



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

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# Conservation Education State & Private Forestry FY 2006 Accomplishments





*“Our most important resource in this country is not forests, vital as they are. It is not water, although life itself would cease to exist without it. It is people. The challenges of climate change and looming water shortages will not be resolved in a few years. It will take generations. Today’s children—and theirs—will need to be able to take the baton and finish the race. For that, they will need a full understanding of why forests are so valuable, along with a strong land ethic. It is our job to give them both.”*

— Forest Service Gail Kimbell, September 2007 —

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## Introduction

The Forest Service has a role—and a responsibility—in helping children connect with nature and their public lands, and in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes to become environmentally-literate citizens. As the next generation of conservation stewards, it will be they who “care for the land and serve people” in the future. The Forest Service’s Conservation Education Program is an effective, dynamic means for the Forest Service to accomplish this important work. The Forest Service promotes the sustainability of our natural and cultural resources by introducing the public to conservation practices and providing the tools they need to assist in maintaining. This understanding will be a coordinated, service-wide effort that will affect all aspects of the agency’s operations. Conservation education targets youth, forest visitors and urban communities. Its goal is to connect people to the land in ways that allow them to assist in the conservation of natural and cultural resources. Conservation education is broad-based in approach, content and scope. Conservation education will encompass developing awareness, more in depth knowledge, and hands-on action efforts among target audiences.

The 2006 annual report recaps the accomplishments of the Forest Service over the past year. Success stories from across the country are highlighted as an example of the progression of Conservation Education. Students, teachers, and surrounding communities in vast regions have been able to benefit from our success.

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## Forest Service Mission

*Sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forest and grasslands to meet the needs of current and future generations.*

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## Conservation Education Mission

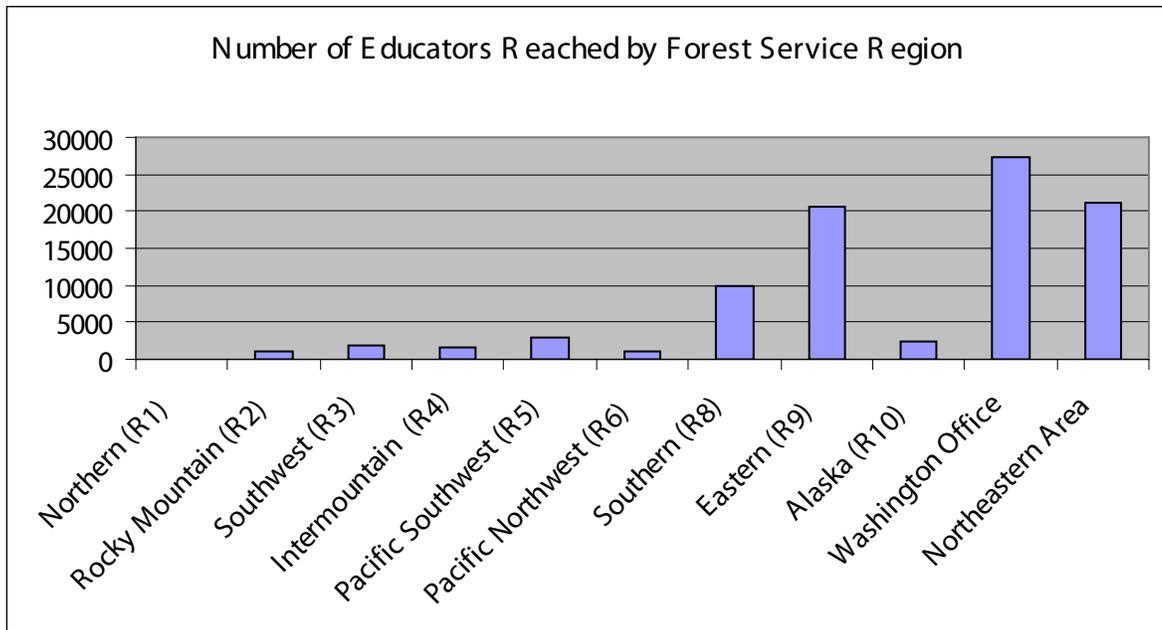
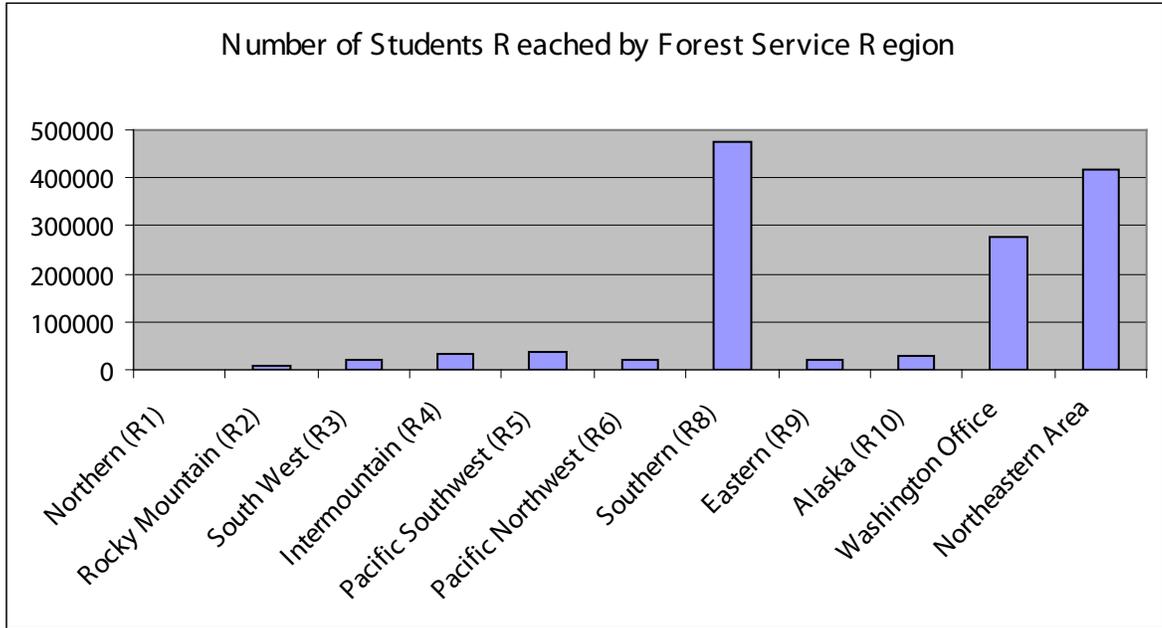
*The Conservation Education program works with partners to coordinate development and delivery of high-quality, science-based education about forests, grasslands, and related natural resources to pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students and educators, in both formal and non-formal settings.*

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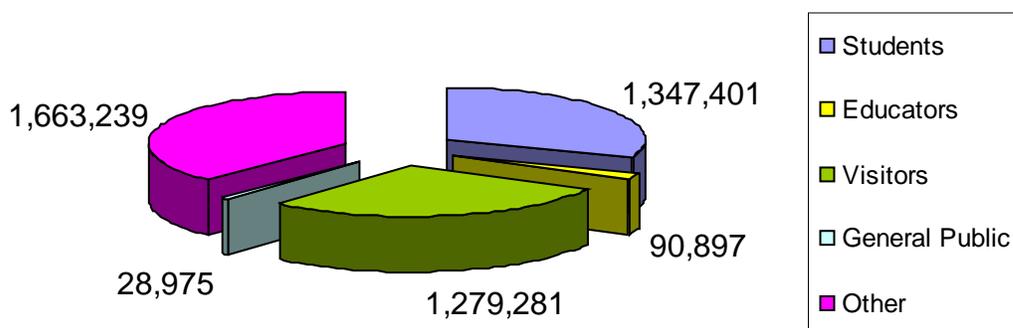
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## Conservation Education by the Numbers

The bar graphs below show the estimated number of students and educators reached in 2006 by the Forest Service Region as reported in the National Information on Conservation Education (NICE) Database. The database can be accessed at [http://www.na.fs.fed.us/con\\_reports/](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/con_reports/).

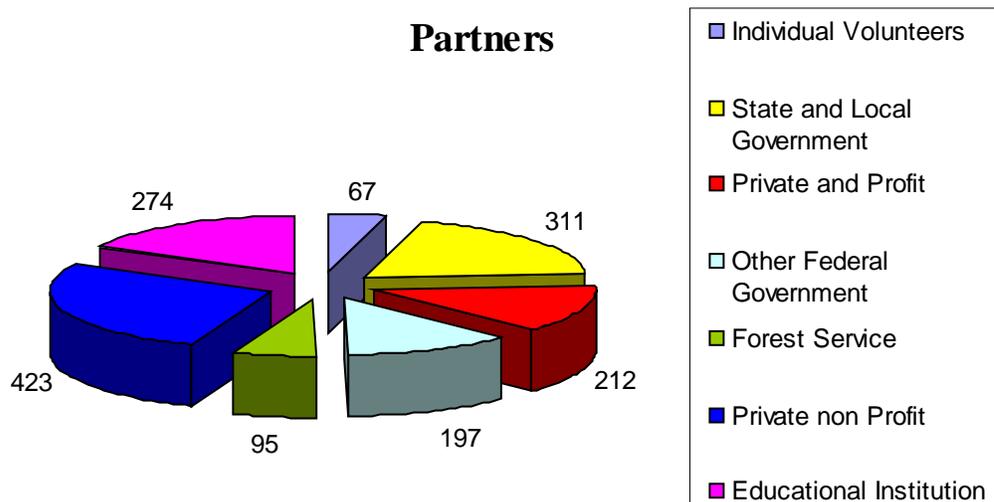


## Audience Reached



Of the 4,409,773 audience members reached, 10% were from underserved audiences. Underserved populations are individuals, groups, or communities on a National level that the Forest Service has not effectively protected, supported, or promoted in the delivery of programs and services on a fair and equitable basis. Also, 35% were from urban settings. An urban environment is an area consisting of a central place(s) and adjacent territory with a general population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land that together has a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people.

## Partners



Partnerships are the foundation of our conservation education work. In 2006 more than 1,500 partners helped leverage Forest Service investments. Looking back at 2005 numbers, the number of partnerships has almost doubled from 825. These partners contributed nearly 12.5 million dollars in cash and in-kind contributions.

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## National Programs Reach Children Across the Country

### Junior Forest Ranger Roll-Out, *Nationwide*



*Ellis Elementary School students on their way to a compass activity project during the Junior Forest Ranger Rollout in the Denver School District.*

One hundred students from Ellis Elementary School's 5<sup>th</sup> grade class (*Denver School District*) completed the new Junior Forest Ranger Adventure Guide, becoming the first class inducted as Junior Forest Rangers. There was a signing ceremony with two of the program's partners (*The Cradle of Forestry and The San Juan Mountains Association*) who began a partnership network to sustain and enhance the program. The goal of the program launch was to develop a model for program implementation in urban settings. The Junior Forest Ranger program engages urban communities by encouraging the use of the

Adventure Guide as a tool to investigate local environments. This program has touched more than 250 students, teachers, and other local individuals.

### National Public Lands Day 2006, *Nationwide*



*America's Outdoors center volunteer Bonnie Ilhardt, leads Milwaukee community children around the Urban Treehouse site.*

Forest Service units across the country participated in the yearly National Public Lands Day. For example, the *America's Outdoors* visitor center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, partnered with other federal agencies to host the eighth annual National Public Lands Day. The event took place at Milwaukee's Urban Treehouse site on September 24, 2006. Work projects for the day included preparation of a snake mound prairie, litter cleanup, and planting and weeding projects. Children visited nature stations where they had the chance to see live snakes and turtles, and learn about backpacking, camping, invasive weeds, wildland firefighting. Partners set up booths and provided free food and music to encourage the neighborhood to

get out and use the Urban Treehouse. The one-day event reached many community members, and engaged them in on-the-ground resource work to enhance the Urban Treehouse site. More than 250 people participated in this successful event.

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## National Garden Clubs Inc. Partnership, *Nationwide*

The Forest Service has a long-standing and strong partnership with the developed National Garden Clubs, Inc to host and organize a yearly Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl poster contest. This partnership has allowed the Forest Service to reach children in all 50 states, as well as Puerto Rico. The mission of the poster contest is to engage children's creativity to help spread Smokey Bear's and Woodsy Owl's important, environmental messages. The contest targets elementary school students across the nation. Children are encouraged to create posters that illustrate either Woodsy Owl's or Smokey Bear's messages of conservation or fire prevention. From the posters submitted, five children are recognized at the national level, and one is chosen as the grand prize winner. In 2006, fourth-grader Dennis Zhang from Menlo Park Elementary School in Edison, New Jersey, was selected as the national grand prize recipient. He decided to display Woodsy Owl's message, "*Lend a hand. Care for the land*". Through this fun, creative activity children learn both conservation and fire prevention. Each year about 270,000 students are reached as a result of this enduring partnership.



*Dennis Zhang, a fourth-grader from Menlo Park Elementary School in Edison, New Jersey was the grand prize winner in the 2006 National Garden Club poster contest.*

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## Teaching Teachers

### Michigan Forest Resource Alliance - Project Learning Tree, *Region 9*

In central Michigan, Project Learning Tree continues to keep teachers updated on the latest facts about forestry and the environment. In 2006, they sponsored a weeklong series of teacher workshops held at the Fort Custer Training Center. During the workshops, more than 100 teachers learned about natural resources, and gained skills to become more effective environmental decision makers both in and out of the classroom. Educators were able to go back to their classrooms and effectively relay the messages of environmental education. Workshops were conducted by Project Learning Tree, Project Fish, Project Wet, and Project Wild, Forest Connections - Land and Water. These yearly workshops are important to keeping teaching networks connected and updated with the latest information.

### Trees for Kids and Trees for Teens, *Northern Area*



*Iowa students plant trees after learning about planting and caring for trees.*

A tree frenzy is taking place in Iowa! The *Trees for Kids* and *Trees for Teens* programs provide information on tree planting and care, for elementary and secondary-level schools. Through these successful programs, educators and their students learn about the importance of trees in the environment. These comprehensive programs produce and distribute educational materials, provide trees for landscaping, and engage a wide range of public and private partnerships. The goal of the program is to plant at least 100,000 new trees across the state of Iowa. Overall, 314,520 people participated in the 2006 program for 2006, and of those 300,000 are students.

Distribution of 14,000 educational teacher packets has helped spread the message that environmental learning can continue inside the classroom. The program also is able to achieve their goals by producing numerous teachers' guides for elementary and secondary schools including color posters and new, native tree booklets. They also offer teachers landscape trees through local nurseries, banks and other partnerships. The success of the program is obvious with such a large number of contributors.

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## Build-a-Forest Felt Board Project, *Region 10*

An explorers troop of Girl Scouts from Sitka, Alaska became even more adventurous when they decided to take on the challenging role of “teacher.” The girls planned an ecology lesson for a local Kindergarten class. The troop designed a large 12’ x 4’ felt board with movable forest components and wildlife characters. However, in order to present to the Kindergarten class, the Scouts had to first learn about the subject. They learned about old growth forest ecology, including concepts such as niche and habitat. With this knowledge under their belt, they were able to help the Kindergarten class learn about their local ecosystems. The brave girl scouts tackled an activity they called “Build-a-Forest.”

The Scouts developed and presented their lesson under the supervision of Tongass National Forest conservation education staff. This is a perfect example of what the Forest Service would like to see taking place in classrooms. Educators can learn a thing or two from these Girl Scouts when it comes to informing their students in a fun and informative way.



*Kindergarten children in Sitka, Alaska are taught about the environment by the local Girl Scout troop.*

## SMILE Workshop, *Pacific Northwest Research Station*

Teachers from across Oregon came to the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest to learn about field research and to help them better incorporate ecology into the SMILE program. SMILE stands for **S**cience and **M**ath **L**earning **E**xperiences, and is a partnership between Oregon State University and 14 Oregon school districts—mostly rural—to provide science and math enrichment for under-represented and other educationally underserved students in Grades 4-12. The purpose of the program is to increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students and those from groups with low high school graduation rates who graduate from high school qualified to enroll in college and pursue careers related to science, math, health, engineering and teaching.

During the last 21 years as a part of the National Science Foundation Long Term Ecological Research (NSF-LTER) program, the Andrews Experimental Forest has become a leader in the analysis of forest and stream ecosystem dynamics.



*Nestled in the central Cascade Range of Oregon, the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest is a living laboratory that provides unparalleled opportunities for the study of forest and stream ecosystems.*

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## Taking Environmental Education to the Classroom

### SMARTY Bus, *Region 2*



*SMARTY Bus visiting students in Sheridan, Wyoming.*

The SMARTY Bus stands for **Sharing Mobile After School Resources Teaching Youth Bus**. The bus is used for an afterschool program which is sponsored by Project Youth, a nonprofit organization located in Sheridan, Wyoming. Students participating in the afterschool programs come from one of eight Sheridan County elementary schools, or one of the two day care centers. There are seven programs, all of which are presented by Forest Service employees. The bus is targeted towards students in Grades 3- 6 as an afterschool enrichment activity. These children have

the privilege of being visited by the bus twice each month. The goal of the program is to educate students about a range of environmental topics—information about our National Forests is at the top of the list. In 2006, the SMARTY Bus directly reached 180 people, 30 of which were teachers. The SMARTY Bus has been successful in providing students with the opportunity to learn about the environment while having fun.

### Adopt-a-School Program, *Northern Research Station*



*Students at Pennsylvania elementary school get help from a Forest Service volunteer with planting a tree.*

For the past five years, the Forest Service Northern Research Station and the Marple Newtown School District in Pennsylvania have been actively engaged in the innovative *Adopt-a-School* program. The goal of this comprehensive partnership is to design and promote environmental literacy, while improving science education for all ages. The partners work to boost academic performance at multiple instructional levels and help schools maintain academic standards by meeting the goals of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. One component of the program was to revise High School science curriculum and initiate planning of field days for 300, ninth-grade students. The program has also installed and maintained discovery gardens at three elementary schools. Another focus was to initiate planning for a school terrarium at one elementary school. Lastly, the program supported the purchase of inquiry-based kits at Paxon Hollow Middle School. These efforts reached 400 students and teachers in the local area.

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## Michigan Envirothon, *Region 9*

When it comes to solving environmental issues, it is rare that children get a chance to share their ideas and beliefs. Instead, decisions are often left solely to the “professionals”, without regard to young people’s opinions. The national environmental competition, Canon Envirothon, engages this next generation of conservation leaders. This engaging, international program introduces students to real-life environmental issues and gives them an opportunity to learn about natural resource issues, and collectively craft solutions. The goal of the program is to promote a desire to learn more about the natural environment and provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to make sound resource decisions. Participating High School students form five-person teams to compete for recognition and scholarships by demonstrating their knowledge of environmental science and natural resource management. Throughout the competition, the teams focus on four universal testing categories consisting of soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife and a current environmental issue.



*High school students tackle outdoor testing during Michigan’s Envirothon.*

## Agriculture Day, *Region 3*

Smokey Bear was on hand to help young children learn about fire safety during the annual *Agricultural Day*. Targeted for young children between the second- and fifth-grade, students also learned about the importance of preserving natural resources. Forest Service employees presented exciting lessons, using visuals and inviting Smokey Bear to meet the children. The students became very involved in the presentation as they were taught safety procedures when camping and participating in other activities pertaining to fire prevention. In 2006, the *Agricultural Day* presentation reached 655 people in the Region’s three areas, 580 of whom were students. The children, as well as the teachers, learned a lot about fire prevention on *Agricultural Day* and expressed how much they enjoyed presentations each year.



*Smokey Bear and a Forest Service Ranger educate students on Agriculture Day.*

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## Programs Built on Partnerships

### Inner City Youth Institute, *Pacific Northwest Research Station*



*Inner City Youth field trip out viewing spotted owls in Portland Oregon's Old Growth Forest.*

The Inner City Youth Institute (ICYI) is an organization that focuses on providing conservation education to children. The program was created through the collaboration between the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Oregon State University. The program is based in Portland, Oregon. The main goal of ICYI is to increase diversity throughout the Forest Service. The organization targets underprivileged and minority youth by helping students investigate rewarding career opportunities. Activities include forest-related internships, summer programs, clubs, and job shadowing. In turn, ICYI hopes to attract interest in environmental issues and

encourage participants to pursue future careers in natural resources. In 2006, the program reached 125 individuals, five of whom were educators. Participants live in urban settings where exposure to environmental issues may be limited.

### Noxious Weed Management, *Region 3*

Forest Service educators created an invasive weed display to educate members of the public interested in native Arizona flora. The exhibit was on display for a period of six months and was viewed by approximately 24,000 people. The exhibit incorporated interactive activities for children and covered identification and information about weed outbreaks in central Arizona, the relationship between noxious weeds to catastrophic fires in the desert, and the effects of noxious weeds on watershed values and recreation. The goals of the display were to increase awareness of invasive plant species among the general public and encourage the public to take measures to prevent the spread of invasive plants.

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## Ely Film Festival, Region 9

For the second consecutive year, the Superior National Forest participated in the annual Ely Film Festival. This community festival is organized in partnership with Vermilion Community College, the Boundary Waters Ecology Group, and others. The Festival's theme was the 2005-Forest Service Centennial—*Celebration of 100 Years*. During the festival, organizers ran one movie each evening, with a five-film 'marathon' held on Saturday. The award-winning documentary, "The Greatest Good", was kicked-off the festival, while "Chased by the Light" by Jim Brandenburg was the final film. Forest Service staff developed and staffed two large displays about the Superior National Forest's history and the history of the Forest Service. The main goals of the partnership were to celebrate the Forest Service Centennial with films and displays, inform residents and visitors about Forest Service history, and provide current information about the Superior NF. The Ely Film Festival helped to better inform 50 individuals in a fun and friendly way.



*The Superior National Forest highlighted the Forest Service Centennial during the Ely Film Festival.*

## Woodsy Owl/Head Start Partnership-Kentucky Pilot Site

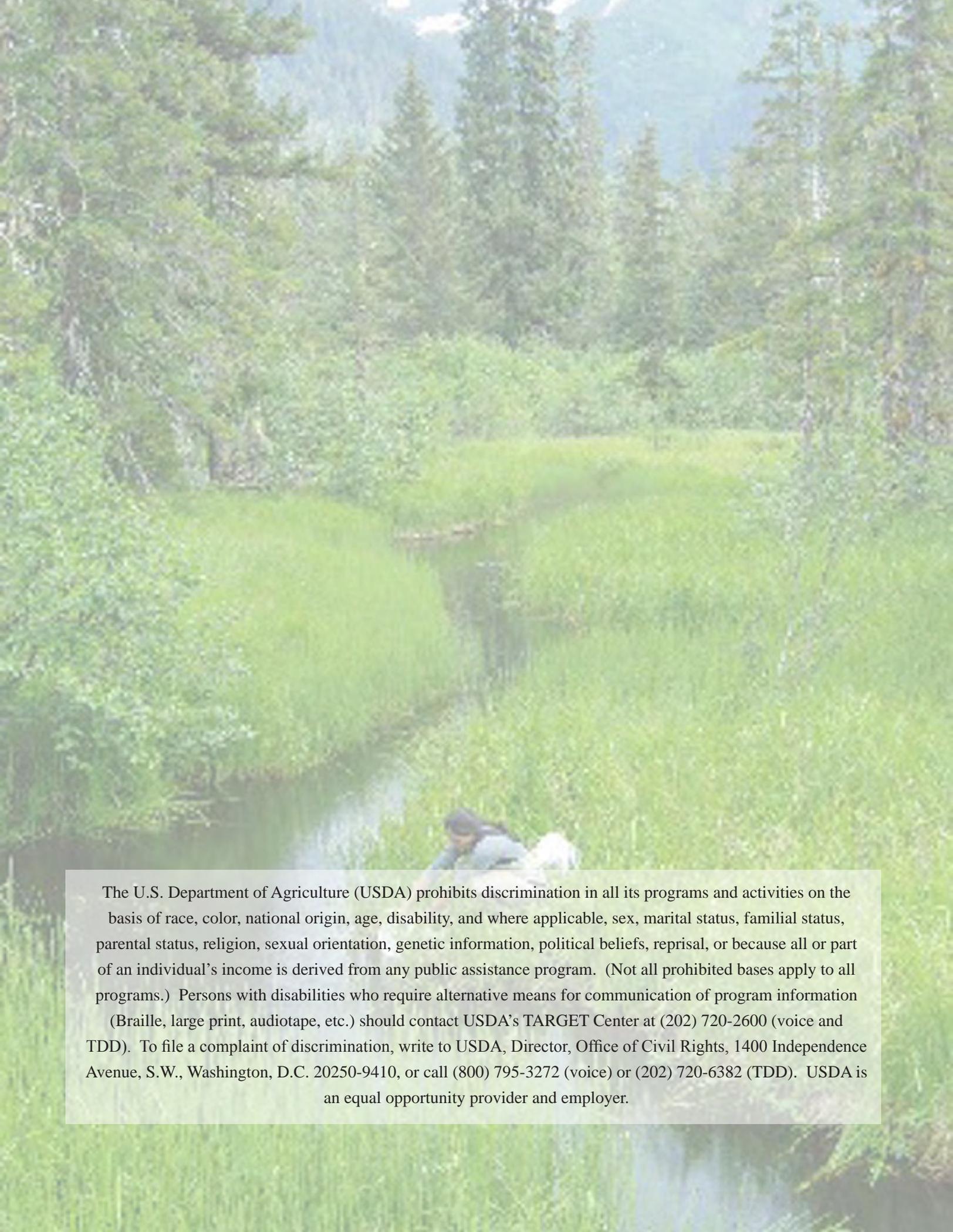
A new partnership between Woodsy Owl and the Head Start program bring exciting, and age-appropriate conservation education materials to pre-schoolers throughout the nation. The goal of the partnership is to use the charisma of Woodsy Owl to instill conservation practices in Head Start children. Woodsy's great appeal to children makes him an effective conservation ambassador. The Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative is a Head Start grantee and participant in the Woodsy Owl pilot program. The Cooperative has 26 Head Start centers spread throughout Kentucky and is developing the Woodsy Owl education model that can be applied to Head Start centers throughout the nation. The partnership includes classroom visits by Woodsy Owl, free distribution of the *Woodsy's ABCs* book, a parent's night, treasure hunting, recycling competition, lessons about trees, and tree planting events. During 2006, more than 260 children and their families were introduced to Woodsy Owl and his environmental message. Program expansion is planned in the coming years.



*Forest Service employee, Kim Feltner, introduces a young student to Woodsy Owl.*



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A person is kneeling in a lush green field next to a stream, surrounded by tall trees. The scene is peaceful and natural.

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