

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Clearwater County Forest and Natural Resources Tour Educates 6th Graders and Teachers

The Situation

Clearwater County is comprised of over 1.6 million acres, of which 91% is forested (Clearwater County Comprehensive Land Use Plan). The area is famous for its diverse topography of mountains, prairies, river valleys, wildlife, and forests. A diverse, but dwindling business base of forest products, agriculture, and tourism is a reflection of the variety of natural resources in the area.

The population of the Clearwater Basin area represents a growing diversity of cultural and geographical backgrounds. Many residents, whether new to the area or employed in other industries, may be unfamiliar with the natural resource-based enterprises upon which the area economy is built. This unfamiliarity often leads to misunderstandings and friction regarding best management practices (BMP's) and natural resource issues.

Our Response

An educational program (in the form of a three-day, two-night tour) relative to the natural resource-based industries was started in 1961. This program was presented in such a way as to help youth better understand natural resource issues and natural

"I want to thank the Sixth Grade Forestry Tour Organization for letting me attend this great tour. I had lots of fun and hope that you will allow other kids to participate and just as much fun as I had. Thank you again for including me." Ian Barrett, 6th grade student who attended the 2007 Clearwater County 6th Grade Forestry Tour.

resource uses. This year the educational program on forestry and natural resources was targeted toward youth just completing the sixth grade, and all school teachers interested in natural resources. The desired effect was to provide both with a balanced view of the importance and impact of natural resource-based industries on their lives and environment.



The tour is sponsored entirely by monetary contributions from local businesses and industry. Participants attend at no cost. The Clearwater County Extension Educator coordinates the tour. Presentations are made by personnel from the

following agencies: UI Cooperative Extension; US Forest Service; US Army Corps of Engineers; Idaho Department of Lands, Potlatch Corporation; Clearwater-Potlatch Timber Protection Association; Idaho Department of Fish and Game; USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service; Idaho Soil Conservation Commission; Nez Perce Tribe; US Fish and Wildlife Service; Lolo Trail Muzzle Loaders Club; and Northwest Management Timber Consultants. Dutch oven cooking is provided by the Sam's family of teachers from Kamiah, ID.



Program Outcomes

To date, over four thousand sixth graders have participated in the tour. It has evolved from a simple logging operations one-day tour into a three-day, two-night natural resources tour focusing on all aspects of forestry, wildlife, water quality, and natural resources. In 1998, the tour received teacher certification credit status through the University of Idaho for two credits (AgEd 503). Since 1998, 364 sixth graders, 13 bus drivers, 82 teen leaders, and 22 adult chaperones have attended the tour. Over 60 teachers have attended the tour for UI credits. All participants fill out evaluations. In 2007, 97% of attendees said they learned something about forestry. Evaluations indicated that there was a 62% increase in natural resource knowledge. The tour remains a highlight of the youth's sixth grade school year. Some teachers have returned a second year just to be a chaperone.

The Future

The tour will continue to be an annual event. It is anticipated that many schoolteachers in Clearwater County (and surrounding counties) will attend the tour in the future as awareness increases. This will equip teachers/educators with additional knowledge to teach and address natural resource issues. Teachers who have attended the tour will be surveyed in the future to assess any increased natural resource skills in the classroom. Those results will be available soon.



For More Information

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