

Wallowa Resources – HAWK Summer Internship Program Final Report

The HS Natural Resources Internship offered through Wallowa Resources represents one of the few opportunities youth have in this county to enter into a true internship work experience that will help prepare them for the workforce. This past summer season we had a crew of 4 HS youth, up from 3 interns the previous summer, representing participation from each of our 3 schools. They were employed for a full 8 weeks, up from 6 weeks the previous year. We had a full field season this summer, with several work projects including trail maintenance, aspen fence assessment and repair, Riparian cage removal and invasive weed surveys and removal. Due to added capacity in staff and duration, we were also able to add in an immersive forest monitoring project that spanned the internship. This was in partnership with the forest service, OSU extension, and other community partners. Students were trained in forest monitoring protocols designed to assess pre-treatment forest plots in the Wallowa Whitman National Forest. This data was then added to a larger data set that is being used to help monitor forest growth and change with different treatments. In addition, we had several other educational opportunities with field professionals that served to enrich the experience. These included a field day with the water master, 2 field days with OSU extension foresters, time with rangeland managers and others. We covered a range of ecology and resource management topics including, but not limited to, endemic plant and animal ID, trophic levels and ecosystem structure, integrated weed management, watershed health and restoration, aspen conservation and ecology, water issues and conservation in the west, fire landscapes, sustainable forest management practices as well as studying and discussing the integrated and complex nature of natural resource management in the rural west for all entities. Crew members also had the opportunity to take what they learned and create educational curriculum that they then delivered to youth in our education programs. All learning and field work done throughout was reinforced through curriculum, specific articles, journal prompts and group discussion. One of the primary jobs of the crew leader is to help our guest professional in the field give context and background for the why of the work they do. They then reinforce these concepts with our crew through discussion. We believe strongly that their needs to be a relevant and real context to why we have our kids do the field work they do in order for there to be real and meaningful learning. The 8-week workplace internship was then capped off with a final presentation developed, advertised and delivered by the crew to the public. This creates a perfect opportunity in which they can share their accomplishments and learning and also reflect on where they have come from the beginning through the process of the internship. We've worked hard to turn this opportunity into something valuable and relevant to the issues facing the rural west and to youth entering the workforce. The added capacity made available by this grant helped us not only increase the number of youth served, but also allowed us to take on the added forest monitoring work to increase the experience and duration of the internship. Below is a link to a podcast created by our staff around the internship experience from last year's crew and features 2 of the interns from the program.

<https://www.wallowaresources.org/podcast>