4-H Sport Fishing: A Positive Trend For Youth

The Situation
4-H youth programs in Ada County remain mostly traditional. Seventy-one percent of county participants select large animal or market livestock projects. Ada County’s rural, agricultural locations are being replaced by urbanization in the form of subdivisions. City boundaries are blurred in the process. Traditional clubs are facing a proportional strain. Traditional leaders are searching out projects and activities that will captivate restless youth and teach a life-enhancing lesson. Today’s youth enjoy opportunities outdoors and have an increased awareness and concern for nature and the environment in which they live.

In a timely fashion, the Idaho state 4-H office, under the direction of 4-H Specialist, Jeff Goodwin, began statewide training in a new project area – Sport Fishing. The training, conducted by a nationally trained team of extension staff and volunteers, provided leadership for the project’s introduction in Idaho’s county programs. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game already had curriculum in place called, Fishing, A Lifetime Sport. This professional material was to provide the necessary reference material for project completion. An initial record book was drafted and divided into three levels – beginning, intermediate, and advanced.

Our Response
Ada County sent Extension Educator, Nate Helm, to attend the state training in Ketchum, Idaho during September of 1999. Following the training, grant monies were obtained in the amount of $1,000 through the Ada County 4-H Endowment. Advertising for the new project area was done via the county 4-H newsletter and monthly leaders meetings. Parents and interested leaders were invited to attend as training for their role as future sport fishing project leaders.

January 29, 2000 began the first of five meetings and one fishing trip for the new project area. Twelve youth and seven parents or adults attended these first meetings and activities. Participating youth were taught in each area of Sport Fishing including, Ethics, Tackle Crafting, Aquatic Ecology, and Angling Skills. With the funds from the Ada County 4-H Endowment, supplies were purchased to provide all participants an equal opportunity to participate. A local art teacher, Michelle Emery, taught participants the ancient art of Gyo-taku (fish printing). Local fishing supply businesses provided...
supplies at reduced rates and often threw in some freebees to be used as extrinsic rewards.

Supplies purchased have been packaged to enable clubs to “check out” the items they might need for a meeting. Items include hooks, rings, spoons, paint, rope, fishing line, jig bodies, beads, casting plugs, water quality testing equipment, complete fly tying kits, and aquatic entomological sampling equipment.

Finally, Idaho Department of Fish and Game supplied fishing poles to those youth who did not have one so everyone could participate in the fishing trips.

**Achievements**

From the efforts of the extension educator, youth in Ada County were able to participate in the Sport Fishing Project. Through the program and funds, 4-H youth in Ada County who participated came away with tangible products as a means in providing them the opportunity to fish. This was an opportunity many of the participants would not have been economically able to provide for themselves.

Most of the youth had very limited knowledge of sport fishing. At the conclusion of the project sessions and fishing trips the youth participants had gained new knowledge in the following areas by being able to:

a) Identify state fishing regulations,
b) Identify Idaho fish species,
c) Tie common knots used in fishing,
d) List the habitat and feed requirements for common Idaho fish species,
e) Discuss ethical behavior in fishing and fish handling,
f) Identify common aquatic insects,
g) Identify and qualify aquatic locations as fish habitat,
h) Demonstrate various casting methods,
i) Demonstrate proper rigging for bait or lure fishing,
j) Identify common fishing jigs, demonstrate their constructions, and discuss strategies for use.
k) Demonstrate safe fishing practices (i.e., handling of hooks, fishing around others, proper personal protection)

Individuals who participated as leaders or parents commented, “This is exactly what more kids need to learn.”

**For More Information**

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