

School children help reforest Wilson River Watershed

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The Tillamook Forest Center has formed a partnership with Beaverton School District's Springville School to restore watershed habitat along the Wilson River.

The partnership was created to help rehabilitate heavily impacted roads and campsites near the Wilson River west of the Forest Center and to build a new interpretive trail. Springville School students planted these restoration sites and the new trail area with native plants, and have also learned a great deal about the local habitat, watershed restoration efforts, and flora and fauna along the way. Following their restoration work, the students created murals about their impressions and experiences in the forest that were on display at the Forest Center throughout the month of April.

The collaboration is creating long-lasting relationships that foster feelings of ownership, responsibility, and pride. Springville School implements a learning approach called Expeditionary Learning where students learn how to ask questions, use active reading strategies, organize information, and create and present high quality products.

The Tillamook Forest Center will continue to use the new trail to conduct service learning projects for K-12 students. The projects will focus on watershed restoration and the need to maintain healthy watersheds.

The trail construction and restoration work is one of the components of the Wilson River Restoration Project, an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) funded habitat restoration project. Goals of the project are to reduce human impacts and sedimentation to the watershed and improve the health of the streamside riparian zone. Wilson River Restoration Project partners and contributors include the Tillamook Bay Watershed Council, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, South Fork Inmate Camp, and the Tillamook Forest Center.

The project work includes restoration of 16 heavily degraded areas along the Wilson River, and the construction of a half-mile interpretive trail west of the Tillamook Forest Center. The 16 rehabilitated project sites are located on the strip of land between Highway 6 and the Wilson River, beginning at Milepost 14.4 and ranging as far east as Milepost 27. This strip of land has long suffered from neglect and impacts from four-wheel-drive vehicles, human waste, litter, and long-term campers. The restoration work is the first phase in the development of an overall management plan for the Wilson River Corridor that addresses impacts to the watershed and provides for appropriate low impact public access to the river.

To begin this work, in the spring of 2009, the Oregon Department of Forestry utilized a contractor to block and plow 2.5 miles of severely rutted, muddy roads and hardened, dispersed campsites adjacent to the Wilson River. Following that initial work, in the fall and winter, inmate crews from South Fork Forest Camp planted the sites with native shrubs and trees.

The total cost of the project was \$78,000, with \$33,000 coming from the OWEB grant that was administered through the Tillamook Bay Watershed Council, and the balance provided by the other project partners. OWEB implements the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds in Oregon through grants to local communities.

Project contract manager Clyde Zeller noted that Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) deserve special thanks for their work. In addition to donating matching road work to the project, BPA is embarking on the repair, rocking, and upgrade of their entire power line road system in the area.

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