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Outdoor Oregon is set to provide local job opportunities for Coos County teens. Next month, the group composed of 10 local teens, will begin its conservation efforts at Sunset Bay State Park.

Outdoor Oregon, a subset of Northwest Youth Corps, hopes to make a difference by encouraging youth to invest in their community. “We want them to have a good understanding of where they work and where they live,” said Tom Helmer, Outdoor Oregon project director.

The teens will build and restore trails that connect Sunset Bay to Shore Acres and Cape Arago State Parks. Unlike other NYC programs, workers need not camp for the duration of the four-week project. Workers will go home at the end of the day and return to the meeting site in Coos Bay the next morning.

“There’s a lot more to trails than people think,” said Mary Jane Freethem, NYC crew leader. “You have to deal with slopes and percentages, identify where the trail will go, deal with draining and organic matter. I like to have the kids build them from scratch,” Freethem said. “It makes them feel more accomplished when they’re done.” The program hopes to become an employment staple for the community’s youth, said Helmer.

“This is the first job for a lot of the participants,” Helmer said.

“We hope to instill a good work ethic and a vested interest within the community.”

Helmer recalled a summer where he worked with the National Forest Service.

“A lot of the people with the forest service had worked with the program in the 80s and 90s,” the director said. “They get interested in working in the outdoors. Folks want to continue with this.” The group will get to work at Sunset State Park on Aug. 3. For more information contact Liz Karas, (541) 349-7501, or ElizabethK@ nwyouthcorps.org.

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