



## Featured Site: Atwell Island

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Atwell Island site is located in the town of Alpaugh, along the shores of the historic Tulare Lake bed in the Central Valley of California. The area is rich in both cultural and natural history: Before Tulare Lake dried up permanently in the early 20th century, it was the largest freshwater body west of the Mississippi and supported vast flocks of waterbirds and a wide variety of other plants and animals. In addition, the region has been inhabited continuously by humans for over 12,000 years. Most of the region is now under cultivation, though, and few people, even local residents, realize how much the landscape has changed or what it once looked like.

The Atwell Island project was started by BLM in 1999, with the cooperation of the Bureau of Reclamation and Fish and Wildlife Service. The project was created with two goals: to restore marginal farmland to native wildlife habitat, and to begin an education program in Alpaugh's schools that would integrate restoration activities with science education. In the last five years, the restoration work has grown to encompass 1,200 acres, and BLM has partnered with the Atwell Island School District and the Tulare County Office of Education to implement an environmental education program.



A student inspects a Hermann's kangaroo rat that was trapped during the annual small mammal trapping sessions.



Atwell Island currently has 30 acres of wetland for ducks and shorebirds to utilize.

Much of the infrastructure for the program is now in place. With the help of AmeriCorps NCCC crews, BLM has built a greenhouse on the school campus. In the greenhouse, students will learn both sustainable farming techniques and how to grow native plants. AmeriCorps NCCC crews have also helped to build a nature trail in Alpaugh that can be used for school field trips and outdoor education once interpretive signs have been installed.

Other BLM Atwell Island projects that will integrate with the environmental education program include additional nature trails, a visitor's center, and a 300-acre wetland complex with viewing platforms and blinds. BLM and Alpaugh Schools are now planning an environmental education curriculum that, by motivating students to get involved in and committed to education and environmental sustainability, promises to strengthen the community of Alpaugh and help make it an economically viable community.

For more information contact Shane Barrow at [sbarrow@blm.gov](mailto:sbarrow@blm.gov) or visit the Hands on the Land website [www.handsontheland.org](http://www.handsontheland.org).

## Member News

### Alder Creek Children's Forest

The Second Annual Spring Fair for about 100 middle and junior high school students was held on May 18 at Alder Creek Children's Forest near Canyonville, Oregon. Students came from schools in Canyonville, Riddle, and Days Creek, Oregon. The Fair had learning stations where the students learned about forest management, plant identification, monitoring, milling lumber, and cultural resources. Senior students provided leadership as assistants to the Forest Service, BLM, timber industry and other instructors. Team games were played after lunch.

"Students in Southern Oregon will have opportunities to learn in environments that best fit their learning styles and are more accommodated to the skills that the students will need to manage resource lands in the future. The Alder Creek Children's Forest provides a land laboratory where different learning styles can be tested in various applications," stated participant Leonard J. Schussel, PhD.

Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) provided bus transport assistance to some schools. Media covering the event included KPIC television and The Roseburg News-Review.



Students study Forest Stages from Alan Baumann during the Spring Fair.



What Tree Is This?  
A group of students learn how to ID trees from the forest at Alder Creek Children's Forest.

## Web Corner

### Posting Educator Resources

Educator Resources are helpful for other HOL sites and teachers visiting the website. Sites can now include PDF files to share. To post an educator resource, follow these easy steps:

1. On the Hands on the Land home page, click on 'Admin Hub'.
2. Login to the Admin Hub using your username and password.
3. Click on 'Post my Educator Resources'.
4. Enter the appropriate information and click 'submit'.
5. Check the Educator Resource page to be sure your posting is accurate and to see what other sites are doing!

## Upcoming Events

### Program Evaluation Course

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is offering its online course, Applied Environmental Education Program Evaluation, **June 12-August 25, 2006**. The course provides participants with an overview of evaluation and an opportunity to practice skills designing and using evaluation tools for environmental education and outreach programs. Contact Angela Arkin at the UWSP Extension Office, 715-346-3854, for a registration form.