

# IMPACT

 University of Idaho  
Cooperative  
Extension System

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## The Idaho 4-H Sportfishing Program: It's More Than Just Fishing

### *The Situation*

Youth development programs must improve the life skills of youth participants and other family members to remain viable into the future. In addition, these effective educational programs must be fun. The Idaho 4-H Sportfishing Program provides that combination of fun-based educational opportunities for Idaho families.

### *Our Response*

The Idaho 4-H Program pilot tested the National 4-H Sportfishing Project in 16 counties across the state on 1999. Idaho offered it as a statewide project in 2000.

The four major project areas addressed with the Idaho 4-H Sportfishing Program include:

1. Tackle crafting
2. Angling skills
3. Aquatic ecology
4. Ethics

The aquatic ecology and ethics components of the project demonstrate to the public that the project is more than just fishing. The Sportfishing Ethical Compass exercise provides an example of the core ethics educational effort. It asks participants to think about their actions beforehand with a checklist:

*Ask yourself the following questions when considering whether an action is ethical or unethical.*

### **Sportfishing Ethical Compass Questions**

1. Is the action legal?
2. Can you tell anyone the complete truth of your actions?
3. Will the action benefit the natural world?
4. Will the action benefit the tradition of fishing?
5. Would you be proud if the action was reported in your local newspaper?
6. Would you be proud if your parents (or kids) witnessed your actions?
7. Will your actions have a positive effect on others?

*If any of these Sportfishing Ethical Compass questions are answered no, the practice probably falls on the unethical side of the equation.*

### *Impact*

Analysis of the evaluation data collected from one of the pilot test counties demonstrates the following significant positive changes in the project participants:

1. Increased awareness about the importance of aquatic ecology.
2. Increased knowledge of aquatic ecology.
3. Increased ability to discern ethical from unethical practices related to sportfishing.

The bottom line is the fun of fishing is a useful “hook” to teach young people some valuable lifelong lessons about aquatic ecology and ethics. These lessons reach beyond the fishing hole and will be used in everyday life as well.

### ***For More Information***

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