WELCOME TO THE FIRST

YOUTH CLIMATE SUMMIT

Please find a seat by 9:15

Youth Climate Summit
Sagebrush Steppe
The idea for Boise’s first Youth Climate Summit was born at a brewery, from several underage students. It’s not as bad as it sounds. A local group, i-CLEER (Idaho Climate Literacy Education Engagement and Research) met to brainstorm climate initiatives in our community. We needed an outdoor space with tables, and a majority of i-CLEER members are adults. However, on the fall afternoon, we were joined by three local high school students who said they would like to see a Youth Climate Summit in Boise.

Staff from Boise’s WaterShed education center (soon to become the nation’s first Water and Climate Change Center!) were there, and had just received a grant from the Idaho STEM Action Center to implement climate education programs. A steering committee of 7 high school students was formed, and we began planning. We divided into sub-committees (Presenter Team, Logistics, and Recruitment) chose a theme, and got to work!

On May 17th, 2022, we had our first all-day Summit. The Summit explored how art, writing, and storytelling can inspire climate action. The speakers reflected this theme: the plenary speaker was Marlow Baines, from the youth-led group Earth Guardians. Baines is an accomplished organizer, and has been a leading youth member for Alliance for Climate Education, International Indigenous Youth Council, Fridays for Future, and many more. Marlow is also a poet and published author, and her speech focused on the importance of the humanities for climate communication.

Following Baines, the summit attendees broke out into workshop groups. Dr. Erin James, an english professor from the University of Idaho, led a group to discuss “cli-fi” or climate fiction, and how literature helps us envision new futures. Teal Gardner, a local multi-media artist, discussed how she focuses on climate impacts in her work, and created a community art piece with students. Kari Greer, a former wildland firefighter and photographer, discussed how her photos help her communicate changing fire patterns with the public.

The students attended a climate career fair to network with local leaders from industry, activism, city planning and research. The career fair was attended by organizations including Clenera Solar, City of Boise’s Climate Action Division, The Sierra Club, and the Boise State University’s geoscience department.

Finally, students met with Kat Davis, who worked to create Boise State University’s climate action plan. With her guidance, they began drafting climate action plans for their own schools. The WaterShed is transitioning to the nation’s first Water and Climate Education Center, and will support these climate action plans in the coming school year.

The City of Boise has agreed to support the Youth Climate Summit, and we will be making this an annual event. In future years, the steering committee members will come from the Mayor’s Youth Climate Action Council, and we will be holding the event in the Spring.
Our steering Committee, with our plenary speaker and Mayor (left to right: Madeline Gendreau, Asha Muhingi, Maya Mazariégos, Alexa Combo, Marlown Baines [Earth Guardians], Lauren McLean [Mayor, City of Boise], Lizzy Duke-Moe, and Lilly Wilson)