

Insights to Interior Fly Fishing & Alaskan Post-Secondary Sport Fishing Education

Notes from the presentation to the:

Alaska Outdoor Council

Fairbanks, Alaska

March 9, 2005

Given by

Shann Paul Jones

Lecturer of Outdoor Recreation

Tanana Valley Campus

University of Alaska Fairbanks

UAF SPORT FISHING REPORT #4

©2005

Abstract

After Robert Redford's release of *A River Runs Through It*, there was a marked increase in post-secondary sport fishing program offerings and enrollments at North American colleges and universities. This presentation discusses the breadth and depth of both credit and non-credit programs across the continent through a series of case studies. Each case serves as an example of a different sport fishing program category, and is discussed in terms of its goals, limitations and future prospects. The author also illustrates how this case study approach can be applied to other recreational program development.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank Jennifer Yuhas for inviting me to speak at this meeting.

Also, I would like to thank Dr. Chuck Bomar of the University of Wisconsin-Stout for his insights on the marriage between sport fishing and general education, and Ron Hulstein at the University of Alaska Southeast for offering his insights and opinions on this work.

I would also like to thank the follow people for taking the time to talk about their sport fishing programs and for reviewing sections of this presentation:

- Dave Atcheson of Kenai Peninsula College
- Marc Belden of Pennsylvania State University
- Gary Ewen of Colorado Christian University
- John Jackman of Texas A&M University
- Patricia Lowder of Northwest Mississippi Community College
- Chris McCart of Black Hills State University
- Greg Morey of Red Rocks Community College; and,
- Linda Topolie of Canadore College

Copyright © 2005 by Shann Paul Jones. This copyrighted presentation of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and its Tanana Valley Campus is meant for the private, non-commercial use of its audience. Any reproduction of the pictures, text or content of this presentation without the express written consent of UAF/TVC or the author is strictly prohibited.

Introduction

Most of the United States population has tried fishing at least one in their lives. Only 12 percent have never fished (Fedler, 2000). About 18 percent of that 82 percent tried the sport but never carried it to adulthood. Therefore, a market exists for adult sport fishing instruction. Why sport fishing is a positive contributor as a collegiate or university curriculum? (adapted from Hulstein):

- Sport fishing is a rewarding lifetime, outdoor activity that is increasing in popularity with university students across the nation.
- There are no negatives to sport fishing, only positive rewards.
- It is beneficial to all everyone whom it touches: the individual student, his/her family, friends, businesses or professional contacts.
- Anglers are supporters of wildlife, fisheries and the environment as well as proponents of clean water, fresh air and the wise use of natural resources.
- Such courses help prepare students to make responsible decisions regarding natural resource development (Madonna, 1995).
- Sport fishing is “gender neutral”; it is equally beneficial to males and females.
- It is not age specific and is suited to young and old alike.
- Fly-fishing strives to be non-consumptive, non-combative, and to teach good ethics, integrity and strength of character.
- The sport binds students together in a healthy, productive outdoor activity, which builds upon leadership and teamwork in life.

Axioms

1) To achieve long-term stability in any post-secondary program, it must address three primary user groups:

- a) *Those students wishing to graduate and move into the workforce that was portrayed in the program.*
- b) *Primary and secondary school teachers seeking professional development and enhancement of grade-specific curriculum.*
- c) *General public members seeking personal enrichment and/or shared family experiences.*

- 2) Hands-on, laboratory-based science educational experiences serve to build confidence and enthusiasm. The same can be said about any active learning experience.
- 3) Community-based science outreach and recreation classes are usually well received because the students take on a certain level of ownership in the program and their education.

Hypothesis

- 1) Non-science/outdoor studies majors non-degree seeking and/or undeclared students will have a deeper appreciation of sport fishing along with the arts and sciences behind it. This will, in time go a long way to cement the legitimacy of such angling educational programs.
- 2) Non-science majors and/or undeclared freshmen may go on to take more science or outdoor leadership courses, add minors or change majors. This is a great boost for any post-secondary institution.
- 3) Those in the general populace taking such a sport fishing course for personal enrichment will also have a deeper appreciation of sport fishing along with the arts and sciences behind it. These same people will also be more supportive of the institution because it has directly impacted their quality of life.

Objectives

- 1) To review selected North American colleges and universities offering sport fishing curriculum, and gauge the breadth and depth of those offerings.
- 2) To discover common elements of such offerings and show case studies which illustrate creative, diverse and successful sport fishing program delivery.
- 3) 3) To aid kinesiology, outdoor leadership, physical education recreation and similar educators develop new approaches that allow their departments to grow and prosper.

Investigative Methods

Prior to developing the Fundamental of Fly-fishing course at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2001, the author began researching other North American post-secondary institutions that offered fly-fishing as a credit course. What he discovered was that there were many different program durations, credit options and delivery methods. During the ensuing three years, the author found over 115 North American colleges and universities through an Internet search that offer sport fishing classes or courses (Appendix I). He reviewed the programs, and found that they mostly fell into three main categories: non-credit short courses and workshops; general education sport fishing programs; and, sport fishing classes that are link to outdoor education/leadership programs.

Out of the original 115 institutions, examined 24 were selected for intensive review based on geographic location, and amount of information readily available regarding their programs. A

short, two-page telephone questionnaire was prepared (Appendix II). The author attempted to interview instructors and/or administrators at these locales only half accommodated his requests. The compiled overviews of these 11 post-secondary programs plus UAF's follows.

NON-CREDIT SHORT COURSES OR WORKSHOPS

Kenai Peninsula College—Kenai, Alaska

The Kenai Fishing Academy (KFA), located in Soldotna, Alaska, is a fishing experience unlike any other offered in the State of Alaska. What sets them apart? Their only mission is to teach people how to be better anglers. During their one-week summer fishing schools pupils spend 20 hours in a classroom learning fishing techniques from experts. Then top Alaskan guides and instructors take them to some of the top fishing spots on the Kenai Peninsula, including the world famous Kenai River, to practice what they've learned. Given this intensive week-long fishing curriculum, it's conceivable to understand why program director Dave Atcheson calls the Kenai Fishing Academy, "The Home of the Educated Angler."

The Academy is based at the beautiful campus of Kenai Peninsula College, (KPC) located just casting distance from the Kenai River, home of the world-record king salmon. The Kenai-Soldotna area is home to 20,000 year around residents. However, the summer fishing season attracts people from all over the world. Atcheson coordinates and helps teach nine non-credit classes in the summer. For the last five years, he's taught a single, one-credit beginner's fly-fishing class during the spring term. He's averaged 12 students for this class.

KPC and University of Alaska Anchorage sponsor this Academy so students are assured the instruction is exceptional and credible. During the last two years, Atcheson has assembled and taught with a cadre of instructor including fishing guides, certified casting instructors, instructors from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Alaska State Parks, and from the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, all of whom participate as part of their job duties.

KFA believes, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day, teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime." Their hope is that students not only improve their fishing skills but learn more about the environment and the resource. When they leave KFA, students take home something even better than fish—the knowledge of how to fish in the future. Whether it's salmon, halibut, rainbow trout, or even grayling, students learn more in a week than they would doing it on they own for five years. They have become "Educated Anglers." For KFA instructors who live, fish and work on the Kenai Peninsula, there is one refrain they hear all summer. "I've been coming to the Peninsula for five years and I still haven't caught a King!" While they won't guarantee students will all catch a king salmon (after all this is called fishing, not catching), they will leave with the knowledge of instructors and guides who have hundreds of combined years of fishing experience in Alaska. Atcheson claims, "Give us one week and you'll be on your way to successful Alaskan trips in the future-an educated angler."

During the summer classes, up to 16 students spend four half days in the classroom, learning just about everything there is to know about salmon, halibut and trout (the fly-fishing class will focus on salmon, trout and Dolly Varden). During this non-credit program, KFA's staff covers fish characteristics, lure selection, casting techniques, and other angling skills. Pupils

learn about the history of the waters they'll fish, their biology, how to deal with Alaskan wildlife, bears when they try to share the catch, and how to filet, smoke, can and freeze the catch. Fly-fishermen learn casting techniques from some of the top casting pros in Alaska, and get to tie some flies that work particularly well in this area.

For the afternoons and evenings students head out to fish the Kenai or Kasilof Rivers (or both, depending upon where the fish are) and fly-in to secret, remote areas to fish for salmon, rainbows and/or grayling. This is when they try out what they've learned, but there is an instructor close by giving advice. The last day(s) culminate with either an all-day saltwater salmon/halibut charter in Cook Inlet or an all-day upper Kenai River drift boat fishing adventure.

Putting together such a comprehensive summer program takes a lot of work. Atcheson cites coordinating all the instructors, housing, guides, etc., as his major challenges. Also, getting the word out that they even exist, especially with a limited budget has become an issue. He hopes to continue a high-quality program that emphasizes regard for the environment and the resource, and would like to add some other outdoor education programs for the summer such as an Outdoor Photography workshop, perhaps canoeing and kayaking and/or natural history classes.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION SPORT FISHING COURSES

University of Alaska Southeast—Juneau, Alaska

The University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) not only offers sport fishing as a physical education course, it is offered as part of its Outdoor Leadership program. This Land and Sea-Grant Institution located in Alaska's capitol city has about 2,000 students with another 2,000 split between two satellite campuses in Sitka and Ketchikan.

For the past three years, Ron Hulstein has taught Fly Tying, Fly Casting, Fly Fishing, a two-credit course offered in the summer and fall terms. The course is cross listed as "ODS 193" and "PE 193" It is one of a group of "Skills Courses" from which students enrolled in UAS's Outdoor Skills and Leadership (OSL) program must take at least 12 credit of the 34 required to receive their one-year certification. It should also be noted that the Sitka UAS campus offers weekend workshop in both fly tying and fly-fishing.

UAS's offers the OSL program in cooperation with the National Forest Service. This is a nine-month intensive humanities program designed to develop skills and characteristics essential to success as an individual, group member and leader in outdoor and adventure settings. OSL incorporates outdoor risk management, leadership skills, specific outdoor activity skills (such as rock and ice climbing, kayaking, skiing, camping, fly fishing), and academic work in areas such as Alaska history, science, philosophy, and communication. Both outdoor and academic courses are designed to develop not only knowledge but also personal traits such as self-reliance and good judgment. Students completing the program have the knowledge and skills to plan and manage a variety of outdoor experiences, and are well qualified for entry-level positions in the outdoor industry.

Hulstein says he caps enrollment in each class at 10 students in order to maintain the highest quality educational experience for the students. Into each of his 37.5-hour classes, he tries to instill a love of fly-fishing, the thrill of catching fish on flies that students make, and the opportunity of acquiring a lifetime activity.

Juneau is very much a sport fishing town. Hulstein has worked with the local fly-fishing club (Raincountry Fly Fishers) and shops in getting people to help out in his UAS with casting technique. He works with the local 4-H outdoor skills club by presenting fly casting and fly tying. This collaboration extends to the northwest into Yakutat where Hulstein has led steelhead fishing trips to the Situk River with UAS students. During these trips the Forest Service gave free use of a public cabin in exchange for public service where the students cleaned up the campgrounds, cut and split firewood, and picked up garbage down the Situk River.

The UAS administration has been very supportive of Hulstein's efforts. He also reports that he uses his field trips and excursions as a chance to go to rural Alaskan communities (Angoon and Yakutat) and recruit students by doing fly tying demonstrations of local flies and making Alaska fly earrings. Hulstein also has plans for the future of the UAS sport fishing program to include offering the Intermediate Fly Tying, Fly Casting, Fly Fishing class during spring terms, and developing an advanced course with extended trips to Yakutat and the Situk River.

Sheldon Jackson College—Sitka, Alaska

The University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) not only offers sport fishing as a physical education course, it is offered as part of its Outdoor Leadership program. This Land and Sea-Grant Institution located in Alaska's capitol city has about 2,000 students with another 2,000 split between two satellite campuses in Sitka and Ketchikan.

Offers the class, Fundamentals of Fly-fishing. Not regularly offered in the fall. Part of ODS program.

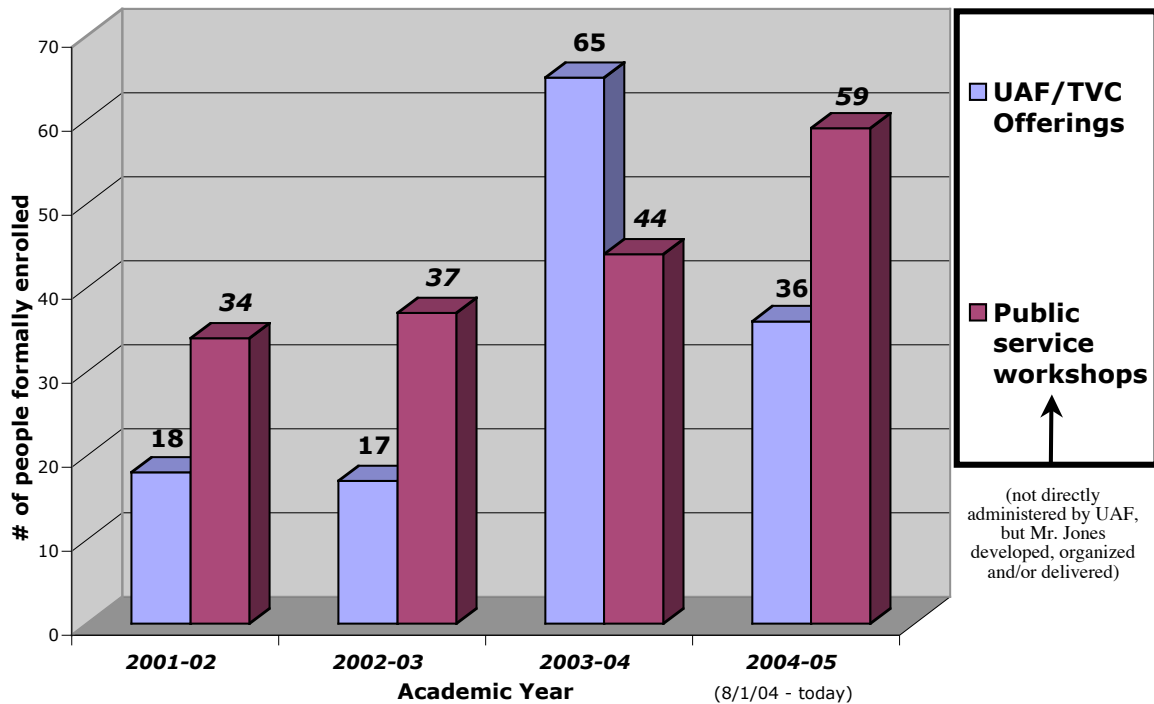
OUTDOOR EDUCATION SPORT FISHING COURSES

University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)

UAF's sport fishing program has attempted to combine positive elements of teaching, service and research. Shann Jones went to Jackie Hendrix, then the UAF Summer Session director with his dream for a Fundamentals of Fly-fishing class in 2001. Then only budget he received was from students' fees. He was told he had one year to put 14 students in the class. One of the most significant program development steps taken to overcome this challenge was to offer public service short courses and workshops through the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Community After School Program. This allowed the instructor to try out various teaching techniques and field sites before putting them into the UAF course.

After two summers, the sport fishing program was relocated to the UAF College of Liberal Arts and expanded to the Fall and Spring semesters with a second class Introductory Fly Casting & Fly Tying added. In fall 2004, the program was moved to UAF's Tanana Valley Campus and a third for-credit class, Intermediate Fly-fishing and Tying was offered. Despite having four different department heads during the past four academic years, Mr. Jones has steadily grown the program's enrollments (see next page):

Shann Jones' UAF Outdoor Education Enrollment Growth



Jones does have some advantages that his colleagues in the Lower 48 envy:

- a. A lake on the UAF campus which is stocked with 1,000 rainbow trout three times annually by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Ballaine Lake)
- b. He has a river that flows through the middle of downtown Fairbanks chocked full of arctic grayling from April through September. The Chena River is a catch-and-release fishery for grayling. The Fairbanks-North Star Borough (FNSB) Parks and Recreation manages two shoreline parks that Jones uses to teach fly casting and fishing techniques during the evenings. Both of these parks are a mere 15 minutes drive from the UAF campus.
- c. From mid-April until mid-September, Interior Alaska experiences long periods of daylight thereby allowing Jones to teach in the field until 8:30 p.m., or later, in daylight. The students really appreciate the extra time on the water to hone their newfound skills.

In order to achieve the growth seen in 2003-04, Jones made the most of these advantages. Nearly 80 percent of all of Mr. Jones' "on the water" time with his classes were in these spots. This was particularly important for the non-credit clinics and workshops, as Mr. Jones had to make the best use of limited available time. Clock management notwithstanding, the near UAF campus fishing sites also provide UAF and Public Service workshop participants a reasonably good probability of catching fish during class time. In fact, last year almost two-thirds of Jones'

students caught fish during class time—**for some it was their first fish, and for many it was their first fish on a fly rod.**

For summer 2005, Jones unveils his fourth UAF for-credit sport fishing class, The Science Behind Fly Fishing at Denali National Park and Preserve. Jones strives to develop one new class a year and looks for ways to collaborate with other agencies. Past projects have included Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, Adult/Child Fly Tying with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, numerous outdoor classes with the Fairbanks-North Star Borough School District Community Schools and Weekend Focus with UAF Summer Sessions.

A Proposed UAF Advanced Sport Fishing Class

When the author attended the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and studied mining engineering, every engineering student regardless of discipline took Engineering Science 101. The two-credit, (1-lecture, 1-laboratory) class exposed all engineering students to the different engineering disciplines and the career skills required to succeed in each. The author wants to adopt a similar approach by developing an advance sport fishing class with a community-based focus to entice both Alaskans and visitors.

Through investigation, the author has noticed that fishing instruction at all educational levels is delivered in one of three ways: recreation education, conservation education, or cultural education. At the same time, he has also observed that science outreach is delivered as straight science. The author asks, “Why not combine the best aspects of fishing education and science education into an effective, stable and popular program?”

This course development project is proposing to develop and implement a series of seminars, clinics and workshops, supporting publications and interactive website; on science behind sport, commercial and subsistence fishing. Potential topics could include: fish biology, water chemistry, invertebrates, watercraft efficiency, stream sediments, hydraulics, etc. All these elements would then be combined into a two-credit (1-lecture, 1-laboratory) UAF class to be offered in Spring 2006. Thereby, bringing science in a tangible form to previously untapped audiences. The positive return for UAF would be a previously untapped reserve of scientific talent. The value to the people of the State of Alaska would be immeasurable.

Discussion

Offering non-credit sport fishing or other recreational programs at the post-secondary level presents many advantages for instructors and administration. First, it allows faculty to be free to create programs that match the demands of the community. Where can a community lead an institution? The demand for general public geoscience education was demonstrated between 1973 and 1989 at UAF when an average of 90 students annually enrolled in eight different non-credit courses through the Mining Extension program. Their purpose was to improve their understanding of the mineral industry, participate in recreational prospecting and rock hunting activities, and general self-improvement (Madonna, 1991). Over the next five years, the lone UAF Mining Extension faculty member and his assistant grew the program to 35 different classes with a peak enrollment of almost 300 students.

Second, it allows administration to add and drop programs based on economic factors. They can easily cancel non-productive classes, and add extra session of more popular ones.

Third, workshop and short course programs are more easily scheduled and can involve families and children thus fulfilling a possible institutional requirement (where applicable) of public service.

Faculty developing general education sport fishing for-credit classes can approach this task from many different angles: pure recreation, science-related, business-related, etc. They also have the opportunity to build a base of students who may then branch off and take more classes in the sciences or other sport-fishing related fields. Sport fishing instructors often find after they develop their initial course that students come back to them asking the instructors to build a more advanced offerings. This clearly demonstrates the potential popularity of intermediate to advanced recreation courses.

At post-secondary institutions where it is integrated into a certificate or degree program in outdoor education/leadership, sport fishing classes receive a level of stability not see on most campuses. Sport fishing faculty in general face many challenges including: lack of funding, lack of respect among other faculty, adequate facilities and equipment, and potential conflicts of interest with the sport fishing industry.

References

- 1) Fedler, Anthony J., 2004. National Fishing and Boating Grant Initiative: 2003-2004 Evaluation Survey Results. Gainesville, Florida: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.
- 2) Fedler, Anthony J. 2001. Defining Best Practices in Boating, Fishing, and Stewardship Education. Gainesville, Florida: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.
- 3) Fedler, Anthony J. 2000. Participating in Boating and Fishing: A Literature Review. Gainesville, Florida: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.
- 4) Hulstein, Ron; electronic mail correspondence; December 2, 2004.
- 5) Humprey Lueck, Diane. & Thomas, Christine L. 1996. Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Instructor Orientation Manual. Stevens Point, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources.
- 6) Madonna, James A. 1995. New Approaches in Vocational, Technical and Continuing Geoscience Education. Hobart, Tasmania, Australia: University of Tasmania.
- 7) Madonna, James A. 1991. Mining Extension Sabbatical Report. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Appendix I – North American Colleges and Universities Offering Sport Fishing Programs

Non-credit Seminar, Clinic or Workshop (43)

Albertson College (Idaho)
Arapahoe Community College (Colorado)
Auburn University
Bloomsburg University (Pennsylvania)
Canadore College (Ontario)
Carl Albert State College (Oklahoma)
Carleton College (Minnesota)
Casper College (Wyoming)
Claremont McKenna College (California)
Clarion University (Pennsylvania)
Conestoga College (Ontario)
Diablo Valley College (California)
Eastern Oregon University
Fort Lewis College (Colorado)?????
Glendale Community College (Arizona)
Kennesaw State University (Georgia)
Las Positas College (California)
Lees-McRae College (North Carolina)
Lower Columbia College (Washington)
Luther College (Iowa)
McNeese State (Louisiana)
Meredith College (North Carolina)
Modesto Junior College (California)
Nicholls State (Louisiana)
Northeastern State University-Tahquah (Oklahoma)
Paradise Valley Community College (Arizona)
Richmond University (Virginia)
San Francisco State University
Shasta College (California)
Stanly Community College (North Carolina)
Sussex County Community College (New Jersey)
Three Rivers Community College (Missouri)
Tulsa Community College (Oklahoma)
University of Idaho
University of Nevada Las Vegas
University of North Carolina-Greensboro
University of Tennessee-Knoxville
University of Texas
University of Texas-El Paso
University of Utah-Park City
Vanderbilt University (Tennessee)

West Virginia State College
West Virginia University-Parkersburg

Multiple Non-Credit Short Courses, Clinics, Seminars and/or Workshops (14)

University of Alaska Southeast - Sitka **(2 different programs)**
University of Calgary (Alberta) **(2)**
University of Colorado-Boulder **(5)**
Harford Community College, Maryland **(2)**
Johnson County Community College (Kansas) **(2)**
Louisiana State University **(2)**
McHenry County College (Illinois) **(2)**
Medicine Hat College (Alberta) **(3)**
Northampton Community College (Pennsylvania) **(3)**
Northwest Mississippi Community College **(2)**
Omaha Metropolitan Community College (Nebraska) **(4)**
Tyler Junior College (Texas) **(2)**
Virginia Tech **(2)**

Colleges Offering Fly-fishing related topics for credit (9)

Buena Vista University (California)
University of California-Davis
James Madison University
Long Island University-Southampton College (New York)
University of Minnesota
Northern Illinois University
Northland College (Wisconsin)
Texas A&M University
William Patterson University (Missouri)

Colleges & Universities with Sport Fishing and/or Fly Tying for Credit (48)

University of Alaska Fairbanks **(4-classes for credit, 1-non-credit)**
University of Alaska Southeast*
Amarillo College (Texas)
Berea College (Kentucky)
Bethel University (Minnesota)
Binghamton University (New York)
Black Hills State University (South Dakota)*
Buena Vista University (Iowa)
Butte Community College (California) *
Calvin College (Michigan)
Chandler-Gilbert Community College (Arizona)
Colgate University
Colorado Christian University **(2) ***
Colorado Mountain College
Cornell University
Dartmouth University

Indiana University
Kansas State University
Kenai Peninsula College (Alaska) **(1-credit, 2-non-credit)**
Lewis & Clark State College (Idaho)
Lycoming College (Pennsylvania)
Marist College (New York)
Medialle College (New York)
University of Memphis
Michigan State University
University of Montana **(1-credit, 1-non-credit)**
Montana State University **(1-credit, 1-non-credit)**
Mount Hood Community College (Oregon) **(2)**
University of Oregon *
Oregon State University
Pennsylvania State University **(3-credit, 2-non-credit)**
University of Pittsburgh-Bradford (Pennsylvania) **(1-credit, 1-non-credit)**
Portland Community College (Oregon) **(2)**
Portland State University (Oregon) **(2)**
Rainy River Community College (Minnesota)*
Red Rock Community College (Colorado) *
Rocky Mountain College (Colorado)
Saddleback College (California)
St. Olaf College (Minnesota)
Sheldon Jackson College (Alaska)
Southwest Missouri State University
University of Toledo (Ohio)
University of Virginia - Hereford College
Washington & Lee University (Virginia)
Washington State University **(1-credit, 1-non-credit)**
Western Carolina University
Western State Collage (Colorado)
University of Wisconsin-Stout

***—sport fishing class is part of Outdoor Leadership/Studies program**

Appendix II— Institution Telephone Survey Form

College or University: _____

Background

- 1) Program Type:
- 2) Contact person(s)
- 3) Type and size of institution:
- 4) Local drawing population:
- 5) # years teaching sport fishing (program)
- 6) Breadth of sport fishing program
- 7) Depth of sport fishing program
- 8) average number of participants

Qualitative attributes

- 1) Synergistic activities (other local classes or educational opportunities)

2) Collaboration or cooperative ventures

3) Challenges & limitations

4) Goals (present and future)

5) Future prospects