



NEWS RELEASE

Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument

1839 S. Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257

Centennial 1908 - 2008

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Contacts: Mary Chislock, Public Affairs Officer

Phone: (559) 784-1500 x1112

Monumental Outlook Over The Horizon **Sequoia Youth Summit** *Celebrates the 15th annual National Public Lands Day*

By Tina Terrell, Forest Supervisor

Porterville, CA.....Hello Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument Stakeholders!

Richard Louv wrote in *Last Child in the Woods – Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, “...at the very moment that the bond is breaking between the young and the natural world, a growing body of research links our mental, physical, and spiritual health directly to our association with nature – in positive ways.” Now is the time to get our young people out into the woods to not only connect them to nature, but to also work with them to become citizen stewards to take care of the land that is ours to treasure.

The first annual “My Forest” Summit for junior high school age youth is the first outdoor event orchestrated by a new partnership. The goal is to combine outdoor fun with environmental education and stewardship activities. The Sequoia Youth Summit began with the Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument’s outreach efforts to connect children, youth, and their families to the land. This Youth Summit is invested in building the next generation of citizen stewards, and instilling a lifelong love and connection to the land. We are targeting middle school students in 7th, 8th, and 9th grades to experience the wonders of the Sierra Nevada. Amazing outdoor experiences build the bridges for the next generation of citizen stewards to care for our public lands.

Beginning on Saturday, September 27, 100-150 students will participate in volunteer projects on public lands. The projects include:

- planting trees at Lake Success and at the Trail of 100 Giants in the Sequoias,
- repairing trails at Tulare County’s SCICON Environmental Education Center (*science* and *conservation*),
- river enhancement along the Tule River,
- improving pond habitats for Western Pond Turtles at Circle J Ranch,
- collecting and planting seeds from native plants along riparian areas, and
- building and installing wildlife nesting boxes.

Schools and youth organizations are invited to send teams of 7th – 9th grade students (up to ten students

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per team.) Adult chaperones must accompany each team of students. The school or organization must provide transportation to and from the MyForest Summit at Veterans Memorial Park in Springville.

Activities begin at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at approximately 3:30 p.m., at Veteran's Memorial Park in Springville for fun, closing presentations, refreshments and prizes. Space is limited so please call for early registration. For more information contact Mary Cole, Landscape Architect at the Sequoia National Forest Supervisor's Office at (559) 784-1500.

Future programs developed by the Sequoia Youth Summit partnership will include outdoor activities for all age groups in environmental education, volunteer projects, outdoor recreational adventures, leadership training, and employment opportunities. This partnership is a long-term partnership that will pool resources to organize, share, strengthen, and develop the most effective program delivery to children and young adults in California's Central Valley. Three long term goals have been identified for this partnership:

1. Outdoor Resource Center- clearinghouse for environmental education programs, outdoor activities, and recreation opportunities for individuals, families and organizations,
2. Organized events targeted at underrepresented age groups and populations, and
3. Volunteer projects and employment opportunities for youth and young adults.

The partners in the Sequoia Youth Partnership include: Tulare County Office of Education (Scicon), Army Corps of Engineers, 3-Forests Interpretive Association (3FIA), California Conservation Corps, WildPlaces, Circle J Ranch, River Ridge Ranch, California State Parks, Community Services Employment Training (CSET), Central California Consortium, Sequoia Riverlands Trust, Wildlink, Kaweah Flyfishers, SSTARs Program, and the Sequoia Natural History Association.

Photos enclosed: