Assessment of Cache County Natural Resource Field Days

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Dates: Sept 2009-May 2010
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Description of Natural Resource Field Days:

- This program began over 30 years ago to introduce students to the natural resources in Cache Valley.

- Every fall, approximately 1500 students and their teachers from Cache County and Logan City School District spend a day at the Guinevah-Malibu campground in Logan Canyon learning about water quality, plants, soils and wildlife.

- All activities are correlated to the fourth grade core and teachers are provided lesson plans and other information from the day’s activities.

- Professionals from USU Water Quality Extension, Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Hardware Ranch, Cache County Extension, and the Utah Association of Conservation Districts volunteer their time to provide hands-on educational activities for your students.

- USU students from the College of Natural Resources and the School of Teacher Education and Leadership also volunteer time and gain experience teaching in an outdoor setting.

- Bussing for Natural Resource Field Days is funded through various organizations. In 2011, the following organizations donated funds towards bussing costs (total cost was $4,094)
  - USU College of Natural Resources - $500
  - Blacksmith Fork Conservation District - $500
  - North Cache Conservation District - $500
  - Campbell Scientific - $200
Research objectives:

1. To determine whether students participating in the Water Station activities at Natural Resource Field Days (NR Days) gain knowledge and/or have a change in attitude about the environment.

2. To determine if activities such as associated classroom lessons or additional field trips promote learning.

Approach:

Before and after testing of the 1500 students from Cache County and Logan City School Districts who participated in the event in 2009. Selected classrooms received additional classroom activities before and after Natural Resource Field Days or participated in a 2nd field experience.

Significant results:

- Students who participated in NR Days showed a significant increase in knowledge 2 weeks after the event.
- Students were able to retain most information learned 8 months after participating in NR Days.
- Enhancing NR Days with classroom lessons immediately before and after NR Days led to a significantly higher increase in student knowledge both 2 weeks and 8 months after the event.
- Enhancing NR Days with a 2nd field experience in the spring led to complete knowledge retention 8 months after NR Days.
- Students who participated in NR Days exhibited an increase in environmental awareness after the event.
- Teachers consistently indicated the value of NR Days as a tool to introduce the science curriculum for the year and refer back to the experience throughout the year.
- Teachers consistently indicated that NR Days aligns with the fourth grade science core curriculum.

In summary, Natural Resource Field Days provides a valuable educational experience for students and serves as a teaching tool for teachers throughout the year.