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Preparing Tomorrow's Natural Resource Educators

Edward C. Jensen¹ and Michael S. Ahr²

Whenever natural resource professionals discuss the future, issues arise to which “education” is the answer. Resource managers and policy makers need to understand more about new scientific discoveries; the public needs to understand more about management principles; teachers need to understand more fundamental natural resource science; youth need to understand more about where raw materials come from. It seems that someone always needs to know more about something to make better decisions.

But who will conduct this education? Natural resource professionals often head willingly into the fray, but their time is limited, as is their understanding of appropriate education methods. Teachers and public affairs specialists typically have good education and communication skills, but often lack a detailed understanding of natural resource science and management techniques.

For the past decade, Oregon State University has offered an MS degree in “Natural Resources Education and Extension” to help prepare students who want to bridge this gap between those who know and those who need to know. Coursework is split between natural resources and education/communication. Typical theses and projects require students to identify an audience with an educational need and to design an educational program to meet that need.

In this presentation, we'll discuss how this program works, give examples of typical projects, and discuss job opportunities. We'll also solicit feedback from members of the audience who offer similar programs and ask how this idea translates into a PhD program.

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