

Wilderness Center enjoys year of unprecedented growth

The U of I Wilderness Research Center, conceived just two years after passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act, "experienced a year of unprecedented growth in 1975," according to its recently released annual report.

Major accomplishments of the year include formation of a Technical Board by Dr. John Ehrenreich, dean of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, who assumed the added duties as director of the center. The board in turn established formal objectives, policies and responsibilities of the center.

Other key accomplishments include:

--Organization of research being conducted under the auspices of the center.

--Initiation of new research.

—Beginning an educational thrust.

As early as May of 1966, then head of the Cooperative Wildlife Unit, Dr. Paul Dalke, proposed a wilderness center that "would provide a major research fund solicitor, an intellectual resource pool, and a well equipped agency for broadly conceived research into the nature of wilderness and man."

By 1969, the U of I had acquired as a field station the Taylor Ranch in the heart of the Idaho Primitive

Area, the largest remaining tract of roadless America. In 1970, the Wilderness Research Center became a reality.

In the formal guidelines established for the center during 1975, the purpose of the center is described:

"to foster research and educational activities which will lead to a broader understanding of the structure and function of natural ecosystems, man's relationship to them, and their perpetual protection in the wilderness concept."

While graduate students work on advanced degrees in conjunction with major research projects directed by faculty, undergraduate students have an opportunity to work at the Taylor Ranch in the summer on projects they propose. Studies on pocket gophers, native cutthroat trout and blue grouse were conducted last summer in the first year of this project.

Future plans for the center, according to the report, include hiring an assistant director to handle daily administration of center activities, creation of an advisory board of individuals from across the nation concerned about the future of wilderness, broadening of the Technical Board to include disciplines outside the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, and expansion of research and educational activities.