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# News Release



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **U.S. Forest Service and the Savannah River Ecology Lab partner on pollinator project** *The Let's Grow Together Initiative to reach over 20,000 youth in the CSRA*

**(NEW ELLENTON, SC) Feb. 14, 2018**— The U.S. Forest Service-Savannah River was competitively awarded \$30,000 by its regional office to effectively engage children in hands-on and sustained outdoor experiences. The University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (UGA-SREL) serves as the Forest Service-Savannah River's lead partner on its Let's Grow Together initiative. This pollinator initiative will connect students to nature; provide Every Kid in a Park passes for fourth graders; enrich the STEM curriculum; reinforce the importance of sustainability; and reach students from a myriad of backgrounds.

"The Let's Grow Together Initiative will shed some light on the importance of pollinators," said U.S. Forest Service-Savannah River Silviculturist Jennie Haskell. "Children will learn about different plant species and pollinators and how our environment is interconnected."

Animals that assist plants in their reproduction as pollinators include species of ants, bats, bees, beetles, birds, butterflies, flies, moths, wasps, as well as other animals. Wind and water also play a role in the pollination of many plants. Numerous animal species, from birds to bears to humans, eat fruit and seeds that require pollination. Of the 1,400 crop plants grown, almost 75 percent depend at least in part on animal pollination, including coffee, almonds, many fruits and chocolate.

Students will develop and maintain pollinator gardens and mentor younger students at afterschool programs with their gardening efforts. Additionally, a model pollinator garden will be developed at the UGA-SREL Conference Center and will serve as a potential seed source and as a demonstration for gardens. Further, the U.S. Forest Service-Savannah River and SREL have connected with the City of Aiken Energy and Environmental Committee for partner schools and organizations to compete in the 2018 Earth Day Aiken Art Contest. The Importance of Pollinators is the theme of this year's art contest.

The Let's Grow Together initiative current partner schools and organizations are Brothers and Sisters of Aiken County, Quest Zone afterschool program at East Aiken School of the Arts, Oakwood-Windsor Elementary, Tall Pines STEM Academy, the City of Aiken Energy and Environmental Committee and SC Educational Television Learningwhy.org. Visit <https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/index.shtml> for more information about pollinators and [www.earthdayaiken.org](http://www.earthdayaiken.org) for more information about 2018 Earth Day Aiken.

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