



for the greatest good

**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Forest Service



# willamette national forest **WORKING FOR THE GREATEST GOOD**

Highlights from 2012 — *We work in communities, searching for the greatest good. We all know that nature matters and are working towards discovering what nature can sustainably provide.*

— Meg Mitchell, Forest Supervisor



# Nature Matters

Willamette water cascades, babbles, and seeps its way past age-old lava as it journeys down from the Cascade Crest to arrive on, and under, the valley floor. This precious water from the Willamette National Forest nourishes the lands and forests that shape our life in Oregon. This gift from the forest supplies all forms of life with clear, refreshing, delicious water. While it is not apparent when you turn on the tap, our employees are the silent stewards of this resource, working hard to protect and enhance water quality in the Willamette watershed.



*Recruiting future firefighters at the State Fair.*

In 2012, we are especially proud of our efforts to plan and implement recreation, timber, wildlife, and other projects while carefully preserving and protecting water quality. Our challenge is finding the way to balance use and preservation, conserving resources while supplying for the needs of communities. Our aquatic specialists guide managers and co-workers in innovative ways to protect and enhance riparian areas, in-stream habitat, and whole watersheds. Clean water is key to this place we call home, and essential to maintaining the quality of life we appreciate in the Pacific Northwest.

*Left: Engaging kids outdoors is easy; just add sun, water and bugs!*



*Youth learn about how streams work by using a model watershed.*

In addition to our daily work of conservation, we are also restoring previously degraded aquatic ecosystems. In 2012, we worked with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the South Santiam Watershed Council, and Cascade Timber Consultants of Sweet Home to improve fish habitat in Canyon Creek, a tributary of the South Santiam River. Foresters and fish biologists from government, non-profit, and business sectors worked side by side to place whole trees securely into streams so that fish have a place to spawn and rear their young. Working across boundaries like this is called an all lands approach; this model of focusing on nature first, and human created boundaries last, reflects our desire to work collaboratively for the resources we all value.

The Forest is also preparing for the future of water in the Willamette Valley by helping to educate the next generation of land stewards. Classrooms and events throughout Oregon use the stream simulator, which was developed by Ernie Ledbetter, a hydrologist on the Willamette National Forest. He and his wife, Marcia, are both former Forest Service employees who love kids, water, art, and conservation. They are now small business owners in the Oakridge area, talking with kids about the future of water, communities, and landscapes as well as building stream simulators and other educational resources for agencies and schools in the Northwest.

# Nature Provides

Willamette wood has long been a staple of local communities and it continues to play a role in local economies today. The location, timing, amount, and types of harvest have changed over the years, but the idea of a sustainable supply of timber and water (Organic Act of 1897) has not. Willamette National Forest employees are proud to be part of this tradition and proud to be part of searching, together with communities, for a way to sustainably produce timber and other wood products. Today, much of the wood produced on the Willamette National Forest is taken as a by-product of larger efforts to restore wildlife and other forested habitats.



*Forester Tim Bailey checks out a legacy oak in the newly restored savanna.*



*Workers clear merchantable logs from the restored savanna.*

In 2012, we are especially proud of the completion of the Jim's Creek project on our Middle Fork Ranger District. One sunny day in 2001, Forester Tim Bailey was inventorying forest stands on his way back to the office from another nearby project. As Tim walked the hillside above Camper's Flat, he noticed a great number of dead oak trees, the majority of which were shorter than the surrounding Douglas fir trees. In his mind's eye, he saw a very different landscape that once occupied this ground; graceful oaks surrounded by open grasses. He also found old pines on the site, some of which were carved by the Indian people who used this site years ago. The forester in Tim hypothesized that the oaks shared the site until the Douglas firs slowly crept up and overtook the older oaks. A group that included dozens of scientists, activists and community members generated a plan that included harvesting the Douglas firs, burning the underbrush, and planting more oaks to restore this important savanna.

Today, after nearly a decade of planning and work, the Jim's Creek Savanna has a new lease on life. Scientists and managers continue to monitor the effort, and community members are welcome to call Tim at (541) 782-2283 for a site visit or more information. The Jim's Creek project netted approximately 10 million board feet of timber for local mills and roughly 100 non-government workers participated in the on-site work.

***Right:** Burning the savanna regenerates grasses and forbs that are important food for wildlife.*





*Forest Service employees and other community members restore a local playground as part of the Ford Foundation's Rural Communities Initiatives.*

## Being in Community

Willamette employees work with local communities to achieve a collective vision for National Forest management. As servants of the American people, our employees work with others across the region and the country who are interested in environmental and social issues. Nearly all of our employees live in valley communities and many serve those communities through volunteer and other leadership roles.



*Douglas McKenzie Bi-Centennial: Forest Service employees share information about the forest with local residents and visitors.*

In 2012, we are especially proud to celebrate the history of the McKenzie River Valley along with the Bi-centennial celebration of Douglas McKenzie, the man credited with naming this special place. Working together with Oregon Tourism and history advocates, our McKenzie River Ranger District participated in the summer-long festival of events. Outcomes from this effort included a new continuity of roadside signage for local river communities, increased community interactions at multiple scales, and a greater knowledge of local history and environmental issues by local residents and others who attended.

## Finding the Greatest Good

Employees in the Willamette National Forest experience work as a great challenge and deep honor, to be a part of defining sustainability on the ground. One thing is for sure, we individually will never know it all, nor will we find some absolute answer to the greatest good: since good is a societal construct and society constantly changes. What we promise is that we are here, willing and eager to learn together. Please be in touch and join the conversation toward a better tomorrow.



*Teaching youth to read maps prepares them for a lifetime of safe adventures.*

In 2012, we also celebrated the 100-year history of the Willamette National Forest with a gathering at historic Fish Lake Remount Depot. This gathering brought old and young together to learn about historic skills and times, such as re-creating a historic ranger visit, horsepacking skills, old time music, and a crosscut saw exhibition. You are encouraged to enjoy Fish Lake today. Winter cabins offer a snowy retreat (accessible only by snowshoes or skies); spring weather brings the chance to float on the lake; and summer days pass gently under sunny skies and soft breezes. You can access this alpine getaway on Highway 126. Call the McKenzie River Ranger District at (541) 822-3381 for more information.



**Willamette National Forest**  
[www.fs.usda.gov/willamette](http://www.fs.usda.gov/willamette)

*Thank you for taking the time to read over some of the highlights from our 2012 work. I encourage you to add your voice and contribute to finding the greatest good together. You can contact Jude McHugh at [jmchugh@fs.fed.us](mailto:jmchugh@fs.fed.us) or 541.225.6305 with questions.*

— Meg Mitchell, Forest Supervisor



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