



July 2003

Yellowstone National Park Education: Camp Wildness - Living with Fire



Using Wildland Urban Interface funds, Yellowstone National Park piloted its high school field camp, Camp Wildness: Living with Fire, June 25, 2003 through July 24, 2003, in Silver Gate, Montana, near the park's Northeast entrance. The pilot represented a partnership between the National Park Service, the University of Idaho-Upward Bound Math-Science Program, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Yellowstone Association.

Using the newly drafted 300-page *Camp Wildness* curriculum, field camp instructors taught students about fire behavior, fire ecology, fire management, the history of fire in Yellowstone National Park, and the concept of Firewise. In preparation for their fieldwork, students learned how to read topographic maps, how to use compasses, and how to take global positioning system readings. In the field, the students and their instructors joined Yellowstone National Park Fire Effects Crew to collect fire data. During the summers of 2000, 2001, and 2002, fires burned through areas that had burned in 1988. Their research aided in the creation of a fuel model that can be used to predict fire behavior in early post-disturbance forest areas of Yellowstone.

A major component of Camp Wildness pilot was community service. Kari Vannice, with the US Forest Service-Gallatin National Forest, was instrumental in helping the National Park Service plan the Firewise component of the camp's curriculum. She also worked directly with the high school students and park staff to schedule and conduct Firewise assessments in the Silver Gate/Cooke City communities. Throughout the camp, students assessed private properties and suggested actions to improve fire safety levels. Students implemented their own suggestions at the Whispering Pines Cabins and used that facility as a model at the camp's open house.

Some of the highlights during the month-long program included:

July 21, 2003, high school field camp students presented their fire science projects to a group of younger students attending a summer day camp program (ParKids). Attendees were from the park's gateway communities. All presentations were hands-on and allowed the younger children to use tools involved in fire research.

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On July 22, 2003, high school field camp students hosted an open house attended by forty park neighbors. Working in pairs, the students designed and staffed a variety of learning stations and shared their knowledge and skills in the areas of fire suppression, fire ecology, fire effects, and fire management. The high school students demonstrated remarkable maturity, knowledge, and professionalism when responding to controversial questions and comments.

July 31 to August 3, high school field camp students taught fire ecology and management to fifty other Upward Bound Math and Science students during their three-day Yellowstone field trip.

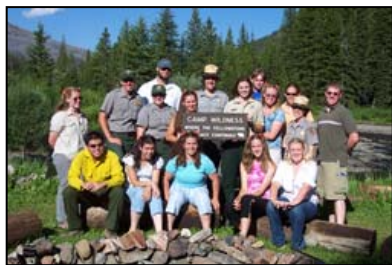
On August 11, Park Superintendent Susanne Lewis hosted a Camp Wildness luncheon at her home to allow the park's Formal Education staff the opportunity to present a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the pilot's success stories. Park partners attended the luncheon.



Twelve high school field camp students and two college interns volunteered a total of 2,400 hours. These hours included fire studies/training, fire research work, and Firewise assessments. Seventeen Yellowstone National Park employees provided 180 hours of instruction and/or research/service facilitation. Fourteen teachers developed lesson plans for the field camp. Four park neighbors offered their expertise at campfire programs. More than fifty local residents attended the field camp's town meeting and open house. High school field camp students taught fire ecology and fire management to two other sets of students—nearly twenty ParKids and their parents and fifty Upward Bound Math and Science students.

The WUI budget for Camp Wildness totaled \$30,000. Of that \$4,200 provided lodging for field camp participants and interns. Through the competitive bidding process, the National Park Service awarded the lodging contract to Henry Finbeinder. Outside a few teaching supplies for the camp, the remaining WUI funds were used to hire four seasonal employees (Nick Myers, Molly Ward, MacNeil Lyons, and Sally Plumb) to develop, plan, coordinate, and instruct Camp Wildness.

The University of Idaho—Upward Bound Math and Science Program recruited the students for the Northwest region and provided transportation, meals, pre/post instruction, and supervision during evening recreational activities and week-end educational fieldtrips. Key staff included Jim Biesel, Nancy Orme, and Joel Lampert.



The Yellowstone Association awarded the park \$31,403 to develop a 300+ page high school field camp curriculum. The US Forest Service provided Firewise training and facilitation of assessments. Park neighbors --an artist, a historian, a writer, and a business owner—conducted educational campfires. Neighbors also offered their properties for Firewise assessments. Parks as Classroom funds (\$25,000) were used to include secondary teachers in the development lesson plans for Camp Wildness.

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The park's Wildland Fire Branch, Formal Education Branch, and the Yellowstone Center for Resources provided instruction, research facilitation, and guidance for community service. In addition to the four staff members who were hired with WUI funds, the following Yellowstone staff were instrumental in making the field camp a success: Eric Miller, Sean McEldery, Becky Seifert, and Shawn Jackson (Fire Effects Crew); Phil Perkins (Wildland Fire Manager); Roy Renkins (Vegetation Specialist); Janet Ambrose and Bob Fuhrmann (Formal Education Branch); Lee Whilesey (Park Historian); Adam Kiel and Mike Walkinshaw (GIS Lab); Ron Black (Fire Lookout Mount Washburn); Rosemary Sucec (Cultural Anthropologist); and Wayne Wolfersberger (Division of Interpretation).

Working with Yellowstone National Park Service staff, the University of Idaho and the University of Montana are presently planning several two-week field camps for FY 2004. If WUI funds are received in 2004, the field camps will include more than one hundred students in fire science projects and research.

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