

Monthly Newsletter, December 2005



Mystical Journey

Chelsea Beach

Honorable Mention, Feathered Friends Art
Contest held by the Friends of the San Luis
Valley National Wildlife Refuges

Member News

The new **Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Interpretive Center**, Fort Benton, MT, is scheduled to open spring '06. Fort Benton teachers developed an interdisciplinary curriculum on topics along a reach of the Wild and Scenic Upper Missouri River, which is at the heart of the monument, and was noted in Lewis and Clark's journals. The first trial 'float' to test the curriculum was taken by Fort Benton 7th Graders in the spring of 2005. Along the way students worked at various stations to learn about the geology, local cultural history, and botany. The most common words from the students during the day were "WOW" and "this is really cool!"



The White Cliffs

Throughout 2005, Oregon Trail Elementary School students and their teachers have partnered with staff at **National Historic Trails Interpretive Center (NHTIC)**, Casper, WY, to learn at NHTIC's outdoor classroom. This area served as the last crossing of the North Platte River by 1800s pioneers. Today it is a public recreation area.



Students participate in field studies along the Upper Missouri River



Students prepare to use their GPS units

In May 2005, students planted willow and cottonwood trees to help enhance the visual appeal of this important historic site. In the fall, the 5th grade students and their teachers returned to the site to check the trees the students had planted. Many students had named their trees, so it was quite amusing to watch them look for "Twiggy" and "Slim" to see if the "baby trees" survived the summer. Additionally, using an observation sheet, they identified, classified, and drew pictures of different types of vegetation.

The purpose for the second visit to the site was for the students to use their newly acquired GPS skills. Teachers Janet Wragge and Paula Sorensen provided students with a paper listing 10 coordinates. Students were required to put the points into their GPS devices, then find the points and describe what they found at the different locations. Teachers also had a surprise cache with snacks and drinks hidden at the site where the trail emigrants left the North Platte River to cross over to the Sweetwater. A third trip is scheduled to finish finding all the GPS points and to compare plant observations noting the changes which plants undergo as seasons change. Partnering history with science, art and language arts is the focus of this year's HOL program at the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, and the partnership with Oregon Trail Elementary continues to flourish!

Featured Site

Alder Creek Children's Forest (ACCF), a charitable nonprofit organization based in Douglas County, Oregon, offers a place, partnerships, and programs designed for young citizens to learn to work together to create healthy, sustainable forests, watersheds, and communities. The site in the 2300-acre watershed reveals a wide array of soils, water regimes, wildlife and vegetation. The land, logged in the mid-1900s, is near an 80-acre tract of old growth Douglas fir on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land providing a wonderful opportunity for comparisons and learning.



Through a set of ACCF sponsored activities, middle and high school students learn skills to manage assets of the Forest. Students who participated in the Fall Forum that focused on “Managing Mortality” learned how to cruise beetle-killed timber. The cruises helped the site manager contract salvage logging operations. The students then helped the ACCF Board decide how to spend proceeds from the harvest. Other learning-by-doing projects include student construction of a footbridge across Alder Creek. Students learned on-the-job applications of trigonometry and chemical interactions between wood preservative and the zinc-coated hardware.

In addition to building a bridge and cruising timber, the students learn a historical perspective. With a grant from the Oregon Council for the Humanities, students will interview “ol’timers” to characterize early day wildlife, mining, agriculture, forestry and water management in the Alder-Jordan Creek watershed. These activities further equip students to manage small woodlands within the context of their watersheds and neighborhoods and to participate knowledgeably in decision making about public forest management.



Alder Creek Bridge ribbon cutting

Other ACCF highlights of the 2005-06 school year:

- broadcasting regular newsletters via Moodle, an online course management system. See <http://www.aldercreek.org/moodle>
 - conducting a Summer Area Teacher's Institute in conjunction with Douglas County/Oregon State University Extension. Support comes from HOL, Oregon Forest Resources Institute, and BLM.
 - hosting a display and picture contest entitled “My Children’s Forest” at Canyonville's Pioneer Days. View winning entries at <http://aldercreek.org> or <http://handsontheland.org>
 - coordinating a tree harvest and revegetation tour as a follow-up to the Managing Mortality fall forum.
- Tours of the ACCF site and Alder-Jordan Creek watershed with local educational professionals and volunteers are regularly scheduled. You can contact ACCF at 541-839-4379 or via email to info@aldercreek.org

Odds and Ends

Thank you to all the site personnel who contributed information for the Hands on the Land Newsletter. If your site was not included here, it will be in future newsletters. If you were not contacted and would like to share what is going on at your site, please e-mail Ellen Reid at The Keystone Center.

Remember to sign up for the upcoming conference in the Las Vegas area entitled “Our Places Tell Stories-Making Connections with our Audiences”, January 24-27, 2006. Learn more by visiting www.publiclands.unlv.edu.