

## Outdoor school teaches students about watersheds

By Kevin Winter Lake County Examiner  
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Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council (LCUWC) and the Lake County Extension Office held an Outdoor School for Paisley and North Lake elementary school students.

The theme of the Outdoor School was "Not JUST Water," to show students that watersheds and watershed health are not just about water, but that ecosystems are an interrelated habitat with animals, plants, soils, and communities all interacting with and relying on each other.

Colleen Withers, program manager for LCUWC; Autumn Muir, uplands coordinator for LCUWC; Breann Vandenberg, 4-H program coordinator Lake County Extension Office; and Brandi Neider, stream and riparian coordinator for LCUWC, were all on hand to lead the students through a variety of fun and educational activities.

At both North Lake and Paisley one of the events that caught the eyes of students was the beaver dam demonstration. Neider led the demonstration and the lesson about the role beavers play in the ecosystem. She explained to the students that having beavers in the watershed makes for a healthy watershed and that without beavers making dams to slow the movement of water it can have a harmful impact on other species that rely on the water.

After Neider's demonstration and lesson, students worked in small groups to construct their own beaver dams from the information they had just learned. Neider then tested each dam and its construction by pouring a bucket of water near it.

Students then learned about the importance of healthy wildlife habitat and what kind of animals it takes to make a healthy overall environment. Muir led the students through a skull and pelt kit provided by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). The kit offers students a chance to get a hands-on feel of antlers, skulls, pelts and even droppings of wildlife found in Lake County.

For the North Lake Outdoor School, Vandenberg joined the fun and through the Lake County Extension Office led a demonstration of what a healthy watershed looks like. She used a model so students could visualize the path water takes as runoff occurs. The students learned how different bodies of water have accumulated sediment and the impact that has on the surrounding geography. One element of the lesson was modeling how pollutants travel in waterways. Vandenberg discussed ways that students can identify and minimize contamination to the water supply.

Both Withers and Vandenberg said the two outdoor schools were a success.

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