

NEWS RELEASE

PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION



Pacific Northwest Region

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Local Stewardship Groups Receive National Honors

WALTON, Ore.— In a ceremony next Wednesday, August 17, local conservation leaders affiliated with four Siuslaw National Forest Stewardship groups will receive the 2010 Two Chiefs' Partnership Award.

This national award is presented annually by the Chiefs of the U.S. Forest Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to recognize exemplary partnership efforts promoting conservation and forest stewardship.

During the 10-year anniversary celebration event for the Siuslaw Stewardship Group, Pacific Northwest Regional Forester Kent Connaughton and Ron Alvarado, Oregon NRCS State Conservationist, will recognize 31 individuals, and 23 organizations for the energy, ingenuity and persistence they have shown in developing and implementing a rapidly expanding world-class program of forest and watershed restoration.

"The award is bestowed upon only a handful of partnership efforts nationwide each year," Connaughton said. "It represents a significant achievement and recognition for all the partners in stewardship on the Siuslaw."

Siuslaw Forest partnerships have successfully completed five 'whole-watershed' restoration projects, addressing the restoration needs of major tributary streams in important Central Coast salmon rivers, as well as creating sustainable jobs producing a dependable output of small-diameter, high-quality timber. This enterprising group of people was able to leverage \$1 million of Siuslaw National Forest restoration funds with almost \$2 million in partner investments in cooperative restoration projects.

"This local, collaborative approach is an outstanding example of how we can make a difference in the health of our watersheds in conjunction with local communities," said Alvarado. "These individuals, with their hard work and dedication, have truly left their signature on the landscape."

The foundation for the success of these projects is stewardship contracting, an innovative approach to managing watersheds and natural resources, rooted in the belief that the health of watersheds and communities are interdependent.

The four stewardship groups active in this partnership on the Siuslaw National Forest include the Siuslaw, Alsea, Marys Peak and Hebo (newly formed this year). These groups have open memberships, composed of interested groups and individuals including private landowners, environmental groups, watershed councils, local governments, tribes, logging companies, and soil and water conservation districts. Cascade Pacific Resource, Conservation and Development (RC&D), affiliated with NRCS, plays a key role in managing the people and contracts involved with stewardship.

“Siuslaw stewardship projects are a model for other forests, and we are grateful for the key role Cascade Pacific RC&D plays,” added Connaughton.

Their designated stewardship areas cover more than 98 percent of the total Forest area, plus adjoining private lands within the same watersheds. National Forest staff and stewardship groups work together to apply proceeds from National Forest restoration timber thinning as core funding for whole watershed restoration across boundaries on both public and private lands (approximately \$150,000 - \$300,000 annually).

Specific restoration activities include replacement of fish passage culverts, wildlife snag and down-wood creation, stream habitat improvement, invasive plant control and planting trees and shrubs to increase stream shading and create habitat diversity.

“Within the National Forest system, this type of stewardship effort is unusual for the size of the area treated, the number of partners involved, the length of time in operation, plus the large scope and scale of activities,” said Connaughton.

The Two Chiefs’ Partnership Awards, begun in 2006 by Chief Lancaster of the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and then-Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth, recognize outstanding partnerships in forest conservation work among Conservation Districts, State Foresters, the Forest Service, and NRCS.

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