

## Connecting Communities at Douglas Creek



Como se dice “BLM” en español? This question and many others were asked and answered through an exciting new partnership that between BLM’s Wenatchee, WA Field Office and Team Naturaleza (TN).

It all started this year, after BLM successfully applied for a Service First grant in cooperation with USFS and USFWS. The focus of the grant was to connect with the Latino community in bilingual natural science field trips, conservation education and stewardship activities with each agency. A 2009-2012 Environment for the Americas nationwide survey identified North Central Washington as an area where Latino families felt they did not know about programs available to get outdoors on public lands. The survey also found time, cost, fear of the unknown, transportation and language to also be large issues for low income families to get out and experience nature. Through the grant, BLM and the other Federal agencies hoped that participants would gain the skills and knowledge to be able to return to the public land sites independently and with their families, and to feel a sense of stewardship for these areas.

BLM and TN chose the Douglas Creek area to be the site of our first partnership projects. Douglas Creek is one of BLM’s closest management areas to Wenatchee, with over 29,000 acres managed for recreation, grazing and wildlife values. This area already sees many visitors who enjoy recreating along the perennial creek, including visitors from the Latino community. BLM and TN also chose the area to help address some of the management issues BLM was dealing with, including littering, graffiti and a backlog of maintenance. Finally, BLM and TN looked forward to the possibility of introducing both new and current Latino visitors to the diversity of the shrub-steppe community in the Douglas Creek area. With Team Naturaleza acting as the community liaison between BLM and the Latino community around Wenatchee, a series of visits to BLM’s Douglas Creek Management Area began.

Douglas Creek adventures and volunteer events included:



- Trail maintenance and clearing along non-motorized railroad trail
- Graffiti cover-up and picking up litter at a popular Douglas Creek swimming area
- A National Public Lands Day event on September 28, 2013, where participants removed an old bulletin board, installed a new one, collected litter, did trail maintenance and covered graffiti

In addition, TN, BLM and Environment for the Americas collaborated on the design of a new, bilingual (Spanish-English) sign about BLM’s management at Douglas Creek. This

sign will be posted at information boards throughout the Douglas Creek area.

BLM provided transportation, snacks, instruction and field equipment for each event, as well as natural resource education about the shrub-steppe, Leave No Trace information, and a crash course on BLM management and history. All events were well attended by the Hispanic community, most of whom had never visited Douglas Creek. BLM and TN hope to continue this partnership in the future, highlighting more opportunities for volunteer work projects, education about the natural environment, and building a sense of stewardship for the Douglas Creek area. Muy Bueno!

