

Natural Resource Internship Program

Abstract: The Kuskokwim Native Association sponsors a Natural Resource Internship Program that is intended to generate an interest among regional youth towards fisheries management, fish biology, and foster a greater understanding of contemporary subsistence fisheries issues. Each year approximately 15 students work closely with fisheries technicians and biologists at ongoing summer field projects (i.e., salmon and whitefish enumeration projects). The objectives of the internship program are to: 1) teach interns basic fisheries management and conservation concepts, 2) encourage participants to pursue higher education and full-time careers in natural resource management 3) develop a skilled pool of future technicians to work on local cooperative fisheries projects, and 4) develop a greater capacity of people within the KNA region to participate in the management process of the valuable local natural resources. Most participating interns are high school students from the KNA region, but when space is available individuals from other locations have been accepted. The program is considered a type of free-choice learning, which by definition is learning that occurs most frequently outside of a school environment. Because much of the learning process associated with subsistence lifestyles is transferred from individual to individual, this program attempts to blend Traditional Ecological Knowledge with western science through the interactions between the students, their parents and local village subsistence users.

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