

# Undergraduates Gone WILD

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## NEED FOR INNOVATION

- Previous research has shown the importance of wildlife and environmental education and training for educators (Anderson et al, 2003; James & Williams, 2017).
- There has also been an evident lack of appropriate training for wildlife educators, especially at the K-12 level (Bleich & Oehler, 2000; Campbell et al., 2005).
- A review of agriculture teacher certification degree programs reveals that very few include wildlife ecology or habitat management courses; yet, high school agriculture teachers are increasingly expected to teach these topics and train wildlife teams.
- Research has suggested that a lack of scientific literacy could be due to the science taught our schools lacking relevant context for students to apply learned skills (Smith & Rayfield, 2017).

## HOW IT WORKS

- Four-day training at a local 7,500-acre wildlife refuge.
- Hands-on wildlife labs (small mammal capture, deer census, track & scat ID) lecture and project-based learning (Project/Aquatic WILD certification).
- This is led by university faculty in agricultural education & wildlife, rangeland extension experts and ecology educators.
- Late Fall and early Summer, each year
- Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide
- Students who participate in this training are then offered the opportunity to lead a day long (6 hr) training at state teachers conference.



## RESULTS TO DATE

- Over the past two years, the training engaged over 225 current students and teachers.
- Teachers have responded positively based upon post-workshop surveys
- Teachers appreciated the focus on WILD in connection with the state agriculture curriculum standards.
- The development of unit plans, hands-on labs that could easily be applied at their campuses and team-based approach were some of the highlighted positive aspects of the workshops.

## FUTURE PLANS AND ADVICE TO OTHERS

- It is recommended that those who wish to host similar programs work with students to develop appropriate assessments and include ways to modify the lessons to fit agricultural science teachers especially (ex: modify WILD activity *Adaptation Artistry* to fit cattle breeds).
- Organization and time management are especially important, as these activities can get quite involved and keep participants engaged well beyond the time limits of the training.
- Our goal is to continue this program; either through further grant support or as a pay-to-play based program.



## COSTS & RESOURCES NEEDED

- This project was funded as part of the USDA-PDAL Grant #2018-06065: *Beyond WILD*.
- The lodging, meals & educational materials at Welder Wildlife Refuge cost \$10-\$12K
- The project WILD & Aquatic WILD curriculum costs \$75 per participant.

