

## Jacksonville State University Field Schools

### Mission

JSU Field Schools provide in-depth programs designed to nurture appreciation of Alabama's natural and cultural significance, celebrate diversity, and foster stewardship of the natural world. We promote natural history and history education from "the deepest canyon to the highest mountain" in Alabama. Utilizing the Little River Canyon Center and the Cleburne County Mountain Center as well as public land "outdoor classrooms", the Field Schools are a project of JSU's Environmental Policy & Information Center (EPIC).

### Programs

Our programs are for everyone! We have a commitment to providing affordable and accessible educational opportunities. Environmental and arts programs for preK-12 school groups are at the core of our programming. We also offer family workshops and classes on subjects such as botany, nature, geology, archaeology, astronomy, arts, paddling, hiking and more. Summer camp programs for children emphasize fun and learning about nature. Teacher training workshops provide opportunities for educators to obtain continuing education credits and to gain knowledge and ideas to use in their classrooms. We also conduct adult nature expeditions and arts-focused programs. Partners such as the USFS, NPS, Alabama State Parks and others assist us in providing high quality and entertaining educational experiences for thousands of folks each year.

### Amazing Things Happen in Little Places

This is the phrase we have used to outline what we believe the Field School experience is about. What does "amazing things happen in little places" really mean? What is the thread that runs through each program we conduct? How do we translate our mission into individual lessons, our mix of programs, and the types of people we seek to serve? These are questions we continually keep in mind. As we develop programs, train volunteers and staff, and consider new opportunities, we look carefully at the message we wish to convey. There are three strands at the heart of our mission: Sense of Place, Diversity, and Stewardship. These strands weave the thread that flows through each lesson and program we offer.

The following are ideas and values that these themes represent:

#### Sense of Place

- Northeast Alabama is a unique and inspiring place.
- Getting to know a place helps us to appreciate it and should lead us to want to care for it.
- Wild places such as Little River Canyon, Alabama State Parks, Talladega National Forest, Dugger Mountain Wilderness, Mountain Longleaf Wildlife Refuge, and Cheaha Wilderness are important to the health of our planet.
- Individually and as a whole, people are a part of the web of life, affecting and being affected by other living things.
- Each of us is a part of our earth-continent-nation-state-local-home-backyard ecosystem. What we do and where we are makes a difference in this world.

#### Diversity

- There is tremendous diversity within the state of Alabama.
- Alabama has been and continues to be affected by people of diverse interests and perspectives.
- We can learn much about ourselves by living in a community with people of diverse backgrounds, philosophies, and cultures.
- Diversity within plant, animal, and human communities makes them strong.

#### Stewardship

- We have a responsibility for preserving and caring for natural areas and wild places.
- Preserving places like the canyon, the river, the forests, and the mountains means learning about their problems and working to help.
- Our lifestyle and daily habits can be adjusted to have minimal impact upon the environment.
- Living in an earth-friendly way can be transferred to our lives at home.
- We have a responsibility for preserving and celebrating our cultural heritage.
- Current and future generations need to be aware of the natural and cultural heritage of their state.