

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Extension Provides Natural Resources Education for Idaho Youth Ages 12-14

The Situation

The economy of Idaho is based in its vast natural resources. Timber, minerals, rangeland, wildlife, and water all contribute greatly to the wealth and well being of Idaho, its communities, and its residents. Timber resources of North Idaho and mineral resources of the Boise Basin opened the way for the development of this great State. But times, and the way people think about the value of a resource changes with it. To one resident, a tree may only have value as it provides wood products. To another resident, the same tree may have incredible value as it stands on a mountain providing a reservoir for snow, soil stability, and a home for wildlife. Two interests, sometimes seen as competing, both correct in their own reasoning. What we do know is the population of Idaho is becoming farther removed from the land every year. Regardless of this, natural resources are still very important to the stability of Idaho.

Our Response

Many years ago, the University of Idaho along with State and Federal partners began the Natural Resources Workshop, now known as the Natural Resources Camp. The 2007 camp was the 48th annual camp. The purpose of the camp was, and still remains, to educate Idaho's youth on the value of natural resources from many different views. Wise use, conservation, and proper management of resources are the key points of the camp. Five resource areas are highlighted: Forestry, Rangeland, Soils, Water, and Wildlife. Professionals from the

Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Lands, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game, and the University of Idaho, deliver five days of intense classroom lecture and outdoor laboratory experiences to give participants a good base for understanding the complex natural resource issues facing all Idaho residents. A key goal is to help participants realize that whether they live on a farm, ranch, in a small town, or in Idaho's largest population center, these issues affect everyone. One of the culminating activities is the Big Wood Simulation Game. Campers are broken into special interest groups representing competing and conflicting interests. Other participants are assigned the job of Planning and Zoning commissioners for the Big Wood Valley. The groups prepare presentations of their special interests that they must deliver to the commissioners. The commissioners must make land use decisions based on the presentations. All participants indicate it is much harder than it seems.

Program Outcomes

Extension Specialists and Educators designed a pre-post test with questions from all the resources areas. Participants are given the test when they first arrive at camp, and then again after the camp is complete. The results are compared and awards are given for highest post-test score and most improved. The pre-test composite score was 27.24/55. The post-test composite score was 44.82/55. This equated to a 67.5% improvement in the composite score. The highest pre-test score was 38/55, while the highest

post-test score was 55/55. The most improved score was 142.1% going from a pre-test score of 19/55 to a post-test score of 46/55. The lowest individual improvement was 28%.

The Future

The goal this year as interim camp director was to bring the camp back into a good financial condition, given a starting deficit of \$2,300. When the final donations are received, the camp should be around \$500 in the black. The directorship will be handed back to the new University of Idaho Soils Specialist for 2008. Our goal will be to increase camper numbers back to historic levels of 80-90. We will also look for additional external funding for the camp. The camp has survived 48 years as a unique learning and premier camping opportunity for youth of Idaho. We will strive to see this camp celebrate its 50th anniversary and more importantly, to see that this type of learning opportunity is continued for our young people. Idaho's natural resources are too important for our youth to lack the necessary education to protect them.

For More Information

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