

USU Extension Grant—Final Report

Project Leader: Katherine Veeder

Project Title: Swaner EcoClub: An Environmental Science and Service Club for Middle School Youth

Beginning Date and End Date: June 1, 2015—May 31, 2016 (club meetings September 2015—May 2016)

Total Requested: \$6975.10

Project Objectives:

1. Formalize Swaner EcoClub as a “traditional” 4-H club to increase reach and impact
2. Provide opportunities for middle school youth to learn more about environmental science and to develop a deeper connection to nature, as well as an understanding of the importance of service within their community.
3. Develop Discover 4-H club curriculum on Environmental Science and Stewardship

Project Results:

Fifteen middle school youth participated in twice monthly EcoClub meetings at the Swaner EcoCenter during the 2015-2016 academic year. These youth were exposure to a variety of environmental science and stewardship topics through citizen science, experiments, outdoor exploration, art, and field trips. Students became very familiar with the Swaner Preserve and spent a large amount of time outside.

EcoClub members participated in Water Watch Utah, a citizen science project, on a water tributary on the Preserve. This exposed students to the process of citizen science, as well as gave them a better understanding of water quality measurements.

EcoClub members helped to plan and lead 4 community service projects during the year. They helped to create ornaments using recyclable materials for a tree then was auctioned off in the Park City community, created a new hive exhibit on pollinators now on display at the EcoCenter on the 3rd floor landing, led a trash pick-up in conjunction with Earth Day, and helped to create the 4th of July EcoHeroes themed parade float. Through this service EcoClub members were able to take leadership roles and work with other youth and adults in the Park City and Summit County communities.

EcoClub members were administered pre- and post-surveys that measured their knowledge on environmental science, as well as their opinions and feelings about environment topics and their relationship with nature. The post-surveys showed an increase in knowledge about wetland habitats, the process of reusing/recycling/reducing, the local watershed, etc. Students were also able to more articulately describe their concerns about the natural environment and human impacts. Students also self-reported an increase in the amount of time they spent outside each week, as well as increases in their interest level in science, a career in science, and caring about the environment.

Currently Discover 4-H curriculum is being prepared for peer review and edits, which will be finalized by the 4-H Annual In-service.

Funding from this grant helped to purchase major supplies needed for future years of EcoClub. Supplies purchased include hand lenses, a watershed and point and non-point source pollution model, reusable trash clean up supplies, including bags and trash grabbers, water quality testing kits, youth sized waders, large thermos style water bottles, etc., all of which can be utilized in future years of EcoClub. Funds also helped to purchase consumable supplies, including snacks, materials for creating touch table exhibits in the EcoCenter, supplies for community service projects, etc.

EcoClub members are continuing to stay involved with Swaner throughout the summer. A number of participants have taken on summer volunteer projects, including Water Watch Utah and cleaning, sanitizing, and assembling a fox and a sandhill crane skeleton found on the Preserve.

There has already been a marked interest in the program for next year and a waitlist for the program has been created. The majority of participants are continuing with the program next year, with the exception of 8th graders who have aged out, but will have the option of coming back to participate as volunteers during EcoClub or at the EcoCenter, as options to participate in Swaner's summer camp counselor program.