


Youths cutting trail at Fish Hatchery Park

By Patricia Snyder of the Daily Courier
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 **Watch Video** » Armed with hoes and rakes, trail-building youths are part of efforts to combat the recession.

A dozen members of the Northwest Youth Corps' Outdoor Oregon are spending five weeks building a new trail for horse riders and bicyclers at Fish Hatchery Park.

The project, which also draws on workers through the Job Council, is part of millions of dollars in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus money being poured into Josephine County. As tracked by the state, federal ARRA spending as of March 31 equaled \$600 for every man, woman and child in Josephine County, or \$48,797,120 out of a planned \$57,157,351.

Youth trail builders are making \$8.40 an hour, for a combined \$38,000 for a trail at county-owned Fish Hatchery Park that climbs Bolt Mountain to Bureau of Land Management property. Located on the north side of the Applegate River, from the entrance off of Wetherbee Drive, the rider trail will start at the upper parking area. Completion is planned for the end of May. It will follow roughly the same route as a foot trail, which begins at the lower parking area. Both are about 1.5 miles.

Josephine County didn't have the money to address the conflicting use of the existing interpretive trail, said Steve Schalk, senior park ranger.

"There were erosion issues here from the horses that were using our other nature trail for foot traffic," he said. The program is a great opportunity to have workers for projects that enhance the community park system, he said.

The work is also a chance for youths having trouble finding work in a faltering economy. The program is in eight counties in Oregon, said Abby Wellumsom, program manager for Outdoor Oregon, a program started in the summer of 2009 using federal stimulus money that concentrates on youths and



PATRICIA SNYDER/Daily Courier

Federal stimulus funding provided wages for a youth crew working to construct a horse and mountain bike trail at Fish Hatchery Park.

conservation work. Oregon is home to the third-highest average teen unemployment in the nation, according to Northwest Youth Corps.

Grants Pass resident James von Krohn, 18, was pleased to land one of the jobs.

"I've looked for work a lot in the past few years. I really haven't found anything, haven't really even gotten called back much," he said.

He was surprised by how much he enjoys the work, and he also likes to give back to the community.

He thinks the stimulus-funded program is great in that it builds trails that will last for years, he said.

In addition to cutting brush and clearing a foot area along the ribbon-marked trail, the crew is dealing with matters such as elevation and culverts.

The crew must build a gentle elevation gain friendly to horse hooves under young riders. While the footpath uses a metal military surplus bridge to cross a stream, riders will cross the water in a different area because horses dislike its metal grating.

The workers must figure out how to drain the trail elsewhere, said Jaqui Murray, a crew leader. "On this trail, our major challenge is water and drainage," she said. "It tends to get a little wet and boggy in areas."

A guide to the numbered interpretive trail is available at the Josephine County Parks Department, 125 Ringuette St.

Information about how Oregon is spending federal ARRA money is available on the website www.oregon.gov/recovery. Estimates are that the money has saved or created the equivalent of 164.8 full-time jobs in Josephine County. County figures through March 31 include:

- \$381,989 for workforce programs, such as trail building.
- \$23.99 million for employment aid, including nearly \$17 million in emergency benefits, \$5.9 million in a \$25-per-week boost, nearly \$1.2 million in extended benefits and \$272,000 in modernization work.
- \$17.7 million for health and human services, including \$13.6 million for Medicaid, \$3.7 million in food stamps and \$426,000 for emergency assistance to families.
- \$9.9 million in education, including \$5 million to stabilize school budgets and retain jobs, \$2.6 million to support services to help the disadvantaged, \$2.1 million for special education, more than \$68,000 for school lunch equipment and more than \$24,000 specifically aimed at homeless children.
- \$5 million for transportation, including nearly \$42 million for paving on Highways 99 and 238, about \$690,000 for the city of Grants Pass and \$241,000 for an overlay in the Wolf Creek area of old Highway 99.
- \$97,747 for energy efficiency work at Three Rivers School District.
- \$23,877 for public safety, to administer a post-conviction drug court for Measure 57 cases diverted from prison. Under Community Corrections supervision, they get drug testing and treatment.

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