

AEEPS Foundation Grant Final Report (1)

Girl Scouts of Maine visit Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at University of Maine

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With the support of AEEPS Foundation's Grant Program, the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at University of Maine hosted Girl Scouts of Maine during summer of 2021. This project was coordinated by Dr. Onur Apul, Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, his collaborator Dr. Lauren Ross, Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and their graduate and undergraduate students. The goal of the project was to introduce environmental engineering and microplastic pollution to Girl Scouts (Brownie and Daisy Groups accompanied by their troop leaders); because we believe the involvement in an early learning experience positively associates with students' interest in pursuing higher education in STEM fields. The hosting groups involved graduate and undergraduate researchers and they participated in a variety of activities (e.g., Anjali Mulchandani's Rubik Cube activity to understand the impor-

tance of surface area for smaller plastic debris). First, the group took a small campus tour and visited auditoriums, classrooms, labs, and graduate student offices. During the tour, the group was trained by graduate students about microplastic pollution, and they observed the behavior of different microplastics in a wave tank. Next, the group of visitors enjoyed "microplastic hunt" in a blow-up estuary. The estuary is set up by graduate students decorated with LED lights and the microplastic beads were hidden inside to demonstrate how difficult it is to recover microplastics once they are in the environment. The end of the day was crayon drawings about microplastics while enjoying snacks and beverages provided by University of Maine catering services. The students left with hopes to visit again soon and their drawings are currently being displayed at Dr. Apul's Lab.

