



David Little Livestock Range Management Endowment

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

2020 Project Progress Report:

Increasing Rangeland Awareness Among Idaho High School Students

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PRELIMINARY RESULTS for 2020:

BACKGROUND:

There are not enough graduates to fill positions in Rangeland Conservation in the West. The major reason for low student enrollment given by University rangeland programs is poor awareness of rangelands and range science among students and high school teachers and counselors (Schacht and McInnis 2003). This sentiment was confirmed at the University of Idaho in the fall of 2018 when 90 students in the NR101 “Exploring Natural Resources” class, which includes new students from all majors in the College of Natural Resources, were asked why they did NOT pursue a rangeland degree. Over half of the students (52%) selected “I don’t know much about what rangeland conservationists do” from a list of potential reasons for not seeking a range degree.

Increasing awareness of high school students and teachers about rangelands and rangeland management is the first step to increasing the number of students graduating from universities prepared to enter rangeland professions. About 20 years ago, the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission, UI rangeland faculty, and agricultural educators in Idaho began developing curricula and programs to address the paucity of information about rangelands in Idaho high schools. A mile post of this journey was the creation of the [Western National Rangeland Career Development Event](#) (CDE) for FFA students in 2010 which provided an opportunity for teams from Idaho, Nevada, and Utah to show their expertise in a regional setting after winning their state events. The CDE was later expanded with participation by teams from Wyoming and Washington. In rangeland CDEs students compete for awards by learning to identify up to 81 common rangeland plants, measuring vegetation attributes for livestock and wildlife habitat, calculating an appropriate stocking rate, considering grazing management options and estimating the cost of habitat improvements.

HYPOTHESIS or OBJECTIVES:

The Idaho FFA Rangeland CDE and the Western National CDE continue at a steady rate. But these events have not effectively increased the number of students seeking rangeland degrees and careers. We believe a few small interventions will increase the value of rangeland CDEs to encourage students to consider rangeland degrees: 1) Increase participation of students and teams in the Idaho and Western National CDEs; 2) Revise event materials to more overtly discuss rangeland degrees and career opportunities.

Curry (2015) examined CDE participation in secondary students and concluded that students who felt prepared to undertake the tasks in a CDE area were more likely to enroll in a related major at the postsecondary level. Increased professional development for teachers is one of the best ways to increase student awareness of agricultural topics, as

teachers are more likely to form CDE teams and expose students to concepts in class when resources are available (Harris, 2008).

The objective of this project was to develop video resources to pair with the components of the Western National Rangeland Career Development Event and the associated state FFA Rangeland Evaluation CDEs.

PROCEDURES:

Timeline	Activity
Spring 2020	Dr. Launchbaugh partnered with Dr. Smith and Katie Gerwig, an undergraduate student in the Agricultural Science, Communications and Leadership major to develop video outlines and resource planning.
Early summer 2020	Raw video footage was taken by Dr. Launchbaugh and Katie at a location in Northern Idaho. Raw video footage aligned with the pre-developed outlines and included components related to set up and completion of the components of the Western National Rangeland CDE.
July 28-29, 2020	Preliminary videos were edited and prepared for inclusion in the virtual Rangeland Assessment CDE teacher professional development workshop coordinated through the University of Idaho and Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission. Feedback was collected from participants in that professional development experience.
August-October 2020	Feedback from professional development participants was reviewed and videos were modified and adjusted with suggestions for improvement. Final videos were completed and collected for upload.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS or RESULTS:

Eleven training and education videos are complete and ready for dissemination. Teachers who attended the professional development noted the usefulness and their intent to continue to use the information to expose students both in their classes and preparing for the events to concepts in Rangeland Conservation.

PUBLICATIONS or OUTPUTS:

Currently, the following video titles are complete and being uploaded for broad-scale distribution to teachers and students:

- Rangeland CDE Event Overview
- Site Description
- Plant ID Walkthrough
- Plant ID Tips & Tricks
- Biomass Calculations & Clippings
- Browse Cover Calculations
- Soil Pit Tips & Tricks
- Soil Texture Tips & Tricks
- State & Transition Model
- Similarity to Desired State
- Site Utilization

These videos in their final forms will be available on the UI Idaho Rangeland YouTube site:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRB25Bs0gle-yAUwcJOZ04w> and linked through the website for the Western National Rangeland CDE.