

FFA Students Show Rangeland Knowledge at Western National Event

Sixteen FFA chapters and 73 high school students from across Idaho, Nevada, Utah and Washington tested their knowledge of rangeland management in the Western National Rangeland Career Development Event, November 8 & 9 on rangelands near Baker City, OR. The event was coordinated by the Western National Rangeland Education Association dedicated to raising awareness of career opportunities in rangeland conservation and management. Sponsors of the event included the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission, the Baker County Fair Board and the College of Natural Resources at the University of Idaho.



“This career event helps students learn about rangeland and give them the opportunity to gain skills used by rangeland professionals across the west.” said Dr. Karen Launchbaugh, Director of the University of Idaho Rangeland Center. Rangelands comprise nearly half of western North America, making their proper use and management vitally important to communities and economies in western states.

Students competed for awards by learning to identify 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. “The event really prepares students with rangeland skills including real world math,” noted Emily Hale, a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employee who assisted the team from Omak, WA.

Mindy McAllister, Director of Recruitment for the College of Natural Resources at the University of Idaho said, “There are far more jobs than students who graduate with rangeland degrees. This is a great profession, and we want to identify students who want to work outside to manage these lands for wildlife, livestock, or to restore rangelands and manage fuel loads to reduce wildfire risk.”

FFA member, Carolina Johnson, from Wells, NV was named “Top Hand” taking first place and winning the coveted silver buckle. Other top individuals included Saree Hillstead – Hagerman, ID (2nd), Tate Goble – Salina, UT (3rd), Kami Bower – American Falls, ID (4th), and Kali Stroshane – Omak, WA (5th). Team awards recognized Wells FFA, NV (1st Place), Rockland FFA, ID (2nd Place), and Hagerman FFA, ID (3rd Place). Top Rookie team from American Falls, ID was also recognized.