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## Outdoor education

Students learn about forestry management at Alder Creek Children's Forest fair

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Seventh-grader Mishell Saucedo of Days Creek Charter School measures a ribbon to find out the circumference of a tree with the help of fellow seventh-grader Mariah Goleman. The two took part in the Alder Creek Children's Forest annual Spring Fair Thursday.

**Andy Bronson / The News-Review**

CANYONVILLE — Emily Noonan wrapped a tape ribbon around a young Douglas fir and called out the tree's circumference to a student holding a clipboard.

Noonan, a seventh-grader at Days Creek Charter School, was taking part in the second annual Alder Creek Children's Forest Spring Fair on Thursday. She was at one of four stations set in a 78-acre forest reserve designed to get South County students some hands-on experience in forestry management.

"It's really pretty and it beats being in a classroom anytime," Noonan said about doing forestry exercises in an outdoor setting.

Noonan and about 80 other middle schoolers participated in the fair by moving in groups from one station to the next. They learned the basics of plant and tree identification, forestry management, forest-site monitoring and forest products production from forestry experts and other professionals.

Alan Baumann, a fire ecologist with the Umpqua National Forest's supervisor's office in Roseburg, demonstrated the tools and methods a forester would use to monitor a specific site in a forest.

Baumann instructed the methods of logging to a group of students next to a thinned stand of trees that had been harvested a year ago. The stand was reduced to a few trees per acre. It was harvested because it had a beetle infestation.

Andrew Quinn, a seventh-grader at Days Creek, had logging on his mind and asked Baumann if running a chain saw would "mess up your hearing if you didn't use ear plugs?"

Baumann said yes, it certainly would, especially if a chain saw operation is performed over a long period of time.

Baumann then fielded another question, this one from Victoria Snyder, a seventh-grader at Riddle, and said yes, counting rings on a tree is "exactly how we get the total age."

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'Hey, look! I'm a tree-hugging hippie!' yells Daniel Hinshaw as he reaches around a tree while measuring it during the Alder Creek Children's Forest Spring Fair Thursday. Behind Hinshaw is his fellow Riddle Junior High seventh-grader Chris Van Aken.

**Andy Bronson / The News-Review**

Getting students engaged, Baumann said, is the first step toward getting students thinking about forest sustainability. Over time, students will return to Alder Creek Spring Fair each year and learn a little bit more about forestry management.

This patch of woods is different than other patches of woods that students visit to view demonstration projects: Alder Creek Children's Forest is designed to be partially managed by the students who visit it so they can learn more about forestry practices.

The goal, Baumann said, is to teach that timber harvest can be done in a responsible manner so the habitat and economic needs of a specific region can be met.

"Hopefully it can be passed on from generation to generation," he said.

Alder Creek Children's Forest, located one mile west of Canyonville, is located in the Alder-Jordan Creek watershed. The watershed consists of 2,500 acres that is owned by private landowners and federal government.

Jim Proctor, president of the Alder Creek Children's Forest Board, established Alder Creek Children's Forest as a nonprofit forestry education center.

Proctor said the forest and its activities will hopefully allow students to grow into young people who understand how to create healthy, sustainable forests and watersheds while working with different landowners in a community.

Proctor, who grew up in the Canyonville area and is now the director of environmental studies at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, said he set aside the forest so students can gain extra respect for the land they live on and around.

Most kids, he said, can't tell the difference between a Douglas fir or a western hemlock.

By teaching kids about their surroundings and management practices for maintaining it, Proctor believes they'll be better informed as adults who will later vote and make government and forestry decisions.

"We're not telling them what to do," Proctor said. "We're saying, 'What would you do here?'"

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