

ERIN ALLISON and ZACHARY LOUGHMAN, Dept of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, West Liberty University, West Liberty, WV, 26074. Human dimensions of crayfish conservation in Appalachian coalfields.

*Cambarus veteranus* and *Cambarus callainus* are two closely related crayfish federally protected under the Endangered Species Act. While government protection provides vital funding for research and management initiatives, it is rare for the average citizen to be involved or impacted by this process. Less popular animal groups, such as invertebrates, lack public conservation support contributed by apathetic perceptions. The objective of this project is to foster appreciation for *C. veteranus* and *C. callainus* through public engagement. The Project Crawdad pilot is an education module designed for 3rd grade students. Five lesson plans, aligned with state standards, will allow students to explore local aquatic ecosystems, interact with native species, and develop experiments of their own design. Pre and post tests accompanied with each lesson will be facilitated to gauge student development. As community understanding and familiarity increases, potential pre-existing negative associations are likely to be supplanted by appreciation and sense of personal responsibility. This environmental education study aims to increase conservation literacy and stewardship of *C. veteranus* and *C. callainus* and the ecosystems they depend on.