

November 12, 2018

Student Recognized for Knowledge of Rangelands

Fifteen FFA chapters across Idaho, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming participated in the Western National Rangeland Career Development Event November 4-5.

The event is coordinated by the College of Natural Resources at the University of Idaho, the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission and members of the Idaho Section Society for Range Management. The purpose of this event was to raise awareness of high school students about rangelands and career opportunities in rangeland conservation.

Rangeland comprise nearly half of the earth's land surface and western North America, making their proper use and management vitally important to communities and economies nationally and internationally. However, the current number of graduates with rangeland degrees each year falls far short of meeting the demand for qualified rangeland management specialists.

"There are far more jobs that students who graduate from universities with range degrees. This is a great profession and we want to get the word out to students who want to work outside and manage wildlife, livestock, fire, and restore rangelands to conserve these lands for future generations," said Dr. Karen Launchbaugh, rangeland professor at the University of Idaho.

In this event, students demonstrated their knowledge of rangeland principles, proved their skill in assessing rangelands and learned about career opportunities in the rangeland profession. Students competed for awards by learning to identify 75 common western rangeland plants, measuring vegetation attributes for livestock and wildlife habitat, and making management recommendations for an appropriate stocking rate, suggesting grazing management options and implementing habitat improvements.

"The field event is designed to mimic standards commonly used in the rangeland management profession, so students get hands-on experience with skills and scenarios they may encounter later as working professionals," said Dr. April Hulet, rangeland extension specialist at the University of Idaho.

Plaques were awarded to high achieving individuals and teams. Top individuals were Anthony Ramirez – Southeast FFA, Wyoming (5th), Kinley Whitmarsh – Hagerman FFA, Idaho (4th), Morgan Thomas – Rigby FFA, Idagi (3rd), and Lindey Smith – Silver Sage FFA, Nevada (2nd). 1st High Individual or "Top Hand" received a plaque, and a custom-made belt buckle, was Jacob Flick from the Gooding FFA Chapter, Idaho. The top teams were from Hagerman, ID (3rd), Yoder, WY (2nd), and first place team was the Silver Sage FFA Chapter from Spring Creek, NV.

Several rangeland management professionals trained students on how the skills they have learned are put into practice in the real world. Representatives from several natural resource management agencies and organizations, including the BLM, Forest Service, and Natural Resource Conservation Service, described their job duties of rangeland professionals. Universities offering rangeland degrees, including the University of Idaho, University of Wyoming, Utah State University, Brigham Young University-Idaho and the University of Nevada-Reno, helped students explore degrees after high school that lead to careers on the range.