



Healthy Kids ☀ Healthy Forests

ACTIVE PARTNERS:

- Bitter Root RC&D
- Bitterroot National Forest
- Darby Public Schools
- Hamilton Public Schools
- Corvallis Public Schools
- Lone Rock Public Schools
- Lolo Public Schools
- Ravalli Headstart
- 21st Century Grant Program Coordinators
- Trapper Creek Job Corps Center
- Lee Metcalf NWR
- USFS-RM Research Station
- Ravalli County Resource Advisory Committee
- Kids First
- Bitterroot X-Country Ski Club

LIKELY PARTNERS:

- Bitterroot Valley 4-H
- City/County Parks & Rec Departments
- City/County Law Enforcement
- City/County Child Services
- Department of Justice
- Healthy Family Coalition
- Local Civic Organizations

An Exciting New Partnership...

Partners within the Bitterroot Valley are recognizing the great benefits that can be generated by combining our interests in children’s health issues with the hopes and concerns we share regarding the health of the natural resources surrounding our communities.

Getting young people engaged in the natural world is an excellent way to promote healthy lifestyles. It is also an excellent way to expand the pool of concerned and knowledgeable citizens who recreate and volunteer in our forests today ~ and who, as future voters and policy makers, will become the guardians of our forests tomorrow.



Addressing the “8th Intelligence”

Of Howard Gardner’s 9 Multiple Intelligences, the 8th is labeled “The Naturalist”. Sensitivity to the environment is its hallmark, while skills to observe, understand and organize patterns in the natural environment are key components. Promoting these skills in our next generation of citizen leaders will benefit students and natural resources.

Primary Goals of our Partnership

We are working to enhance the:

- ▶ Short- & long-term physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of valley children, along with the...
- ▶ Short- & long-term health of National Forests by engaging kids in the care and enjoyment of their National Forests.

We want to get kids out into the woods! They can help land managers monitor the condition of the Forest and restore unhealthy components of the ecosystem through activities that are physically, intellectually and mentally stimulating. The end results will improve the health of both the Bitterroot Valley’s children and the National Forests.

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HEALTHY FORESTS

LIKELY PARTNERS, continued:

MT State Forester &
Department of Natural
Resources

MT Fish, Wildlife and
Parks

Mountain Biking Club

Outdoor Sport
Associations &
Industries

Public Schools in
Victor,
Stevensville, and
Florence

Rocky Mountain Elk
Foundation

Trout Unlimited

USDA Forest Service

USDA Natural Resource
Conservation Service

USDA Extension Service

Western MT Addiction
Task Force



Three Key Objectives

1) Increase kids' recreational use of National Forests. To best serve kids and their families, these rec opportunities have to be easy to get to and easy to use. And best of all, kids need to be introduced to the many possibilities that their National Forests, neighboring city and county parks, and state lands have to offer! Helping young people fall in love with the natural world may be tough duty, but our partners are excited to take that on.

2) Expand kids' involvement in management of their National Forests. The National Forests will be better managed with the additional volunteer workforce and classroom projects that clean campgrounds,



naturalize heavily used wilderness campsites, monitor noxious weeds quality and assist public land managers in a variety of ways. These activities have also proven to enhance one's sense of purpose & meaning (the very definition of spiritual well being) as well as instilling a life-long interest in the natural world.

3) Engage the broader community in issues relating to Healthy Kids and Healthy Forests. It's a natural fit for many organizations in a community that is constantly reaffirming its collaborative nature.



Why Here? Why Now?

When one takes a casual glance at kids in the Bitterroot Valley, things look pretty good ~ kind of like that mythical place where "the women are strong, the men are good looking and all the kids are above average". But initial impressions are deceiving.

18.5% of our junior and senior high school students attempted suicide in 2003. That's 4.3% higher than in 2002, a high number for MT which "leads" the nation. The number of junior and senior high school students who drank alcohol before age 13 was 45.8% in 2003, a 2% increase from 2002 and 2% higher than the state average. Obesity and inactivity lead to a higher risk of developing diabetes and heart conditions. They can also lead to poor body image and low self-esteem which in turn, can lead to higher incidences of suicide and abuse of drugs and alcohol.

Similarly, few can drive through the Bitterroot without admiring the beauty of the forested mountains surrounding the valley. But upon closer inspection, much of the forests are impacted by insects and disease, infested with noxious weeds and are highly susceptible to devastating wildfires.

Significant issues exist here in the Bitterroot. And, the people with the will to address these issues are here and are already taking action.

What's Needed Next?

While much work is already under way, funds are needed to support the partners' broad range of action items. Budgets are being reviewed and grants are being pursued.

The Bitterroot's Healthy Kids—Healthy Forests has been supported nationally by the USDA USFS as the program received one of the competitive USFS- More Kids in the Woods grants in 2008.



The program compliments:

The President's Challenge

USDI & USDA's Get Fit with US Campaign, co-sponsored by the American Assoc. of Family Physicians and the Outdoor Industry Association, and

The National Recreation & Park Association's Hearts N' Parks.