

Great American Outdoors News Bulletin

Local Youth Help Improve Developed Recreation Along Idaho's World-Famous Salmon River

North Fork, Idaho—During the spring, summer and fall, the Salmon River Road corridor from the community of North Fork, Idaho, to the end of the Salmon River Road at Corn Creek Campground and Boat Ramp can be one of the most populated places in Lemhi County. Managed by the Salmon-Challis National Forest, the Salmon River Road provides river access to over 10,000 river users annually. It is recognized nationally and internationally by whitewater enthusiasts, hunters, anglers, and many other recreationists.

With the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, the Salmon-Challis National Forest recognized the importance of investing in this important recreation corridor. Recreation staff knew right away that investing in the approximately 45-mile corridor would be a great use of the additional funding.

The Forest successfully competed for Great American Outdoors Act funding to address maintenance needs for all the developed recreation sites along the river corridor. They turned to the Youth Employment Program, a local partner in Salmon, Idaho, to help tackle the work.

Charlie Hansen, 19, is a recent Salmon High School graduate. This is his fourth year working



U.S. Forest Service Photos

Salmon Youth Employment Program Founder and Executive Director Steve Adams, center, instructs his crew about how best to approach staining a cultural site platform after they had sanded it down to wood.

for Youth Employment Program, or YEP. Part of the maintenance needed at the campgrounds is replacing campfire rings. Pairing up with professional welders in the community, Charlie has been able to learn welding skills as they fabricate the rings.

Not only has Charlie been able to learn an in-demand skill like welding, he's also thought about job opportunities with public land managers. After his experience with YEP, he says, "Now I can see if the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) or the Forest Service would want a person like me."

James Call is a junior at Salmon High School. He enjoys getting to work in the Salmon River Corridor. Growing up here, he knows the area as a pretty spot to camp, fish, and float on the river. "There are a few nice swimming holes near where we've been working, where the water is calm and pretty deep," he reveals. "I've always liked public lands and getting to work on them is something I'm proud of. My mom is really proud of the work I'm doing, too."

One of the younger YEP crew members, Brylee Ganske

is a lifelong Salmon resident. He's a freshman and on the wrestling team. His summer working with YEP reinforced to Brylee how important a good work ethic is. Even if a job like staining a sign at a campground seems small, Brylee said their crew looked at the task as an opportunity to "get the job done and do a good job while we're at it."

A local program like YEP can offer some flexibilities that most youth corps, which require a multi-month full-time commitment, can't. Steve Adams, YEP's founder and executive director, explains that not everyone can, or wants to, put their life on hold for months on end. He said some of his participants help irrigate the family ranch in the morning and after work, or help their grandparents out, or have a football or volleyball camp that is important to them.

Josh Phillips appreciates the flexibility that YEP offers. Josh is 24, and he has epilepsy. Working full-time and long days isn't always in the cards for him. He's worked for YEP for 4 years, but he says it is hard for him to think of it as work when he's outside. "Being outdoors is more relaxing, and not as stressful," he said.

One of the sites the YEP crew worked on last summer was a cultural site next to the road. The crew stained the deck that is next to a pictograph from the indigenous people who lived in and traveled through this place. "I remember when I was little and my grandpa took me to show me the (American) Indian paintings there." Josh's grandpa has since passed away, but he said, "That's a good memory. I was happy to



As the crew works, Adams stops the crew to show them professional tips and tricks for applying the stain evenly.

work down there. It was important to me."

Josh noted that the community does a lot to support YEP. "The community is super good to us, so it's nice that now we might be able to help the community by improving their campsites. It's important that we take care of what we have and appreciate our environment."

The Salmon-Challis National Forest has been partnering with the Youth Employment Program for several years. Much of the past work focused on trail maintenance and construction projects. "It's good that we are working with a partner like YEP to assist with the Great American Outdoors Act Projects," said Ken Gebhardt, North Fork District Ranger. They are helping us with additional capacity, getting youth outdoors, and are also contributing to the successful completion of these nationally prioritized projects."



Josh Phillips hand sands the deck railing with fine-grit sandpaper.



Brylee Ganskee detaches interpretive signage in preparation for staining.



James Call brushes stain onto a sanded deck rail.