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Tools for Teachers

Six county educators learn about forestry, watersheds from summer program

DANIELLE GILLESPIE, dgillespie@newsreview.info

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CANYONVILLE -- The sun filtered in through the thick canopy of Douglas fir and incense cedar trees Tuesday, illuminating the compasses held by a group of teachers.

The middle and high school teachers studied the compasses with complete concentration as a forester explained how they worked.

The six Douglas County teachers are participating in the Alder Creek Children's Forest Summer Area Teachers' Institute that began Monday. During the four-day institute, teachers are given tools to teach hands-on forestry activities to their students that link topics such as science, history and math.

The objective is to train teachers so they'll be able to take their students to the Alder Creek Children's Forest near Canyonville during the school year for learning opportunities, said Jim Proctor, president of the Alder Creek Children's Forest Board.

Alder Creek Children's Forest is a nonprofit organization that has set aside about 80 acres of forest for youth to learn how to create healthy, sustainable forests and watersheds. This is the first time the nonprofit has offered the teachers' institute.

"It's a great educational opportunity for the kids," said Scott Hampton, a science teacher at Days Creek School who is participating.

On Tuesday, Hampton and the other teachers found out how to take an inventory of the vegetation in an 80-acre old growth forest managed by the Bureau of Land Management off of Canyonville-Riddle Road.

John Punches, an Oregon State University Extension Service forester, showed the teachers how to find the slope of a hill with an instrument called a clinometer and to find the height and diameter of a tree with a measuring stick. The teachers are partaking in both field experiences and classroom exercises.

They're gaining knowledge about forest ecology and management. They're also discovering how to analyze data about forests using computer programs.



The purpose is to show teachers the links between watersheds, forests and communities, said Proctor, who's also a professor at Lewis and Clark College in Portland.

Alder Creek Children's Forest is located in the Alder-Jordan Creek watershed, which is 2,300 acres and contains the cities of Riddle and Canyonville. The watershed's land is owned by various groups, including the government, a tribe and private citizens, and it takes all those landowners to work together to maintain it, Proctor said. The hope is teachers will

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Forest experience: Summer Area Teachers' Institute program participants, from left, Dave Swenson and Scott Hampton, assist field school instructor John Punches of the Oregon State University Extension Service in measuring the circumference and height of a tree Tuesday. The program is designed for teachers who are interested in teaching their students how forests, watersheds and communities are connected.

JON AUSTRIA / N-R staff photo



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Measuring

Oregon State University Extension Service forester John PUNCHES and Dave Swenson, a teacher in the Oakland School District, attempt to measure the angle of a slope and height of a tree while using a clinometer.

JON AUSTRIA / N-R staff photo

share that lesson with their students.

"We want to teach young citizens to work together," he said.

Teachers are given a \$250 stipend for completing the summer institute and another \$250 if they bring their students back to the children's forest during the school year.

The stipend comes from an \$8,000 grant from Hands on the Land, a network of field classrooms sponsored by Partners in Resource Education, which consists of five federal agencies, a nonprofit foundation, schools and other private sector partners.

Oregon Forest Resources Institute, created by the Oregon Legislature in 1991, supplied materials about Oregon's forestry for the teachers.

Cindy Barkhurst, a Winston Middle School teacher, said she's excited to give her students more hands-on activities. She already teaches them about aquatics at the South Umpqua River and about wildlife at Yellowstone National Park.

"It's about making a connection ... middle school students need something to keep them interested in science, to convince them that as citizens it's important to know," Barkhurst said.

* You can reach reporter Danielle Gillespie at 957-4202 or by e-mail at dgillespie@newsreview.info.



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Compasses: From left, Jim Long, a volunteer with the Alder Creek Children's Forest, Scott Hampton of Days Creek High School and Dave Swenson of the Oakland School District adjust their compasses during the Summer Area Teachers' Institute Program Tuesday.

JON AUSTRIA / N-R staff photo

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