

NAE4-HA Specialty Award
Excellence in Natural Resources/Environmental Education
Individual Award

Wasco County 4-H offers several ways for youth in grades K-12 to participate in 4-H programming focused on natural resources and environmental education. Opportunities include day camps focusing on renewable energy, horticulture, entomology, fishing, outdoor education and naturally occurring phenomena (such as volcanoes, earthquakes, rock formation); residential camps, outdoor school for 4th and 5th grade students; afterschool and in-school enrichment programming; and traditional 4-H club programming. This extensive focus on natural resources and environmental education is possible through great teamwork.

The summer camp program includes both day and residential camps. Though the theme of the residential camp changes from year to year, natural science/environmental education are always included through learning opportunities such as special classes and camp activities. An extensive summer day camp program places Wasco County 4-H in a special class. As mentioned above several topics of exploration are offered to youth including a 3 day renewable energy camp that incorporates field trips to wind farms and hydro power facilities. Youth explore wind, solar and hydro power with hands-on class-based activities and field trips. Bugs are explored through an entomology focused 3 day camp exploring insects, pollinators and decomposers through science inquiry. The wondrous world and life of plants is investigated through a 5 day horticulture based camp, the life cycle of fish and the art of fishing is explored through a 2 day angler education camp, and our amazing earth is explored through a 4 day CSI Earth camp.

The Wasco County 4-H team plans and implements a 5 day outdoor school for the students of the rural community of Maupin to explore their environment through a camp experience. The long-term goal of the program is for youth to develop the skills and knowledge needed to become effective stewards of the environment. The outdoor school program is working toward achieving that goal through interesting and engaging interactive learning in an outdoor setting.

Natural resources and environmental education topics are explored through our afterschool and in-school enrichment programs also. Youth explore these topics in a rather unique way – through Lego™ Robotics. Students in the technology afterschool program build and program Lego Mindstorm NXT robots with solar and wind powered sensors. They use these sensors to collect information and record data on energy harnessed. Other sensors used are pH, soil and moisture sensors. These are incorporated into gardening and sustainability topics as well as renewable energy and natural science topics. In addition, Wasco County 4-H also reaches youth through the implementation of the National 4-H Science Experiment in The Dalles Middle School's science classes (as well as our afterschool programs and club programming). In addition, the Wasco County 4-H team facilitates the ability of students to explore the natural sciences through the raising of butterflies, worms, trout and salmon. Finally, the Wasco County 4-H team partners with the Master Gardeners to implement a Jr. Master Gardener program

through an elementary afterschool program. The children are transported to The Dalles Imagination Garden (a Children's Garden which is a joint venture of Wasco County 4-H and Master Gardeners) where youth explore vermiculture, composting, plant science, and worm biology.

The Wasco County 4-H works with the Oregon Fish and Wildlife, Master Gardeners, Soil and Water Conservation, Parks and Recreation, the Army Corp of Engineers and other 4-H professionals to secure experts as instructors for camp, afterschool and enrichment programs and reaches over 2800 youth annually.

Youth involved in the Wasco County 4-H programming has shown to be positive due to youth returning to the program. Youth have taken their knowledge and skills home to pass on to the rest of their family members. They have started their own gardens at home, they have gotten other youth involved and have returned to the program as teen mentors.

Lynette and Holly together plan the educational content of program, deliver programming and secure the needed expert instructors. Holly takes the lead in in-school, afterschool and some day camps. Holly plans the daily activities and implements them into the afterschool and in-class enrichment programs. She has been an excellent resource for Wasco County 4-H, as well as partners of 4-H by teaching renewable energy, natural resource management and sustainability.