



MEMORANDUM

TO: 4-H and FFA Wildlife Habitat Education Program (WHEP) Coaches, State Coordinators, and National WHEP Committee Members

FROM: Matthew Springer, National WHEP Committee

SUBJECT: 2025 National WHEP Contest

DATE: May 8, 2025

This is the official announcement for the 2025 National 4-H WHEP Invitational, which will be held at the **Clyde York 4-H Center in Crossville, TN, July 28–31, 2025**.

CONTEST ECOREGION

The ecoregion in which the 2025 contest will be held is **Eastern Deciduous Forest**. We will be using the revised 2024 WHEP manual. The manual can be accessed, or a hard copy purchased, from this website: <https://www.whep.org/national-whep-manual/>.

DATE

The 2025 National 4-H and FFA Wildlife Habitat Education Program Invitational will be held Monday, July 28th through Thursday, July 31st. All participants should plan to arrive between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. central time on Monday, July 28th. Participants should plan to depart after breakfast on Thursday, July 31st.

LOCATION

Each state winning team plus their two chaperones will stay at the Clyde York 4-H Center (<https://clydeyork4hcenter.tennessee.edu/>) in Crossville, TN. The education day, coaches tour, and contest will be off site.

COST

\$225 per person (teams should consist of 4 students and 2 chaperones)

Food, lodging, and transportation (i.e., for education day, coaches tour, and contest) will be provided during the Invitational. Each team is responsible for travel related transportation expenses, liability coverage, etc.

DEADLINES

- June 1, 2025 (or within 1 week of your state contest, which ever falls later) – State’s intention to participate(link just below)
- June 16, 2025 – Online registration deadline including gender, shirt sizes, dietary restrictions, plus each coach’s pick from the coaches’ tour options list
- July 7, 2025 – Paperwork and payment due (Checks should be made out to **Tennessee 4-H Foundation, Inc.** and list **National WHEP** on the memo line)

INTENTION

Each state WHEP coordinator should notify us of your intention to attend by **June 1** by completing an online form at: <https://forms.gle/JDAnTaqk4yMaivd28>

REGISTRATION

Online registration will open on **June 1** and is due on or before **June 16**. Registration will be limited to the first 96 coaches and youth. A state team consists of either 3 or 4 senior 4-H members or FFA contestants and 1 or 2 adult coaches/chaperones who are certified 4-H/FFA leaders from that state. **Only one 4-H team per state and one FFA team per state may attend.** Starting June 1, teams will be able to register online at <https://www.whep.org/national-contest/> by completing the appropriate forms. Print forms using your browser before you submit.

Participants will be expected to have documentation of Health and Permission forms in accordance with their own state 4-H or institutional policies. **Please bring a copy of all youth and adult health forms and any IEP’s (Individualized Education Program) with you to the event.**

Registration will be through the Tennessee 4-H Foundation, Inc. Details about payments and paperwork will be announced around June 1st to teams with declared intent.

Incomplete forms and/or lack of payment by the July 7 deadline may result in an individual or team being disqualified from the Invitational.

ADULT SCREENING & CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING

Participants will be expected to adhere to adult screening and child protection protocols in accordance with their own state 4-H or institutional policies. **Be prepared to show proof of screening and training, if requested.**

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have any special needs or require special accommodations, please notify Cassie Young (whep.org@gmail.com) as soon as possible and no later than **June 16**. Special needs include, but are not limited to, mobility, education, and lodging requirements. Dietary restrictions are part of online registration this year. Please list and describe any special needs as best you can. You will be contacted by the contest committee if clarification is needed.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

Teams flying to the event are encouraged to fly into Knoxville airport (79 miles) or Nashville airport (107 miles). Registration and room check-in at the 4-H Center will start at 3:00 p.m. (CST). Plan to arrive between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. on July 28. Those arriving after 6:00 p.m. cannot be guaranteed supper on July 28. Participants depart after breakfast on Wednesday, July 31, but by 10:00 a.m. More detailed information will be sent to the coordinating coach after registration.

LODGING

Lodging will be in assigned dorm-style cabins at the Clyde York 4-H Center (<https://clydeyork4hcenter.tennessee.edu/lodging/cabins/>). Lodging will be arranged for up to 4 contestants and 2 coaches/chaperones per team. Teams from multiple states will share cabins. Team members will be lodged in gender specific cabins. Chaperones will provide oversight within their gender specific cabin. Each cabin contains 4 bunk bedrooms (sleep between 12-18 per room) with a shared, central bathroom for contestants only, and 1 adult chaperone room with 5 twin size beds (not bunk-style) and a bathroom for chaperones only (see example attached). Everyone should bring their own linens or sleeping bag, pillows, towels, wash cloths, and toiletries. The cabins have air-conditioning and access to wireless internet and a satellite tv. Lodging for additional 4-H or FFA approved family members or friends outside of the two chaperones is the responsibility of the team and must be off site at area hotels or campgrounds.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

We cannot accommodate non-participants at this event. **4-H or FFA approved family members or friends outside of the two chaperones are not allowed to participate in any of the Invitational events other than the Awards Banquet.** Any of these who wish to attend the banquet on Wednesday, July 30th, can purchase tickets (\$30 each) at the time of registration.

There are numerous hotels in and around Crossville for non-participants. Hotel room vacancies are often limited in the summer, so families are encouraged to book hotel rooms quickly if they intend on joining.

COACHES TOUR

The coaches' tour will take place on Wednesday, July 30th. Coaches/chaperones will spend the day visiting nearby attractions. All coaches/chaperones are required to participate in the tour to ensure that in the event of an emergency, coaches/chaperones can be located quickly. Coaches will be given 3 options to choose from by June 16th, and they will likely include 1) Downtown Nashville with at least one tour of a popular country music destination plus some free time, 2) Tennessee Aquarium in Downtown Chattanooga (freshwater and saltwater exhibits) plus some free time, and Canoe the Caney. Lunch will be on your own for the Nashville and Chattanooga tours. A minimum of 8 folks will be needed to field each trip. If there are less than 8 based on registration, then coaches will be assigned their 2nd option. Coaches are encouraged to research the internet to find out more about these tour options. More details forthcoming.

EDUCATIONAL DAY

The Education Day will be Tuesday, July 29th, and will involve learning from wildlife and fisheries professionals. There will likely be a half-day of terrestrial-based content along with a half-day of aquatics content. The aquatics portion will be weather dependent but wading and swimming are part of the plan. Only strong swimmers should participate in the swimming part and goggles will be provided for underwater observations. Swimming is NOT allowed unless there is a designated lifeguard on duty and swimming permissions have been provided at registration on July 28.

THINGS TO BRING

- Your state flag
- Share Fair items (foods, pins, stickers, mementos, unique items from your state, etc.)
- Field clothes and shoes/boots
 - *(This is important! Shorts and open shoes will not be allowed on the educational day or the contest day. Long-sleeved shirts, pants, and boots with gripping soles are strongly recommended. This is your responsibility. We will not wait for individuals to go back to their rooms to change clothes.)*
 - Appropriate swimwear and an additional pair of closed toe shoes for swimming in a freshwater stream (plus a towel), and appropriate swimwear during the designated swimming pool time at the 4-H Center
- Bed linens or Sleeping bag, and Pillow
- Towels, wash cloths, and toiletries
- Clothing for the awards banquet will be informal (**no formal dress**)
- Appropriate swimwear and beach towels (optional, details on swimming forthcoming)
- Sunscreen, sunglasses, hat
- Insect repellent – Permethrin spray can be used to reduce contact with ticks but follow the label
- Rainwear
- Clipboard and pencils
- Camera (optional)
- Binocular (optional)
- Medications
- Health forms

RESPONSIBILITIES

Adult coaches/chaperones are responsible for the actions of their youth and are expected to supervise them as appropriate. Coaches/chaperones will need to keep their team members on schedule. Lodging will be arranged based on gender at birth, but if special accommodation needs to be requested, then ask Cassie Young (see special accommodations above). For mixed gender teams, it would be best to have a male and female chaperone to oversee your team's contestants in the cabins. Otherwise, your contestant(s) must obey the 4-H cabin rules and be mindful of the adult chaperones assigned to that cabin. Chaperones are responsible for their state's youth health and well-being during this event. Information regarding local health care options will be provided in coach welcome packets.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions regarding location & local logistics: Chris Graves (cagraves@utk.edu)