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Wolfree Receives Support to Continue Efforts to Restore Whychus Creek

Wolfree Central Oregon, based in Sisters, has recently received a second consecutive \$20,000 Matching Awards Program Grant from the National Forest Foundation (NFF). This grant is to expand and enhance its highly successful grassroots efforts to restore critical riparian habitats along Whychus Creek in preparation of returning reintroduced salmon and steelhead. A key component of the project is to increase the watershed literacy and stewardship of the community – especially amongst young people.

Wolfree is an award-winning non-profit that engages community members in science education, ecological research and ecosystem restoration projects throughout the Pacific Northwest. Since 2006, Wolfree and partners have engaged more than 250 community volunteers in restoration efforts along Whychus Creek including 150 students. In particular, the last two years about 50 students from the Interdisciplinary Environmental Expedition (IEE) program have designed and implemented projects that have restored and managed about 10-acres of critical riparian and upland areas. Nearly 5,000 native trees and shrubs have been put in the ground along the creek to increase shade, stabilize streambanks, and promote the input of woody debris.

According to Wolfree Education Director Jay Hopp, "The incredible on-the-ground habitat improvements we've made on Whychus creek the last couple of years equals the powerful learning students have experienced. This type of instructional model is state-of-the-art education that challenges young people to grapple with authentic complex problems in their community. It doesn't get any better."

Wolfree's efforts in conjunction with local citizens and students are part of a coordinated, collaborative and strategic campaign to restore the Whychus Creek led by regional partners such as the Deschutes Basin Land Trust, Deschutes River Conservancy, Oregon Trout, Sisters Ranger District, Three Sisters Irrigation District and Upper Deschutes Watershed Council.

The NFF is the congressionally-chartered nonprofit partner of the U.S. Forest Service that addresses key challenges to the health of our National Forests and Grasslands. Wolfree Executive Director, Dale Waddell conveys, "The key for us is to match these NFF funds dollar for dollar with local business and individual support. If you're interested in improving habitats along Whychus Creek then please send in a tax-deductible end-of-the-year donation to Wolfree. What a great holiday gift!"

Contributions to the Wolfree Whychus Creek Restoration Project can be made through Wolfree's website at www.beoutside.org. To learn more call 541-549-1459.