

AmeriCorps team helps fire damage relief

Blue Mountain Eagle

In response to the Canyon Creek Complex fire, the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps team Green Two worked with the Malheur National Forest from Nov. 8 through Dec. 18.

The Canyon Creek Complex fire not only increased flood risk in the area but also had a negative impact on the trails and roads.

"Working in this small town, I've learned how close the community is and how most of the town is brought together through the love of the national forest," Green

Two Member Scott Bartuska said in a press release. "Wherever we go, the town knows who we are and thanks us for our work, showing us the importance of maintaining the trails, roads, filling sandbags and helping out the community any way we can."

Green Two coordinated with the multiple departments in the Forestry Service and Grant County to help the area recover from the fire damage. The team filled sandbags to reduce the risk of flooding, cleared hazard trees and created signage for the roads department. On approx-

imately four miles of Laycock Creek Road, the 11-member team cleared hazard trees and trimmed vegetation that would potentially clog the drainage area and block vision.

The mission of the U.S. Forest Service is "Caring for the land and serving people." The Malheur National Forest and Strawberry Wilderness are major sources of employment for members of John Day and the larger Grant County area. The Malheur National Forest is one of the main tourist attractions in John Day and plays a large role in the economy.



Contributed photo

The AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps team Green Two, pictured here, recently assisted with rehabilitation of the Malheur National Forest after the Canyon Creek Complex fire.



Contributed photo

The Baker and Grant SWCDs received NRCS Partnership Awards at the Oregon Association of Conservation District's annual gathering Nov. 4 in Eugene. From left, Misty Bennett, NRCS district conservationist for Baker County; Whitney Collins and Tim Kerns of Baker SWCD; Lorraine Vogt, NRCS district conservationist for Grant County; and Jason Kehrberg of Grant SWCD. Not pictured: Barbara Grant, Partnership Award recipient from the Curry County SWCD.

Local SWCDs receive awards

Blue Mountain Eagle

EUGENE — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service recognized members of local soil and water conservation districts with annual Partnership Awards, presented Nov. 4 at the Oregon Association of Conservation District's annual gathering in Eugene.

The Grant SWCD and the Baker County Association of

Conservation Districts each received the 2015 Partnership Award for outstanding contributions to post-wildfire recovery following a year of devastating wildfires across the West.

"Both the Grant and Baker district staff were instrumental partners for getting post-fire conservation practices on the ground during a critical time for the community," said Jay Gibbs, NRCS basin team lead-

er for the Snake River and John Day/Umatilla basins.

At its annual fall gathering, the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils honored Amy Stiner of the South Fork John Day Watershed Council and Liz Vollmer-Buhl of the Suislaw Watershed Council with its annual Dedicated Service Award. The award, in its second year, honors recipients for their outstanding leadership and dedication to the stewardship of Oregon's watersheds. Stiner was noted for significantly increasing the scope and capacity of the watershed council over the past two years.

To learn more, visit www.oregonwatersheds.org or www.southforkjohnday.com.

Assistance available for private forestland owners

Blue Mountain Eagle

BAKER CITY — The Emergency Forest Restoration Program has national funding available to assist owners of nonindustrial private forestland that has been damaged by natural disasters.

Forest owners can use the money to implement restoration practices, including removal of unusable materials, replanting of cover, erosion or water quality control.

Eligible land must have had existing tree cover and be owned by a nonindustrial private individual or group. Tribal land is also eligible. The disaster must impair or endanger the natural resources present or materially affect future land uses.

Sign-ups are being taken Nov. 15 to Jan. 15.

To set up an appointment, visit the FSA office in Baker City at 3990 Midway Drive, or call 541-523-7121, ext. 2.

For an application and more information, visit disaster.fsa.usda.gov or fsa.usda.gov/conservation.



The Eagle/Sean Hart

County Judge Scott Myers, left, and Doug Ferguson, the engineer in charge of a flood mitigation plan, look over maps of the project at a town hall meeting Dec. 16 in Canyon City.

Merry Christmas
From the City of Prairie City

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FLOOD

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as Dec. 23, and the county is continuing with a plan to increase the amount of water Canyon Creek can accommodate before flooding.

Doug Ferguson, the engineer in charge of a plan to build up low-lying walls along 6,000 feet of the creek using earthen berms, concrete blocks and sandbags, said the county knew it needed to be proactive after the fire. He said, although the best long-term solution would be to dredge the creek to make it deeper, the authorization required to do so would be difficult to obtain. The current project, he said, was a positive first step.

The county held meetings Dec. 16 to explain the project to landowners who would be affected. Ferguson said easements are needed from about 30-40 landowners, so crews can begin working on the project.

County Commissioner Chris Labhart said the county plans to purchase a machine that can fill more than 500 sandbags per hour, as about 45,000 are needed for the project. AmeriCorps volunteers have also spent hours filling sandbags for the project, and another 15,000 have been purchased.

"A lot of times, people are reactive, but we're taking a proactive approach," Labhart said. "The cooperation between the county and the state and the local cities has been excellent."

JUNIPER ARTS COUNCIL/GRANT COUNTY CULTURAL COALITION IS SEEKING GRANT PROPOSALS FOR OREGON CULTURAL TRUST GRANT AWARDS

The coalition has \$6,500 from the Oregon Cultural Trust to distribute in Grant County to organizations for projects relating to culture. Projects may be related to the visual or performing arts, heritage, and/or humanities.

Applications are available from Karin Barntish, 131 W. Main Street, John Day or call Kris Beal at 541-932-4892 for more information or an application.

Grant applications will be accepted until January 8, 2016 at 5:00 pm.

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Merry Christmas and a Happy 2016!

From all of us at **Grayback Forestry Inc.**