

Reclamation Participates in the Outdoor Summit for Youth

By Donna Potter, Public Affairs Specialist



Park Ranger Mike McGraw talks to students about Reclamation.

Reclamation, along with other natural resource agencies and interest groups, participated in the Summit to encourage and strengthen partnerships on public lands to better educate, involve and employ underserved youth. The day's activities included small group break-out sessions where Rangers shared the mission of the agency, employment opportunities and Reclamation's resource challenges – especially the threat posed by quagga and zebra mussels. A question & answer game modeled after the Family Feud television show created a fun way for the Rangers to interact with the youth. During lunch, an exposition room was set up allowing for informal engagement with the young attendees.



Students learn about quagga and zebra mussels.

with limited 'outdoor exposure,' parents are reluctant to see value in their son or daughter having an interest in natural resources. Exposing parents to the outdoors (e.g., camping, nature hikes) and the work performed by employees may ease some of the discomfort and make more tangible to them the possibility of their child having a career in a natural resource field. The Summit was a good starting point as a venue for expanding horizons with young people enthusiastic for outdoor opportunities.

On Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2013, Bureau of Reclamation Park Rangers from New Melones Lake and Lake Berryessa participated in the 2nd annual Outdoor Summit for Youth at the U.S. Forest Service Wildland Fire Training Center at McClellan Park in Sacramento, Calif. The event was hosted by the Bureau of Land Management to highlight and solicit input from young people about their multicultural experiences in America's Great Outdoors. Summit attendees included students from the GEO Environmental Science Academy of Grant Union High School, Generation Green, California Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association and a number of other organizations which engage young people in the outdoors.



Park Rangers Mike McGraw and Ross Batchelder listen to a student's presentation.

In the afternoon, the Rangers participated in working group sessions to facilitate conversation on ways agencies and other land stewards can collaborate with a diverse young population. The goal of the conversation was to identify specific means in which this young and eager generation can experience the outdoors and be prepared for jobs in natural resource fields. Encouraging greater volunteerism, but better still, mentoring, was seen by the working groups as a good entry point into a resource-related profession. For example, matching a Reclamation employee with a high school student provides a personal connection, a coach and an apprenticeship relationship that benefits the aspirations of the teenager and the vitality of the agency.

The attendees also contributed to the discussion by emphasizing the importance of parental support for future ambitions. Participants mentioned that in communities



Students gather around Park Ranger Mike McGraw to learn about outdoor opportunities.