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## **Wal-Mart Donation Puts McCall Outdoor Science School Curriculum on Wheels**

MCCALL, Idaho – Communities across Idaho will benefit from an enhanced mobile environmental program delivered by the University of Idaho McCall Outdoor Science School (MOSS). The Mobile Environmental Education Corps engages more than 2,500 Idaho K-12 students in challenging and interdisciplinary environmental education.

A new \$10,000 grant from the Wal-Mart Foundation will support 15 trained AmeriCorps members who will travel throughout Idaho to deliver two- to four-day programs with the goal of heightening student awareness, knowledge and commitment to their home environments.

“A partnership with Wal-Mart will ensure that MOSS can offer our innovative Mobile Environmental Education Corps to Idaho schools at prices they can afford,” said Steven Hollenhorst, MOSS director.

Outreach programs occur in classrooms and in nearby natural areas close to Wal-Mart stores in Boise, Nampa, Lewiston and Moscow. Each outreach program module is divided into four sessions. Topics include watersheds, exploring local rivers, mapping and GIS, invasive species, fire ecology, ethno-geography and landforms.

“We use the principles of inquiry and place-based education to guide content selection and best practices,” Hollenhorst said. “Through hands-on methods, students become environmental scientists and gain a love of learning and exploration, all while fulfilling state math, science and technology requirements.”

As a result of the program, Mobile Environmental Education Corps program directors expect the following outcomes:

- an increase in student engagement and motivation with higher problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration skills;

- an increase in teachers' ability to incorporate inquiry-based environmental learning into the classroom;
- at least 2,500 students served in the 2008-09 school year.

The program was created in response to a recent National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) report entitled "Understanding Environmental Literacy in America" that indicated Americans are not prepared for future of environmental stewardship.

The report stated that environmental education's best hope for the future lies in the interface between the formal school-based education systems and informal, hands-on learning opportunities.

"While our program uses a progressive educational model to ensure environmental goals are met, our curriculum appeals to Idaho schools because it fulfills critical state standards," said Hollenhorst.

"Despite the mounting evidence of the success of inquiry-based environmental education, it is not surprising that many Idaho schools do not have the time or resources to create an inquiry-based curriculum that fulfills rigorous state standards," he said. "The Mobile Environmental Education Corps program seeks to address this need and in the process, provide a model teachers can replicate."

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### **About the University of Idaho**

Founded in 1889, the University of Idaho is the state's flagship higher-education institution and its principal graduate education and research university, bringing insight and innovation to the state, the nation and the world. University researchers attract nearly \$100 million in research grants and contracts each year; the University of Idaho is the only institution in the state to earn the prestigious Carnegie Foundation ranking for high research activity. The university's student population includes first-generation college students and ethnically diverse scholars. Offering more than 150 degree options in 10 colleges, the university combines the strengths of a large university with the intimacy of small learning communities. For information, visit [www.uidaho.edu](http://www.uidaho.edu).