

# Healthy Kids ~ Healthy Forests

2005-2009 Final Report



Bitter Root Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc.



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## **Program Goals**

- 1) To connect youth with their natural environment through environmental education programs and service projects**
- 2) To help young people develop a healthy and active life style**
- 3) To improve the health of our public lands through stewardship projects**

## **2005 Activities**

In 2005, HKHF undertook numerous partnership projects with a variety of partners and accomplished a diverse array of projects. The accomplishments included:

- 8 miles of litter pick-up
- 2 acres of weed removal by hand
- 800 feet of gravel placement along a recreational trail
- 50 feet of fence removal and 50 feet of new fence construction
- 6 fire ring benches constructed
- 1 historic site reconstructed
- 8 informational and educational posters created
- 1 resource management plan drafted



Youth doing trail maintenance.

## **2006 Activities**

Healthy Kids~Healthy Forests worked to improve both the health of youth and the health of the forest by engaging youth in volunteer projects on public lands and leading field trips with nature and science themes. Projects in 2006 ranged from pulling noxious weeds and picking up litter to painting trailhead signs and building a bridge. Field trip topics included: compass, 'GPS', insects, trees, birds, wilderness skills, water quality and more.



Youth learning about aquatic insects.

From January through September 2006, we worked with 34 different groups on 61 projects and field trips. Twenty three of our partners were school groups, two were afterschool groups and nine were community groups. We are excited to have worked with students in six school districts. Our programs reached over 2000 people. The majority of our funding came from the US Forest Service Centennial of Service. We also received a mini-grant from Montana Watercourse.



## **2007 Activities**

Healthy Kids Healthy Forests had a great year of teaching Ravalli County's youth about the natural world! Seventy-seven total groups learned about, worked in, and experienced nature in the Bitterroot Valley through participating in school presentations and field trips, completing service projects on the Bitterroot National Forest, and participating in Be Active Bitterroot programs by being physically active on our public lands. We reached 3229 people through these programs. Highlights from 2007 included Be Active Bitterroot, during which 832 people participated in activities from hikes to bike rides to wildflower walks to a floating weed pull; many spring field trips teaching kindergarten students about insects, birds and trees; a geocaching and mountain biking summer camp with the Keystone Afterschool Program; and working with a Boy Scout Troop who has adopted and begun restoring the Slate Creek Campground. Our 2007 funding was from the US Forest Service.



Hamilton Keystone youth camp students stay healthy biking while learning to geocache with GPS.

## **2008 Activities**

In 2008, we led 87 educational programs and service projects for Bitterroot Valley youth. Program topics included geocaching, fire prevention, the importance of water, OHV ethics, bats, birds, terrestrial insects, aquatic insects, moose, careers in the outdoors, nature hikes, leave no trace ethics and outdoor survival skills. Some of our service projects included trail work, weed pulls, and campground cleanups. Through these programs we taught 3159 youth, 448 adults and were assisted by 285 adult volunteers.



Youth perform campground cleanup and maintenance.

We partnered with many school and community groups and appreciate their willingness to be involved in our programs. We worked with school groups from Corvallis, Darby, Florence, Hamilton, Lolo, Lone Rock, Stevensville and Victor as well as with Bitterroot Valley Homeschool Students, Hamilton and Lone Rock Headstart Preschools and the Assembly of God Preschool. Community groups that we partnered with included the Bitterroot Youth Home, Boy Scouts, Darby Community Public Library, 4-H of Ravalli County, Hamilton Garden Club, Kids First, Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, Ravalli County Weed District, Retired

Senior Volunteer Program, Trapper Creek Job Corps and the University of Montana's English Language Institute. Our 2008 funding came from the Ravalli County Resource Advisory Committee and the Bitterroot National Forest.

**Bitter Root Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc.**



## 2009 Activities

Our focus was on two new programs: Snow Snoops and Friends of the Forest. In Snow Snoops the students learned about winter ecology, winter survival, geocaching and snowshoeing through active outdoor lessons and field trips. A student survey showed that 19% of participants had been snowshoeing before this program and all of the students had snowshoed by the end of the program. Participating groups met three to twelve times as a part of this program. Those participating in Snow Snoops included after school programs from Darby, Hamilton and Corvallis and school day classes from Lone Rock, Hamilton Christian Academy, Corvallis, and Valley Oak Homeschool Academy. Volunteers from the Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club and the Ravalli Off Road Users Association volunteered their time with this program.



Snow Snoops participants getting ready to snowshoe back out the trail they came in on.

Friends of the Forest was a week long summer camp for elementary students in partnership with Kids First. Campers played teambuilding games in the forest, learned about outdoor safety and survival, discovered aquatic insects, and learned about insects as biocontrols as part of a stewardship project in which they collected and distributed knapweed weevils. Our pre and post test results showed that the percentage of students who liked being in nature “a lot” increased from 80% at the start of the program to 96% at the conclusion of the program. The percentage of students who thought it was “very important” for them to take care of the land also increased. These programs were made possible by funding from More Kids in the Woods.

## Partners

### School Groups

Public schools (Darby, Hamilton, Pinesdale, Corvallis, Stevensville, Lone Rock, Florence and Lolo), Headstart Preschool, Assembly of God Preschool, Valley Oak Homeschool Coop, After school programs in Darby, Hamilton, and Corvallis, Corvallis summer school program, Trapper Creek Job Corps

### Community Groups

Boy and Girl Scouts, Ravalli County 4-H, Kids First, Bitterroot Youth Home, Youth Connections, Bitterroot Ecological Area Resources (BEAR), Ravalli County Off Road Users Association, Watershed Education Network, Montana Audubon, Hamilton Garden Club, Darby Community Public Library, Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club, Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Ravalli County Women Infants and Children (WIC)



Agencies

Bitterroot National Forest, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, Ravalli County Weed District, Ravalli County Office of Environmental Health, Bitterroot Conservation District, Bitter Root Water Forum, USDA Forest Service: Forest Health Protection

**Funding Sources**

Forest Service National Centennial of Service, Ravalli County Resource Advisory Committee, More Kids in the Woods, Bitterroot National Forest, Montana Watercourse, and Annie Maclay Leffingwell Foundation for a total of **\$170,000**

**Summary**

From 2006-2009, we taught **354** programs to help youth learn about their natural environment. In 56 of these programs, youth completed stewardship projects on public lands. In total, we reached **10,395 youth** and **1,834 adults volunteered** their assistance. Our non-federal partners gave **\$122,892 of in-kind support**. We garnered **\$22,680 of in-kind support from federal partners**.

*“Every child should have mud pies, grasshoppers, aspen trees, blue sky, soaring birds, fuzzy squirrels, huge rocks, butterflies, pine cones, wild strawberries, and room to run in - who has been deprived of these has been deprived of the best parts of education.”*



*~~Luther Burbank*

