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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Forest Service Resource Advisory Committees Secure Four National Awards for project work benefiting public lands and local communities

PORTLAND, OR – April 19, 2006 – Four national awards for cooperative conservation projects approved for funding by Oregon and Washington Resource Advisory Committees were presented to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management projects recently at the 9th annual National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition Conference in Sparks, Nevada.

Under the Secure Rural Schools Self-Determination Act of 2000 legislation, Resource Advisory Committees in Oregon and Washington, approve the use of Title II funds for specific projects. More than 50 projects were considered for honors by the Counties and School Coalition, with only six receiving the prestigious national awards.

A panel of knowledgeable forestry experts nationwide reviewed them all, selecting projects that improved forest health and wildlife forage, protected human health and controlled noxious weeds for honors.

“We are honored to have received national recognition for the great work being accomplished on the ground, which benefits forest health,” says Linda Goodman, Regional Forester for Pacific Northwest Region of the USDA Forest Service. “We are especially grateful for the working relationship we have with our county governments and private groups that make it all possible,” Goodman says.

“The legislation has created an atmosphere of new trust between the federal agencies and counties”, says Rocky McVay, Executive Director of the Association of O&C Counties. “We work together in the spirit of cooperation to advance the health of our national forests.”

Recognized for multi-agency participation was Diamond Lake Big Game Forage Enhancements Project. Honored were the Rogue-Umpqua Resource Advisory Committee and Umpqua National Forest. The project, a shining example of collaborative management, engaged five agencies and three special interest groups, and received funding of \$38,000 from the Rogue Umpqua RAC.

“The project has continued to gather more cooperators since the project’s inception,” notes the Forest Service’ Jeff Bohler. “As we discovered broad support for this restoration activity, we found other projects and locations to build upon the project’s success. The initial Title II funding was truly the catalyst that made this successful effort possible.”

Also recognized for multi-agency participation was the Lane County Forest Work Camp Project. Honored were Siuslaw National Forest, Eugene BLM, the Siuslaw Resource Advisory Committee, and the Lane County Sheriff’s Office for coordinating work by 8 to 15 crews each year. About \$96,000 of Title II funds were used for forest health improvement, habitat restoration work, release of riparian areas, control of noxious weeds, and trail maintenance.

“Overall work we’ve been able to accomplish has been a win-win to the community, its citizens and a benefit on dollars expended for these projects,” says Anna Morrison, Lane County Commissioner.

Title II dollars were used to pay for crews to reduce the backlog of illegal dump sites and for efforts to discourage future dumping. This cooperative project involved the Lane County Forest Work Camp, the Department of Juvenile Services, Lane County Solid Waste Management, and local youth. Resource-related projects included erosion control, riparian area improvement, weed control, and road drainage improvement.

Recognition for broadest community involvement also went to the Dump Stoppers Program to reduce the threat to human health and safety posed by illegal dumping on public lands. Honored for that effort were the Hood-Willamette Resource Advisory Committee, Salem BLM, and Clackamas County.

“The Dump Stoppers program is a great example of the collaboration between the agencies and the county, providing critical public education on a problem facing all of us,” says Andrei Rykoff, District Ranger Clackamas River Ranger District. “We all desire to protect and enhance the environment and Dump Stoppers illustrates the wonderful working relationship we have to make this happen.”

Also recognized for broadest community involvement was the Noxious Weed Program Partnership among Gifford Pinchot National Forest and Skamania, Lewis, Klickitat and Cowlitz Counties in Southwest Washington. North Gifford Pinchot and South Gifford Pinchot Resource Advisory Committees worked together on projects that benefit the entire forest. County Weed Board representatives meet twice a year with Forest Botanists to discuss program planning and implementation.

“The Noxious Weed Program is truly a success for the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area and for private lands in these neighboring counties and provides a direct benefit to the National Forest,” says Gifford Pinchot National Forest Supervisor Claire Lavendel.

Resource Advisory Committees recommend funding for a variety of natural resource management projects that improve and enhance federal lands throughout Oregon and Washington. Fifteen member committees review a variety of natural resource projects and attend a one day meeting to make a recommendation on these projects for approval by the Forest Supervisor or District Manager.