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**Hands on learning-Wild Rice conservation, harvesting, restoration, and processing research at an Undergraduate Teaching University in Michigan**

Scott Herron\*, Patrick Robinson, Crystal Phillips, Michael Reynolds, Chris LaVelle, Andrea Lodholtz, and Lauren Mitten  
Ferris State University  
\*herrons@ferris.edu

Abstract:

Undergraduate Teaching Universities rarely provide the hands-on research experience for students to conduct conservation and restoration ecology. This project utilizes local funding and Federal Work Study dollars to help the Wild Rice and Ethnobiology Lab at Ferris State University achieve one of the primary goals of the regional Native Wild Rice Coalition, The restoration of wild rice habitats in the lower peninsula of Michigan. Students acquired harvesting techniques, field identification skills for wetland plants and animals, restoration principles and methods, as well as the ecological foundation of wild rice as the base of aquatic food webs. Students have gained a better understanding of the ethical history of wild rice and how it correlates with the evolution of the Great Lakes Native American culture. Extensive environmental analysis of wild rice growth conditions are being investigated in our lab, including soil/sediment health, water chemistry, seed viability, germination rates as well as the effects of herbicides on different rice life stages.

Impact Statement:

Ferris State University partnered with local stakeholders (Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, Houghton Lake Lake Association, Math-Science Training Center of Mecosta & Osceola County) and regional stakeholders (Michigan State University Extension, University of Wisconsin Extension, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, and Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission). This coalition exposed the students to multicultural collaboration and the active extension programs and research, as well as the benefits of service learning. The integration of American Indian language, customs, resource management, and traditional ecological knowledge into undergraduate research and learning has had profound impacts on the student perceptions of science, diverse cultures, and alternative ways of knowing and living within America.

Category: Watershed Assessment and Restoration  
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