

Celebrating Arbor Day at the Charles E. Bessey Nursery

Cyd Janssen, Public Affairs Specialist, Nebraska National Forest and Grasslands

The perfect venue for exciting Arbor Day celebrations in Nebraska were held at the Charles E. Bessey Nursery, which produces over two million seedlings every year and is the oldest federal seedling nursery in the nation. Working with the Bessey Ranger District and the volunteer group Friends of the Nebraska National Forests, participants in the celebration had a rare opportunity to see the Nursery in full production; growing, packing and shipping hundreds of thousands of seedlings to the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, conservation districts, and other government agencies. The seedlings are used for reforestation following fire and insect infestations, wildlife/habitat plantings, wind breaks, conservation plantings, as well as for general planting.

"We've just shipped 150,000 container seedlings of Douglas-Fir and Ponderosa Pine to the site of the Hayman fire in Pike San Isabel National Forest in Colorado," says Richard Gilbert, Bessey Nursery Manager. "These seedlings were grown from cones gathered by Pike San Isabel National Forest Service personnel near Colorado Springs and sent to us for extraction and storage until they are needed. The seedlings were started in February 2013, packed once dormant in November 2013, stored in a freezer at 26 degrees, and today we are ready to return them home. It's gratifying to know we play a part in preserving the natural integrity of our nation's forests."

According to Gilbert, in addition the Hayman fire site, another 136,000 container seedlings were shipped to the Pike San Isabel National Forest. In total almost 2.3 million seedlings were shipped for spring planting to forests in the Rocky Mountain Region and State Agencies including 223,000 to the San Juan National Forest, 160,000 to the Black Hills National Forest; 45,000 to the Nebraska National Forest; 50,000 to the Kansas Forest Service; 15,000 to the Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest; 48,000 to the Grand Mesa, Umcompahgre National Forest; 85,000 to the White River National Forest; 1,000,000 to the Natural Resource Districts of Nebraska, 300,000 to Conservation Districts in South Dakota and North Dakota and large trees to the Memorial Grove near Monument, Colorado.



1st Photo: Richard Gilbert, Bessey Nursery Manager talking to students from Sandhills Public Schools about the seed collection process, growing process and replanting. Photo courtesy of Tim Buskirk, Bessey District Ranger.

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More than 100 people turned out for the event, including approximately 65 students from Sandhills Public School, college students from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, radio, newspaper and TV media representatives, State Senator Al Davis and representatives from Sen. Johann's office.

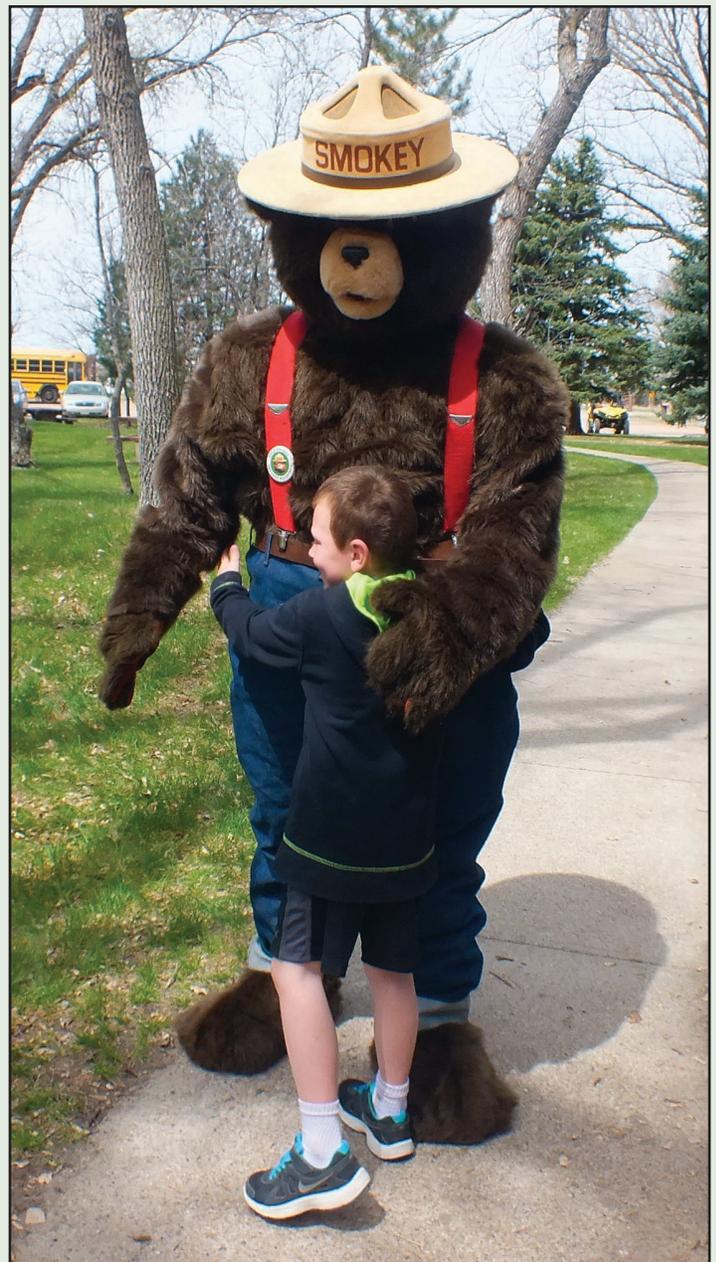
"It was exciting to have so many students involved in our Arbor Day celebration," said Tim Buskirk, Bessey District Ranger. *"It was an honor to introduce them to the rich history of Bessey and the unique hand-planted forest. I hope many of them come back with their families soon".*

The event also celebrated the kick-off for a new, accessible Discovery Loup Trail to loop through the Bessey Arboretum, conveniently located near the Bessey Visitor Center and Nursery. The three-quarter mile trail will be completed by Friends of the Nebraska National Forests, working together with the Bessey staff.

According to volunteer Pam Reed, Nebraska Master Naturalist, the project involves renovation to a portion of the Bessey Arboretum, new tree identification markers for the 65 tree species located there, interpretive exhibits and a kiosk will be installed. Throughout the project educational materials will be developed to showcase this unique Nebraska ecosystem, and the experimental, hand-planted forest and federal nursery.

For more information on how you can help out with the trail, go to:

www.tourthomascountynebraska.com/discoveryloup.



Smokey Bear gets an Arbor Day hug from one child from Sandhills Public School who was one of over 100 people who turned out for the event, including college students from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, radio, newspaper and TV media representatives, State Senator Al Davis and representatives from Sen. Johann's office. Photo courtesy of Tim Buskirk, Bessey District Ranger

USDA Forest Service | Rocky Mountain Region

**Colorado: Arapaho Roosevelt NF & Pawnee NG | Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, & Gunnison NFs
Pike-San Isabel National Forests and Cimarron-Comanche NGs | Rio Grande NF | San Juan NF
White River NF | Nebraska: Nebraska & Samuel R. McKelvie NFs | South Dakota: Black Hills NF
Wyoming: Bighorn NF | Medicine Bow-Routt NFs & Thunder Basin NG | Shoshone NF**

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