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Dave H

FWP Fisheries History Document

AQUATIC EDUCATION

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Montana FWP's aquatic education program can trace it's beginning's to the federal aid funding sources in the late 1980's. Project WILD and Aquatic WILD trainings were offered to teachers across the state, and gradually, demand increased for more specific water and fishing education programs.

In 1996, a formal program of Angler Education was instituted, with an FTE and permanent funding secured. Emphasis was placed upon several areas in the program, all of which centered upon removing the barriers which kept Montanans from fishing with family and friends. This effort was titled "Family Fishing Adventures".

Family Fishing Adventures included several main components, including free fishing licenses, implementation of the national program "Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs", a tackle loaner program, volunteer fishing instructors conducting youth and community fishing clinics, and easily accessible sites for families to fish together. Of these components, the Hooked on Fishing was one of the most successful, and by 1999, over 100 classrooms participated across the state. Youth and community fishing clinics also became popular, with over 10,000 participants annually, and individual clinics drawing almost 2000 parents and children in a single day.

Educational assistance was provided to schools and teachers during this time as well. Posters were developed, and were widely distributed. Poster subjects included: warm water habitat, cold water habitat, whirling disease, fish species of special concern, fish anatomy, aquatic insects, native salmonids, and fish of Montana's lakes and ponds. Project WILD and Aquatic WILD workshops and trainings continue to be offered to teachers, with nearly 400 teachers taking part annually.

FWP also sponsored a Riverwatch water monitoring program, in which schools monitored their local watersheds, and shared results with other schools across the state and nation. Cooperative agreements were entered into with Montana State University, which conducts Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), and the Federation of Fly Fishers, which conducts a wide variety of educational projects as well as operates the International Education Center in Livingston.

Other educational efforts also were utilized, including production and distribution of a Bull Trout Recovery video, aquatic and fish education trunks, and promotion of the FWP web site, Montana Outdoors Magazine articles, and press releases.

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