[http://www.ca.uky.edu/enri/4H2O_educator.htm](http://www.ca.uky.edu/enri/4H2O_educator.htm) - website for curriculum download

*What is the optimum number of students to be involved in a complete 4 H unit program?*

For me, I prefer a group around 10-15 students. I feel this allows for good group discussion and interaction during activities, but is small enough to be able to manage. When working with the school group (the example I gave in the presentation) there were around 32 students, however, the teacher did any disciplinary action needed which helped tremendously.
Could you remind me what a priority watershed is? Also does Kentucky have a program similar to MI's Explorer program (State Parks) because some of the activities would be similar to that in your 4H2O program?

In KY, priority watersheds are selected by the river basin teams as areas for restoration and protection efforts and resources. I found this website from EPA for Region 4 regarding priority watersheds http://www.epa.gov/region4/water/watersheds/priority.html. Again individual states might contact their state division of water to learn about priority watersheds in their area.

Kentucky State Parks have Family Adventure Quests but this program is structured a bit differently, and focuses not only on natural resources but also cultural and historical resources. KY State Parks may also have a junior naturalist program but I think it varies from park to park.

How do we make learning about water resources fun?

I feel that if the instructor is enthused about the topic and goes in planning to have fun, that the students will also become enthused as well. The activities provided in the curriculum are interactive and hands-on which I feel many students enjoy. I find that the activity that almost all students enjoy is the activity where students learn about aquatic insects (macroinvertebrates) and search for the insects in a stream, pond, etc.

I would like to have seen more of path that others to venture into this realm of educating younger people in their area. What are the links or method to start a program in our area. Do I contact someone? Who? Do I need to ask the U of Florida to sponsor me to implement this program? What are the avenues to proceed?

Our committee highly encourages individual states and counties to take the curriculum and use and/or adapt it to meet their needs. I know each state differs in regards to their requirements to start a program. If you are at the county level, I would contact one of your state 4-H or natural resource Extension specialists and talk with them about how they might help you start this program locally. At the University of Florida Amy Shober is currently adapting the program. Amy’s email is alshober@ufl.edu. If you are at U of FL I would contact Amy first and talk with her. If you are at another state interested in starting the program, please feel free to contact me. I will gladly help you figure out the avenues to take in your state to get the program started. Or you can also contact your state’s water quality coordinator. Their contact information is here http://srwqis.tamu.edu/program-information/contacts.
How much did the rain garden cost?

Whitfield County, the one that I highlighted in the presentation, budgeted $1000 for plants only toward the rain garden (15 x 40 ft). They did receive some donations and the labor was covered by 4-Hers. So I imagine $1000 is a great starting point for a budget to build a rain garden if partnerships are established to rely on for services and other needs.

Are there hands-on water resource activities in which 4Hers can participate?

We have found Enviroscape (http://www.enviroscape.com/) models to be a great, hands-on water resource activity. These are available in several formats and they provide the opportunity for students to interact directly with the activity and lesson. They are a bit pricey and we have been successful in using grant funds to purchase these in many cases.

Best ways to have youths influence water consumption of their entire families.

Founded on the principles of youth influencing adults, 4-H has been bringing home positive messages to families for years through young people. 4-H is also “learn by doing”, so my suggestion is that the youth make the practical changes themselves (water off when brushing, dishwashing, outdoor watering changes when appropriate) and set the example for their families to follow suit!

Is it safe for youth to visit homeowners as "trainers" to teach others about conservation?

I believe that every 4-H faculty and staff member knows their communities and their 4-Hers best, but we would typically not send youth into areas alone to work as trainers or in any other capacity. 4-H relies heavily on a youth-adult partnership model and having that caring adult to work with the 4-Hers adds another layer of protection for our young people. Many of the “training” examples that I went over in the presentation were designed in group settings where youth were sharing their message to groups of adults (through displays, conference presentations, festivals, etc.) and all under the guidance and care of adult leaders.

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In Georgia, we looked for ways to incorporate water education training into existing programs, formats, and opportunities. Once we identified water as a need (we have been in and out of droughts and floods, it’s also in state curriculum, so it’s very relevant), we looked for resources and funding opportunities that could support our needs. We applied for grants, leveraged resources through partnerships, and devoted staff time to trainings all in support of water education. We also tried to provide focused water education resources in areas where there was already established programming (for example: in-school meetings and the Water Friends).
National Junior Master Gardener Program
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