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Harold Tascher to coordinate Rocky Mountain States Regional Study

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The eyes of educators throughout the country will be on an educational experiment this summer that will combine travel and academic work and will involve five western universities.

Dr. Harold Tascher, professor of social work at Montana State University, Missoula, will coordinate the project, called the Rocky Mountain States Regional Study, which is being launched with the cooperation of the National Education Assn.'s Division of Travel Service and the Montana and Florida Education Assns. Participating schools are Arizona State College, New Mexico Western College, University of Denver, University of Utah, and Montana State University.

The Rocky Mountain States Regional Study is open to teachers, both active and retired, who may earn college credit while enjoying a spectacular vacation. They will study the region by actually touring seven western states, viewing carefully selected sites, observing phenomena at firsthand, listening to lectures by experienced administrators, discussing regional problems critically, and preparing study materials for educational use after the course is over. MSU and the other participating schools will offer study in the field of regional development. Each institution will assume responsibility in its own area.

Teachers who apply for the tour must register for credit at one of the five cooperating schools. All the schools will allow 7 1/2 quarter credit hours for either graduate or undergraduate students, except MSU, which will offer 8 credits because of IBM mechanical requirements.

Interest in the tour has been unusual, according to Dr. Tascher. The tour quota is already practically complete, he reports.

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The class will convene in Denver on June 23 for three days of lectures and field trips as guests of the University of Denver. The three days will be used to give the students an intensive briefing on the Rocky Mountain region to provide background for their experiences of the next five weeks.

The teachers will leave Denver by chartered bus on June 27 to explore the Spanish and Indian areas of the region, spending time in Santa Fe, N.M., the center of Spanish and Indian cultures. From Santa Fe they will go to Taos, celebrated art center, and to Pueblo de Taos, a picturesque Indian pueblo.

Stops at the ruins of pre-Columbian apartment dwellers in Mesa Verde National Park and at Gallup, N.M., modern capital city of the Indian, will point up striking contrasts between the old and the new. Visits to the Hopi and Navajo Reservations for talks with Indian leaders are also scheduled. The Painted Desert, Petrified Forest, and Sunset Crater are among the scenic wonders the teachers will visit in Arizona.

The students will also stop at Grand Canyon, Zion, and Bryce Canyon National Parks for a graphic look at how these natural phenomena actually record geological history. Grand Canyon, with its formation of huge rock beds, red in color and a mile high, represents the Ancient Period. Thousands of examples in Zion of splitting of rock beds to form canyons manifest the Medieval Period. The Modern Period, marked by the erosion of rock, is etched by the pink and white monoliths found in Bryce Canyon.

The grand tour through the Southwest will end July 8 at Salt Lake City. There, the class will spend a few days at the University of Utah for instruction from the university staff on the geography of the area and the history of the Mormons and other facets of the region's past.

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From July 12 - 24, the class will be driving from Utah to Montana, going through Idaho enroute to Missoula, crossing on the way one of the largest wilderness areas in the United States.

In Missoula the group will meet with representatives of the U. S. Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Soil Conservation Service, and Montana State University. After four days as guests of the University, the teachers will take a three-day pack trip into the wilderness, under the experienced guidance of Forest Service personnel. They will then travel through Indian country to Flathead Lake and Glacier National Park.

Next on the itinerary is a swing down to Helena, Montana's capital city, to see the State Museum, a nearby ghost town, and other sights and to take a boat trip to the Gates of the Mountains to retrace part of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

The tour will end with a three-day stay in Yellowstone Park, the first of the national parks. Park officials will tell the story of the National Park System to the teachers. They will go from the park to Denver, via the Grand Tetons and Rock Springs.

The whole program is designed, according to Dr. Tascher, "to present the meaning of the Rocky Mountain region in relation to its place in modern life - its physical setting, its people and resources, its problems and conditions, and its grandeur - to be seen, studied, and understood."

"The tour personnel, well-trained and experienced educators, will pool their competence with that of the varied staff to demonstrate that 'travel education is integrative education; it builds perspective while featuring detail'," Dr. Tascher added.

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