

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Understanding climate change and its potential impacts to rural landowners

AT A GLANCE

Information on climate change and how it will impact local ecosystems will help landowners and managers adapt.

The Situation

The topic of climate change is one that is well known by the public given its coverage by the media, and prominence in national policy debates and international agreements. However, the media sources rarely provide background information on the underlying science, the uncertainties or the history of climate change to give the public a deeper understanding of its implications. In addition, there is seldom a discussion of the effects of climate change on a particular region or locality, not only in terms of expected changes in local climate, but the potential changes to local vegetation, ecosystems, natural resource industries and agriculture.

Providing some of the latest science to landowners and natural resource managers can assist them not only with acquiring a better understanding of the topic to inform their participation in public policy discussions, but also give them direction on how they might adjust their management, and plan for the future, given the exigencies of climate change for their geographic area.

As adaptation will be one of the major ways humans deal with climate change, providing the information to landowners and managers to help them adapt successfully to anticipated changes will help make our



Droughts are increasing in frequency and severity in some regions.

communities and ecosystems more resilient to anticipated changes.

Our Response

In the 2019 UI Extension programming year two programs on climate change were created and delivered. The programs were Current Topics of Farm and Forest Health: Climate Change delivered in December of 2018 in Orofino, and Anticipated Effects of Climate Change on Forests and Other Ecosystems in North Central Idaho and the Region delivered in June of 2019 also in Orofino. The combined curriculum for these two programs included an introduction to the issue of climate change globally including a discussion of paleoclimatology, earth history, and past changes to local ecosystems and plant communities (Bill Warren, UI

Extension). These introductions were followed by a series of presentations on effects expected from climate change on specific resources including pest pressure on dryland crops (Doug Finkelnburg, UI Extension), tree mortality from forest insects to native conifer forests (Erika Eidson, Idaho Department of Lands), impacts to cattle operations and grazing systems (Shannon Neibergs, WSU Extension), the spread of invasive plants (Tim Prather, UI Extension) and native ecosystems and the natural resources they provide (Bill Warren, UI Extension).

Program Outcomes

Fifty-five people attended the two programs, representing almost 12,000 acres of land. Attendees reported an average 38-40 percent gain in knowledge, and over 90 percent stated that they would, or probably would, be able to use or implement the knowledge gained. Over 90 percent reported that the programs were a good way for them to learn the content.

We are currently in the process of conducting a telephone survey of attendees of the two programs to determine whether, and how, the programs changed their understanding of climate changes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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