



FRIENDS of NEVADA WILDERNESS

STEWARDSHIP DISPATCH

March 2012

SLINGSHOTS AND STEWARDSHIP

COLLEGE STUDENTS SPEND SPRING BREAK VOLUNTEERING ON THE DESERT REFUGE

Students from the University of Nevada, Reno passed up beach parties to spend their spring break volunteering in the Desert National Wildlife Refuge outside of Las Vegas. Led by Friends of Nevada Wilderness, the team worked to restore and re-naturalize the area for wildlife and people alike.

The team completed five road restorations and planted 120 native trees and shrubs during their week of volunteering, and contributed over \$29,000 of in-kind service to the Desert Refuge.

The visual impact of the volunteers' work was apparent to UNR journalism student Lucy. "You look at it, and keep going, then you look back and it looks completely different than what you started with!" Lucy said while working on re-naturalizing a decommissioned road. "I'm excited to come back some day and see a whole new landscape there."

"I'd like to plant a little seed in their hearts so they'll want to make this one of the regular things they do," said Kurt Kuznicki, Southern Nevada Program Director for Friends. "And maybe spread the word to other folks and get their friends involved."



The team even participated in an experimental reseedling technique involving a slingshot. Volunteers used the slingshot to launch seedballs of native coyote melons along a riparian area in Corn Creek. The dried seedballs would burst open upon impact, scattering the seeds for small animals to distribute.

The team also created songbird habitat out of a decommissioned railroad engine cooling pond at the Corn Creek Field Station.

"This is a really popular spot for people to come out and look at birds," said Matt Flores from the Great Basin Institute. "We're trying to get as rich a habitat of

native plants to promote bird diversity and density."

Amy Sprunger, refuge manager, joined the students for lunch and gave an educational program on the refuge.

The Desert National Wildlife Refuge is approximately 1.5 million acres, according to Amy, and was established in 1936 to protect the bighorn sheep, Nevada's state mammal. An estimated 800 sheep currently call the refuge home.

"It takes a special type of person to want to do this instead of laying on a beach somewhere," Amy told the students.

"I really appreciate your assistance."

COMPANIES AND KIDS RESTORE WILDLIFE HABITAT

Club members and business volunteers left the pavement of Las Vegas behind and joined Friends of Nevada Wilderness in the Desert National Wildlife Refuge for some hard work and big smiles.

REI rolled up their sleeves with Friends in late February to contain an impacted area in the refuge. Encircling the undesignated campsite will prevent the area from becoming larger and encourage camping in the impacted space.

30 natural looking juniper posts were strung with half-inch cable to create 167 feet of fence. The enclosed area measures 1,800 square feet.

“Constructing something with your own hands, and knowing that this place is better off is because of our work was a good feeling,” said Eric Larson of REI.

In early March, SH Architecture of Las Vegas joined Friends in the Desert Refuge for a day of re-naturalization. Eight

volunteers and two youth wilderness stewards joined Friends to plant native trees. The team planted 37 trees, mainly willows and cottonwoods, in the Corn Creek area of the refuge.

Youth volunteers from the Cub Scouts and the Las Vegas Junior Master Gardeners also got dirty with volunteers and Friends in March. The youth volunteers covered over 3.5 acres in the refuge with 470 native plants.

In addition to the Cub Scouts, Junior Master Gardeners, REI and SH Architecture, KEEN Footwear, members of the Zappos.com family, the UNR Alternate Break Club, members of UNLV’s Circle K service club, and employees of Wells Fargo have teamed up with Friends in the field during the past year.

“Working with Kurt makes everything simple. Because of



Friends’ working relationship with the [land-management] agencies, organizing this project was a lot more streamlined for REI,” said Eric.

“Friends reputation precedes you so much, that we can get out to do projects very effectively.”

