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National Science Foundation grant to support summer institute in biology for high school teachers

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FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27

The National Science Foundation has granted $36,100 to Montana State University to support a summer institute in biology for high school teachers, University officials announced Tuesday.

The institute will be at the University Biological Station on the east shore of Flathead Lake during the summer of 1958. It will be under the direction of Dr. Gordon B. Castle, professor of zoology and director of the station.

High-School teachers specially selected to participate in the institute will receive a weekly stipend, not to exceed $75 plus additional allowances for dependents and travel. Others may participate at their own expense.

One of the primary objectives of the institute is to give the high school teachers some training in the field of ecology, an area usually neglected in the preparation of high-school teachers, Dr. Castle said. The second principal objective is to give the participants an opportunity to see how ecology and the field approach can be used in the teaching of biology.

The station staff believes that the ecological approach to biology is an ideal way to catch the interest and imagination of the high school student, Dr. Castle said. He called ecology a field of study which requires the student to relate the various facets of biology to each other as well as to other fields of science.

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The general aims of the summer institute, according to the National Science Foundation, will be to improve the subject matter competence of the participating teachers; to strengthen the capacity of these teachers for motivating able students to consider careers in science; to bring the teachers of high-school science into personal contact with the prominent scientists who make up the staff of the institute in order to stimulate their interest in their field of study and to increase their professional prestige; and to bring about greater mutual understanding and appreciation of teaching problems of teachers of science at both the high-school and college level.

The institute at the biological station will center around the study of ecology, which deals with the relationships which exist between organisms and their environments, Dr. Castle said. Laboratory work will involve the study of methods used in measuring and analyzing various aspects of the environment and the study of the organisms found in those environments. Lectures will consider the significance of those environmental factors and will discuss the interrelationships of organisms both as individuals and as populations. Field trips will illustrate the laboratory and lecture material.

In addition to the course in ecology each student will take one other course of his choice. In this course he will study either a specific group of organisms or the organisms which occur in a specific habitat. Both students and staff will also participate in a seminar presenting current problems in biology.

The institute staff will be composed of members of the staffs of the Depts. of Botany and Zoology supplemented by visiting instructors, Dr. Castle said. The institute will open June 23 and continue for 8 weeks. All participants will live at the biological station.
The United States Congress established the National Science Foundation in 1950 to promote the progress of science. One of the major responsibilities of the foundation is to develop and encourage the pursuit of an appropriate and effective national policy for the promotion of basic research and education in the sciences. Several programs have been established to meet this responsibility. The summer institutes for high-school teachers of science is one of these programs that has been particularly successful, Dr. Castle said.

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