

News Release



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STIMULUS DOLLARS PUT OREGON YOUTH TO WORK ON THE FREMONT-WINEMA NATIONAL FORESTS

Lakeview, Ore. – Oregon youth are spending their summer working on the Fremont-Winema National Forests. While the youth learn valuable survey and mapping skills by assessing aspen stands, the Forest, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the Collins Pine Company and several private landowners will benefit from the information surveyed, gathered and documented by the youth.

In June 2009, the Lane Workforce Partnership awarded South Lane School District in Cottage Grove, Ore., \$211,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. The Lane Workforce Partnership is a private, non-profit workforce development organization dedicated to assisting businesses to recruit and retain employees, and helping adults and youth to gain the knowledge and skills to succeed in the workforce.

“We were looking for work that would provide training in ecological restoration and forestry and the technologies of these trades, while also contributing to a real world project,” said Chris Parra, Director of Special Services for the South Lane School District. “These young people want to develop skill sets that will help them find meaningful work in the future.”

Parra added, “Aspen is a very important and emblematic tree species of the western states and has been declining for decades as a result of fire suppression and other factors. The pride of ownership in this project is obvious in the faces of the crew members even after a long hot day of work.”

Under the guidance and leadership of Integrated Resource Management (IRM) owner, Darin Stringer, and IRM crew leaders, six youths, between the of ages 18-22, spent July and August assessing and documenting aspen stands on the Fremont-Winema National Forests. As a result, crew members gain field experience and other skills by using a compass, Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographical Information System (GIS).

Data gathered by the youth will map where aspen stands are currently located on the Forest, document whether or not conifer species are encroaching and where stands are located in relation to each other. In the future, the information will help identify fawning habitat for mule deer, determine growth trends and establish possible treatment areas.

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“The Forest was pleased to host this crew mostly from the Cottage Grove area,” said Mike Ramsey, Wildlife Biologist for the Fremont-Winema National Forests and the North Warner Aspen Assessment Project Coordinator. “This information will also be used to prioritize stands for treatment to improve mule deer habitat as part of Oregon’s Mule Deer Initiative.”

“I have not been to this part of Oregon before,” said Jason Khristiansen, crew member. “I love being outside and helping the environment. I’d be here year round if I could.”

In 2009, President Obama promised to create 125,000 jobs to train low-income youth and set aside \$1.2 billion of the federal stimulus money to make that happen. This aspen assessment project is just one part of that goal for youth to be employed and trained.

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