

# NEWS RELEASE

**USDA Forest Service  
Caribou-Targhee National Forest  
1405 Hollipark Drive  
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401**



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## Volunteers Work Together on the Curlew

CURLEW NATIONAL GRASSLAND, Id – Volunteers from the Caribou-Targhee National Forest (CTNF), Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust (SSLT), Trout Unlimited and Idaho Master Naturalists worked together on the Rock Creek Restoration Project on the Curlew National Grassland (CNG), in South Eastern Idaho, this week.

The Rock Creek Restoration Project, which will span three years, was started last year when the CNG was given a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, forest service and the Joint Chief’s Landscape Restoration Partnership. It was one of 11 projects that were awarded funding in 2016.

The CTNF partnered with the SSLT for the restoration project. The SSLT, a non-profit group, organized the volunteer event to help the CTNF transplant sedge mats along a newly constructed stream bank to encourage stabilization.

“This is a very labor-intensive project,” said Louis Wasniewski, a forest hydrologist with the CTNF. “The volunteer team has spent the past two days cutting sod, digging trenches along the stream, transplanting the vegetation, seeding along the bank and watering.”

The project focuses on a four mile stretch of stream that runs through the CNG, and its scope includes reelevating channels, reconnecting flood plains and creating a stable stream system.

“Having volunteers on a project like this is extremely important and helpful,” said Wasniewski. “Not only do they provide quality work, but this also gives us the opportunity to teach. The Sagebrush Steppe [SSLT] helps us gather volunteers for our project.”

The mission of the SSLT is to protect and enhance natural lands, wildlife habitat and working farms and ranches by working with willing landowners in Southeast Idaho, creating tailored agreements, also known as conservation easements.

“We keep in contact with different groups like the Idaho Master Naturalists and Trout Unlimited to let them know when an opportunity for volunteering comes up,” said James Bailey, SSLT operations manager and volunteer coordinator. “As part of our partnership with the forest service, we bring volunteers together to aid in the project.”

The SSLT serves the public, farmers, ranchers and others who care about conservation, in seven counties. Local volunteers help them carry out their mission and stretch their budget.

“I don’t think this would be possible without volunteers,” said Bailey. “It helps keep project costs down, allowing us to use more money on materials, further enhancing the restoration project.”

The SSLT reached out to various conservation minded groups, looking for volunteers for this week’s project, and seven people stepped forward to help out.

“I volunteered for this project through Idaho Master Naturalists,” said Leslie Soderquist. “I first found an appreciation for the Curlew in the early 1980s, when my ornithology class visited the grassland, so I was excited to come back out.”

Organizations, like the Idaho Master Naturalists, require their members to obtain a certain number of volunteer hours to maintain their status with the program. The naturalists program aims to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to actively work towards stewardship of Idaho’s natural environment.

“By volunteering, I get a better understanding of what the agencies are trying to do,” said Soderquist. “It’s good to give back and help out the agencies. I believe it helps keep our public lands public.”

There are still plenty of opportunities to help. If anyone is interested in volunteering with the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust, please contact James Bailey at [james@sagebrushlandtrust.org](mailto:james@sagebrushlandtrust.org) or visit their website at [sagebrushlandtrust.org](http://sagebrushlandtrust.org).