

Living Archaeology Weekend 2008

The 19th annual Living Archaeology Weekend, held September 19-20 at the Gladie Historic Site in the Red River Gorge, was a complete success, thanks to the hard work of 37 volunteers and over 20 demonstrators, and to the support of over 30 sponsors. The Kentucky Organization of Professional Archaeologists, Kentucky Archaeological Survey, and US Forest Service co-organized the event. Thanks to a grant from the SEAC Public Outreach Committee, the LAW Steering Committee met a major goal for LAW 2008: improving educational materials and assessment instruments.

The Steering Committee developed educational materials targeting two LAW audiences: 5th grade students and their teachers and the general public. The materials focus on the unique archaeology of the Red River Gorge, the fact that the Gorge is part of a world center of plant domestication, the role that Gorge sites played in understanding plant domestication, and the need to preserve sites that contain this valuable information.



Materials developed for students and teachers were collected into a LAW Teacher Packet: culture history of the Red River Gorge, handout on plant domestication spotlighting an EAC crop (sunflower), sunflower seed recipes, vocabulary word lists targeting technologies demonstrated at LAW, event scavenger hunt, stewardship lesson plan, and list of educational resources for teachers. These were supplemented by existing content including two booklets in the KAS Education Series and their activity companion guides. Each student received a packet of sunflower seeds, with information on how to grow the plant and how prehistoric peoples used its seeds. Members of the LAW Steering Committee visited classrooms before the event, speaking to students about the technologies they would see and reviewing the packet contents with teachers.

School attendance was down this year due to the price of gasoline and an emergency in Powell County that closed the school system. Nevertheless, over 675 students attended on Friday. Because fewer classes attended, it meant that a richer, less harried experience for those who did. Schools from seven counties attended, as did several home school groups.

Materials distributed to the general public were the handout on plant domestication, sunflower seed packets and recipes, and an event program. About 1300-1400 people attended, the largest turnout ever for Saturday. We attribute the record attendance to a greater effort publicizing the event: flyers distributed at state parks, listings on online calendars, press releases, and a feature story in the Lexington *Herald-Leader*. Many visitors came from Lexington and surrounding central Kentucky counties. However, some came from as far away as North Carolina and Illinois.



The Steering Committee implemented evaluation forms with the public and teachers. Responses indicate most visitors recognized and appreciated the significance of past cultures and how their lifeways have affected us today. The responses indicated that visitors shared an

awareness of our cultural heritage and the need to preserve ancient lifeways. Comments like these illustrate LAW's success: "It is very important for our children to learn about our cultural heritage" and "This is a nice way of preserving history for our children to enjoy".



The main reasons teachers cited for attending LAW were hands-on learning opportunities for students, social studies topics covered by the event, and reinforcement of subject matter covered in classrooms. Teachers unanimously agreed that their students met LAW's education goals. Their pupils were better able to draw parallels between the lives of the people who previously lived in the Gorge and themselves, and students understood the importance of preserving cultural resources in the Gorge. Teachers cited the hands-on approach to learning, the knowledgeable demonstrators, the variety of technologies represented, and the freedom students had to visit various stations among the best aspects of the event. Teachers mentioned the educational materials and the classroom visits as the most important steps they took to prepare their students for their visit.

In order to reach a broader audience, some of the educational materials developed for LAW 2008 will be available on the LAW web site. In addition, short videos and lesson plans focusing on specific demonstrators and content will be developed and posted.