

IMPACT

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Extension

Northern District

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IDAH₂O and 4-H Urban Interface increase natural resources education offerings

AT A GLANCE

4-H Urban Interface, a new natural resources education program, helps meet education needs of underserved urban youth by facilitating impactful science activities.

The Situation

Throughout Idaho there is a common misperception that 4-H is all about raising plants and farm animals, cooking, or crafting. While these outstanding educational opportunities remain strong and well-loved throughout Idaho's rural areas, many urban and in-town youth feel excluded from these activities, or at least find them difficult to access. As an example, Kootenai County's 4-H program is one of the largest in the state, but there are no clubs within the Coeur d'Alene city limits. In addition, after school programs struggle to find enough science-based enrichment activities to keep students engaged throughout the year and learning beyond the classroom.

Our Response

Extension's IDAH₂O Water Quality Outreach program teamed up with the Idaho statewide 4-H Science Program to develop a new framework, called Urban Interface. Our goal is to provide greater opportunities to engage urban youth. An AmeriCorps Facilitation Coach is assigned in each of four regions throughout Idaho to develop the program and assessment strategies. The focus is learning about natural resources science, and is expandable into many science related categories. In addition to providing youth with new, exciting 4-H opportunities, Urban Interface will meet multiple University of Idaho goals as a land grant university and 4-H goals of recruiting new members and leaders. IDAH₂O



Youth at the Central Idaho 4-H Natural Resources Camp explore hydrology with IDAH₂O's mobile stream table. Photo by Jim Ekins.

Director, Jim Ekins, is supervising the N. Idaho AmeriCorps Facilitation Coach, Jennifer Bokma. For IDAH₂O, it's a natural fit; the program is well-networked with educators and after school administrators, and focuses on developing and delivering watershed science education opportunities in schools and after school enrichment programs.

Program Outcomes

Youth will apply the traditional 4-H mission to reach the Head, Heart, Hands and Health objectives while creating their own specific project goals related to the Natural and Environmental Science Curriculum. Youth will have a greater understanding of the natural environment, what a scientist does, and will complete a project to be entered and judged in the North Idaho Fair. This program will be replicable in the 5 Northern Counties and can include a much wider set of curriculum and levels of learning. Urban Interface will recruit more 4-H members and leaders within

urban areas. Urban Interface will help kids and adults to explore the natural world everywhere, from the backyard, to the local park and beyond, and it provides a framework to actively access experts in the field to add additional depth and relevance to the educational activities.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

This program could not happen without the support of the cooperation from many county 4-H programs, especially Kootenai County. The Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute's AmeriCorps program provides administrative support the three regional 4-H Natural Resources Facilitation Coach positions. The program started with the statewide 4-H Science Program office, a brainchild of Tim Ewers, Youth Development Specialist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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