

# **NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Local Students Participate in Wilderness Skills Trail Program**

Most kids in northern Idaho grow up recreating on National Forest lands and wilderness areas, and for many of them, it becomes a life-long passion. Of the more than 4 million acres of congressionally designated wilderness in Idaho, 4 of the 6 areas in Idaho that encompass 3.6 million acres, are literally right out the students' backdoors. The Selway Bitterroot, Gospel Hump, Frank Church-River of No Return and Hell's Canyon wilderness areas are loaded with opportunities for kid-friendly recreation including: backpacking, rafting, horseback riding, hunting and fishing. The Wilderness Skills Trail Program, offered jointly by the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests, is meant to introduce students to these local wilderness areas and "Leave No Trace" camping skills.

Developed in the early 1990s, the Wilderness Skills Trail education program was designed for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The program takes approximately two hours and consists of 10 stations. "Each station offers a hands-on activity or game to emphasize how kids can minimize the impact they have on natural resources while enjoying the outdoors," said Kearstin Edwards, a wilderness ranger from the Selway Bitterroot, who coordinates the program. Students learn about trip planning, campsite selection, low-impact techniques for camping with horses and mules, backcountry sanitation, and ways to minimize the impact of campfires.

Last week, as classes came to a close for the season, over eighty elementary students from Grangeville and Craigmont visited the Forest Service's traveling Wilderness Skills Trail. For more information, or to schedule a program for a youth group in your area, contact Kearstin Edwards at the Powell Ranger Station, Lolo, MT 59847 or call (208) 942-3113.

2008 Wilderness Skills Trail: Newsrelease Photos w/ cutlines



Grangeville students meet “Brutus, the burdened backpacker,” and discuss lightweight camping equipment and trip preparation checklists.



Students get hands-on practice with a water filter and learn proper sanitation skills to use in the backcountry.



To keep their food safe from animals, students test their throwing arms and their imaginations; using a basketball hoop to simulate setting up a food hang in a tall tree.