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News Release

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For Immediate Release

SCC Holds Invasive Species Summer Science Enrichment Camp

Earlier this year, Southeastern Community College was awarded a \$109,000 grant from the Burroughs-Wellcome Foundation to fund a series of Summer Science Enrichment Camps for area high school students in the North Carolina Lower Coastal Plain. The primary topic for the week long camps, which will run from 2009-2011, will be Invasive Species, which is an important emerging environmental issue. During these hands-on, field-oriented sessions, camp participants will interact directly with prominent scientists and educators who are involved with invasive species management issues across the U.S. and Canada.

Camp instructors for the 2009 SCC Summer Science Enrichment Camp, which was held on July 20-24 included **Rebecca Westbrooks**, Camp Director and Chair, Natural and Social Sciences at SCC; **Dr. Randy Westbrooks**, Invasive Species Prevention Specialist, U.S. Geological Survey, Whiteville, North Carolina (introduction to invasive species); **Dr. Les Mehrhoff**, Director of the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, University of Connecticut (invasive plant identification and collection); **Teresa Lengner**, SCC Lab Assistant/Instructor, a 2004 graduate of the SCC Environmental Science Technology Program (GPS Survey); **Bernice McPherson**, Lab Assistant; **John Robards**, SCC Forestry Instructor (GIS mapping); **Lee Patrick**, Vice-President, Invasive Plant Control, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee (invasive plant control); **Alan (Bo) Burns**, BASF Corporation, Raleigh, North Carolina (quality vegetation management methods); and **Don**



Hopkins, North Carolina State Apiarist (bee pathogens and diseases). Two recent graduates of the SCC Environmental Science Technology Program provided further insights on careers in environmental science and invasive species management. **Roger Caulder**, a 2007 graduate who is now working with Catlin Engineers, Inc., in Wilmington, provided an overview of careers in the field of environmental science. **Bo Benton**, a 2008 graduate who is now working with USDA APHIS Wildlife Services in Robeson and Columbus Counties, gave an overview of injurious wildlife such as beaver, nutria, coyotes, and birds at airports.

Camp activities included seminars by camp instructors; lab activities such as cactus moth larvae extraction and preservation; and field activities such as identification, collection, survey, mapping, and control of invasive plants on the SCC Nature Trail. The group also initiated a project to eradicate a two acre infestation of wild taro (Elephant Ears) from Lake Waccamaw State Park near the lake dam. In recent years, taro has spread into the park from plantings around homes and gardens at the lake.

A major goal of the project is to provide this unique 'hands-on' learning opportunity to students throughout the Lower Coastal Plain Region. A total of 15 students from Columbus, Bladen, and Robeson Counties participated in the 2009 camp.

Camp participants included **Tyler Hewett** (SCC Early College), **Courtney Harrelson** (SCC Early College), **Alexis Benson** (East Bladen High School), **Ricky Godwin** (South Columbus High School), **Sarah Mize** (Columbus Christian Academy), **Conor Mize** (Columbus Christian Academy), **Isaiah Fipps** (South Columbus High School), **Alice Cabellero** (East Bladen High School), **Jasmine Campbell** (East Columbus High School), **Shelby Stewart** (East Bladen High School), **Samuel Smith** (East Bladen High School), **Abby Pritchett** (SCC Early College), **Matt Fowler** (SCC - Robeson County), **Vanessa Roberts** (SCC – Columbus County), and **Aaron Clark** (SCC – Columbus County). Camp Assistants included **Jeff Maness** (a 2009 graduate of the SCC Environmental Science Technology Program), and **Thad Watkins**, who is currently enrolled in the SCC Environmental Science Technology Program.

As a follow up to the annual summer camps, student participants will assist camp instructors in developing a Regional Volunteer Early Detection and Reporting Network for Invasive Plants. Monthly field trips will be provided this coming semester, to alert the students about regionally important invasive species issues and ecological problems such as Chinese Privet, Witchweed, Giant Salvinia, and Beach Vitex. A monthly seminar series over the next year will focus on important invasive species issues in other regions of the U.S. - such as the Giant Gambian Pouched Rat in the Florida Keys.

The group will also continue the effort to survey and map wild taro around Lake Waccamaw, and help eradicate it from Lake Waccamaw State Park. Later this fall, the group will hold a public meeting at the



park to help raise awareness of the invasive species issue, and to encourage lake residents and others to prevent wild taro from spreading from homes and gardens into the lake – and ultimately back into the park. The long term goal is to raise environmental awareness and to eliminate invasive species that pose a threat to the natural beauty of the lake and the park. Lake Waccamaw State Park Superintendent Chris Helms and his staff have been very supportive of the effort to teach young people about invasive species – *from Kudzu to Fire Ants*.

The next camp outing will be another trip to Lake Waccamaw on Saturday, August 22, 2009. For more information about the 2009 SCC Summer Science Enrichment Camp, upcoming Saturday Seminars and Field Trips, or to learn more about the SCC Invasive Species Management Training Program, or the SCC Environmental Science Technology Program please contact Rebecca Westbrooks at 910-642-7141, Ext. 291, or by e-mail at rwestbrooks@sccnc.edu.

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