

October 16, 2013

Dear North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Faculty and Staff,

As you know, 4-H has a very proud and rich tradition in our state. Dating back to 1909, this great program has positively impacted the lives of thousands of young people and developed generations of leaders for our state. NC State University, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (NCCES) are very proud of this great program and the life-changing impact it has had on over 237,000 people in our state. As the signature youth leadership development program of NCCES, this program develops citizen-leaders by focusing on initiatives that prepare youth for the challenges they will face economically, educationally and in their health through the 24,000 person volunteer network and 100 county-based programs led by 4-H Cooperative Extension agents. Based on the four H's of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health, this program is recognized as a national leader in positive youth development with a 104-year history in the state.

One of 4-H's delivery modes for positive youth development is residential camping. The North Carolina 4-H camping program has, since the 1920's, evolved to include six properties in North Carolina including: Swannanoa (Buncombe County), Sertoma (Stokes County), Anita-Alta (Caldwell County), Betsy-Jeff Penn (Rockingham County), Millstone (Richmond County), and Eastern 4-H (Tyrrell County). These properties have provided positive experiences for thousands of young people over the years, however it is no secret that the financial challenges relative to maintenance of camp properties coupled with the economic hardships and limited discretionary income of many NC families for activities such as 4-H camp, has created a situation that is now calling for significant changes in the camping program. As a result of these financial challenges several properties have had annual budget shortfalls, had to raise rates to keep up with operating costs and have faced tremendous repair and renovation challenges. Every effort has been made to increase efficiency and reduce costs, but additional reductions would lead to safety issues and put at risk the American Camping Association (ACA) accreditation of these properties. From a financial perspective, nearly \$3.7 million would be required to meet the repair needs and renovate the residential camping sites to meet required standards. For many years, we have also been facing significant financial operational challenges. In addition to the funds needed for renovations and repairs, four of the six residential camps (Swannanoa, Sertoma, Anita-Alta, and Betsy-Jeff Penn) created a combined deficit of over \$ 400,000 in operational costs. As you can imagine, these continued financial constraints have considerably lessened our ability to maintain and grow a strong statewide 4-H program.

Given these issues, CALs, NCCES and 4-H administration, along with support from the University, have initiated a plan to reduce the number of properties in operation for 4-H camping. On October 14, 2013, a plan to reduce the 4-H camping program to two strategic properties began. The operations for Swannanoa, Sertoma, Anita-Alta, and Betsy-Jeff Penn 4-H camps will cease by January 1, 2014. The Millstone 4-H Camp and Eastern 4-H Center will remain fully operational.

There is a lot of work to be done during this time of transition. Over the next several weeks, an action plan and timeline will be created to close operations at the four residential camping properties indicated and additional plans will be developed to grow to the Millstone 4-H Camp and Eastern 4-H Center. Every effort is being made to accommodate groups that were booked for activities in 2014.

These important changes to the 4-H camping program while difficult will ultimately enable the holistic 4-H program to be more cost effective and to provide high quality positive youth development experiences for current and future generations of young people in North Carolina. Thank you for your continued support of 4-H'ers in North Carolina and your efforts to help us continue growing the 4-H program in our state.

More information will follow in the upcoming weeks. Any questions regarding these changes may be directed to: Dr. Marshall Stewart, State 4-H Leader, at [marshall\\_stewart@ncsu.edu](mailto:marshall_stewart@ncsu.edu) (919.515.1681).



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