



Kids' Community

4-H Club Tracks Tide Flow

(NAPSA)—Helping to make sure the beaches are safe on St. Simons Island, Georgia, is the Glynn County Senior 4-H Club, the “Sea Monkeys.”

Routine beach water testing by the Coastal Resource Division’s Beach Water Quality Monitoring Program resulted in health officials posting beach advisories banning swimming last summer.

Concerned, the high-school 4-H members began investigating the mystery behind the elevated enterococcal bacteria levels that threatened their pristine and popular beaches.

“The beach is where we hang out with our friends and family, and it is a special place we all go to just chill out,” member Will Prince said.

“It puts a different spin on paradise when you think it might be polluted.”

No one really knew why the levels were so high or even from where the beach water originated. But, volunteers were needed to help run tests, and the 4-H club was quick to respond.

After analyzing the terrain of their community and aerial photos of local inlets, creeks and rivers, the Sea Monkeys guessed that marsh water traveling out of two marsh tidal creeks could be ending up on the beaches, delivering harmful bacteria.

To test their hypothesis, the Sea Monkeys set up a clever experiment using large naval oranges and other citrus fruits to track marsh water flow. With tough outer skin, the fruits could



withstand wear and tear from ocean rocks and curious seagulls.

In all, 280 fruits were dropped—half, marked with a black band, into the Blackbanks River, and the other unmarked half deposited in Postell Creek. The group launched the fruit markers into the ebbing high tide early one morning and began to retrieve the beached fruits six hours after launch. Over several tide cycles, they kayaked marsh creeks and combed the beaches, collecting the fruit and documenting locations. From this, they were able to conclude that marsh water from both places did indeed travel to area beaches.

“We all agreed that our stake in this issue was as great as anyone’s,” Will said of the project and their decision to expand their research to investigate the marsh pollution itself.

4-H clubs like the Sea Monkeys are making a difference in communities across America as they learn leadership, citizenship and life skills. Learn more about 4-H at www.4HUSA.org.