

Alder Creek Children's Forest Wins Web Resources Award

Roseburg, OR – Alder Creek Children's Forest (ACCF) recently won a Web Resources Award from the Hands on the Land Network. Nominated by the Bureau of Land Management, the non-profit organization is being recognized for its years of web resource development. Presentation of the award will take place at the ACCF's Board of Directors' Meeting at noon on February 9.

The Children's Forest is being recognized for having number of informative educator resources, student work, curriculum, and other web resources unique to the site. At ACCF's webpage (aldercreek.org), main menu options offer links to background information, calendar, site tour, forest quiz, resources, forum, and how to help. Background information lays out the site's history, mission, educational programs, Board of Directors, and contacts. In the calendar, one can find out what's happening at ACCF.

The ACCF Tour allows one to travel by balloon, touch down in five ACCF locations, and do a treasure hunt game at each location. The Forest Quiz assembles a set of "puzzle pictures" from ACCF educational activities, and web surfers are encouraged to find the answer to each puzzle. As a part of their educational activities, ACCF offers a list of online Resources on forests, watersheds, sustainability, and related important issues affecting the area and region. Students are also contributing to a GIS (geographic information system) to store, view, analyze data with a spatial reference.

ACCF Board President Jim Proctor says, "We are working with Oregon State University's Umpqua Basin Explorer (www.umpquaexplorer.info), an online GIS and natural resource digital library of Douglas County, to develop opportunities for K-12 students to gather, share, view, and analyze data from the ACCF site and surrounding Alder Creek-Jordan Creek catchment, serving real-world planning, management, and monitoring needs while developing valuable academic and professional skills."

Like the Hands on the Land website (handsontheland.org), ACCF's own on-line and interactive Forum offers the opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions with others concerning forests and watersheds. "We value input and ask that contributors respect each other's viewpoints and perspectives," notes Proctor.

Finally, ACCF's "How to Help" section identifies how people can volunteer to help ACCF. "We have many opportunities where folks can contribute," says Proctor. There's info on joining Friends of ACCF and contributing financially to support ACCF's special approach to youth, forestry and watershed education.

According to Jay Carlson, District Manager of the BLMs Roseburg District, the award is justified because, through its web resources, Alder Creek Children's Forest achieves several important goals related to youth and natural resources. First, the site provides natural resource education and employable skills to students. Secondly, students conduct inventory to provide baseline data for watershed monitoring and restoration. "By offering watershed-scale educational programs linking forests, watersheds, and communities, they are cultivating a knowledgeable and committed young citizenry," says Carlson.

"Alder Creek Children's Forest provides a model to young citizens of the benefits of working together," notes Jim Proctor, who also serves as a professor of geography at Lewis & Clark College in Portland.

The Web Resource Award is presented by Hands on the Land, a nationwide network of field classrooms designed to enhance kindergarten through high school student learning. HOL is sponsored by Partners in Resource Education, a collaboration of five federal agencies (including Bureau of Land Management) and a nonprofit educational foundation. Established in 1999, "Hands on the Land" has sometimes been called "America's largest classroom." Currently, nearly 60 federal agency sites are participating nationwide. Education specialists at these sites work closely with local educators to develop programs that meet state education standards. In the process, school subjects are brought to life as students and teachers engage in hands-on activities in natural and cultural settings. Through the HOL website (www.handsontheland.org), students can learn about other sites and participate in environmental monitoring and other interactive projects.