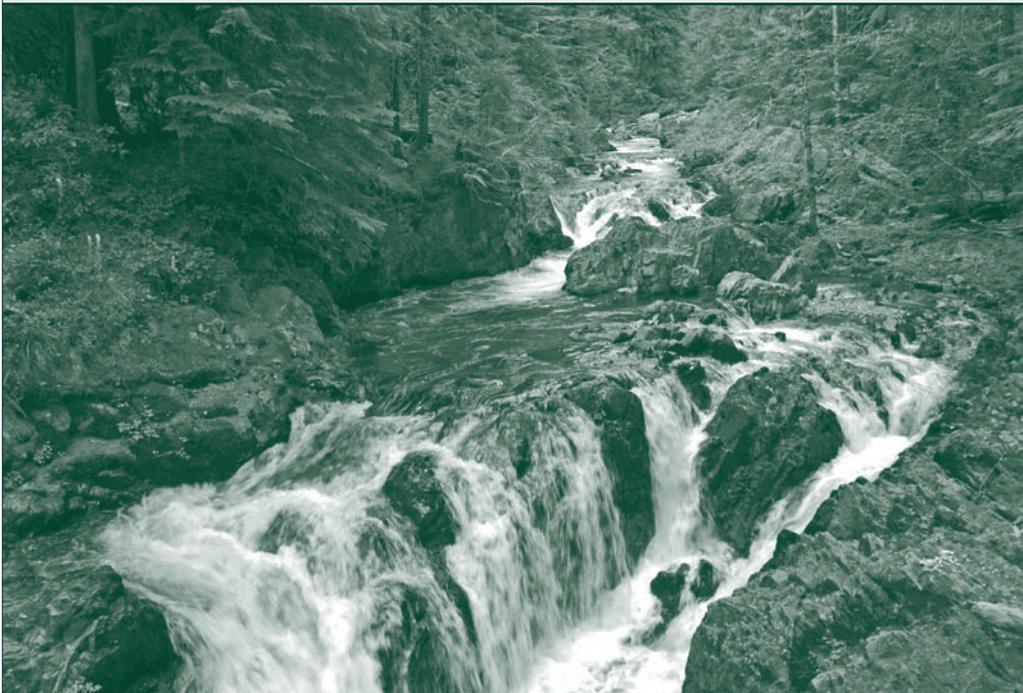


FALL 2011



OPAL CREEK

ANCIENT FOREST CENTER



2011 SEASON SNAPSHOT

In our 2011 season we served **1,183** students from **33** different schools for a total of **2,149** student nights. An additional **235** people participated in a weekend workshop, volunteer stewardship opportunity or Opal Creek Expedition throughout the season.

Opal Creek looking upstream from the bridge over Opal Pool. Photo by Mark Cornwell.

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Opal Creek, a Window to Wilderness

by Katie Ryan

Wilderness – what images does that word conjure up? Clear streams, giant trees, steep ridgelines, views extending for miles, clean air, stillness. Wilderness – where natural processes dominate, where man is but a visitor, where the views stretch as far as one's imagination, and where there is space to think, to walk and be renewed – these are wilderness.

I want to ask you to consider the role that wild and open spaces play in your life. Why do you go for that after work walk in the sun or that run in the rain? What causes you to seek out the mountains, forests and beaches of our state in search of relaxation? Why do we seek out adventure in remote places? And why do we care about protecting them?

Think about the gifts that wild places bring

you – the memories made, the confidence, at times shattered yet always built higher in the end, a clear head, a humble appreciation of the places we call home, a connection to the larger natural world, a world devoid of human technology and distraction. Wilderness makes me whole. I can't imagine a world without access to the thousands of acres of public lands, of mountains, rivers, streams, deserts, and beaches that are mine to roam and explore. Nothing allows me to see clearly and solve my problems like a walk in the woods.

My relationship with wilderness began in Quebec, Canada, where my family has a cabin on Mud Lake. We went every summer at least once without fail and it was a time for my family to connect without the distractions of everyday life. We ate our meals looking out

at the lake, we spent our days hiking, fishing, and swimming and our nights listening to the loons and the sounds of my brother's guitar across the water. These experiences in the Canadian woods made me who I am, and are the reason I do the work I do today. For over a decade I have strived to help create positive experiences for people in wild places, and that is what I continue to do today with my work at Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center.

For many, these memories and special first experiences with the natural world are happening at Opal Creek through the many programs and opportunities offered by Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center. By the end of our season in mid-November we will have worked with over 3,000 participants this year through our school programs, student wilderness

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Comings & Goings

Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center bid a fond farewell to our Program Director, Serena Becker, in August. Serena is now working on her Master's at Columbia University in New York City and we wish her all the best! We welcome Louisiana native Tucker Lee as our new Program Director and Jawbone resident.

In September, our Registrar, Mindy Boes, left us for the sunny side of the mountains and in her place we welcome Gabbi Haber to the Portland office. Gabbi's is the friendly voice you'll hear when you call in November 15th to stake your claim on a cabin stay at Opal Creek during our member's only reservation period through the end of the year.

We've Moved!

Opal Creek's Portland office is now located in the Ecotrust Building in the Pearl District. We are incredibly excited for this move as we will once again be surrounded with a community of environmentally focused folks in a more interactive setting.

Please amend your records! Our new address is:
Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center
721 NW 9th Avenue
Suite 236
Portland, OR 97209



Still Seeking Vehicle Donations

Our fleet needs updating! If you are purchasing a new vehicle and need a home for your old one, or if you have a connection with a car dealership that may be interested in donating a vehicle to OCAFC, please call our Portland office and get in contact with Katie: (503) 892-2782.

Hello from New Program Director

My name is Tucker Lee, the new program director at Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center. I'd like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all of you Opal Creek members, donors, and friends. I'd also like to tell you all a little bit about myself and how I came to be in Jawbone.

I was born and raised in Louisiana right down the street from my entire extended family. After high school I explored the outdoor world for the first time, backcountry skiing in Colorado for several years. After spending so much time recreating in the wilderness I started dreaming about working in it too. So I took a couple NOLS courses and was initiated into the wonderful world of outdoor education.

I haven't looked back since. I attended Brevard College in western North Carolina and received a degree in Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education. During my time at school I worked all over the country, from New Canaan, Connecticut, to McCall, Idaho. I have focused on science or environmental education because of the amazing things I find everyday when I learn something new about my environment.

The Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center is the most amazing place I've had the privilege of working; not only because of the big trees, but because of the amazing people and incredible programs. Even though our season is almost finished you can still come up for a cabin rental or just a hike through Jawbone. I can't wait to see you in person!

STAFF

Brian Campbell
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Sam Humphreys
*Science Instructor/
Facilities Assistant*

Mary Lugg
Science Instructor

Nick David
Science Instructor

Ellen Incelli
Science Instructor

Kristina Oldani
Development Associate

Aislinn Dugan
Assistant Cook

Kelsey Jaye
Assistant Cook

Katie Ryan
Executive Director

Gabbi Haber
Registrar

Tucker Lee
Program Director

Rebekah Yglesias
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MISSION

Promoting ancient forest stewardship through educational experiences inspired by Opal Creek's natural and cultural history.

Nancy Bales on Why She Supports Opal Creek

One summer, several years ago, my daughter asked me to sign her up for an Opal Creek camp. I hadn't been there myself, but had heard what an Oregon treasure it was so, I happily sent her off for a week. She came home from that trip bursting with the excitement of a nine year old – stories of salamanders, banana slugs, delicious food (“even though it was vegetarian”), and tales of swimming in rivers and a butt slide! I wasn't sure what that even meant but, I knew, based on Camille's reaction, she had discovered a magical place.

I was lucky enough to have my own Opal Creek “summer camp” experience soon after this in the form of a work retreat. Together with my 40 co-workers, I too discovered the magic and uniqueness of this place – from the incredible old growth forest, to the history of the old mining town, to the comfortable beds, beautiful cabins, and delicious meals. I was sold.

So, last summer when I was asked to join the Board of Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center, my family enthusiastically encouraged me to accept and, following their advice, I enthusiastically did.

Each member of my family has their own special reason why this place is important to them. My husband finds a special connectedness

with the earth there. My daughter, Helena, describes Opal Creek as an “awesome place that we need to share with people.” And this summer we did just that. We rented a cabin for a weekend so she could share her love of Opal Creek with a friend and her family. And everyone, from the most experienced outdoors person in our group to the least, found something to love, whether it was reading by the fire in our cabin or hiking to an abandoned mine or enjoying the beauty of Opal pool.

This summer Camille took her camp experience to another level and signed up for a five-day Opal Creek Expedition backpacking trip. The Opal Creek instructors helped her discover some of the beauty of the Opal Creek Wilderness area only accessible to those willing to walk for a few days. And she discovered strength and will that she didn't know she had. My husband and I also decided to embark on a new Opal Creek experience this summer and attended a weekend fly-fishing workshop. Not only did we connect with wonderful fellow fly-fishing novices, we connected in a whole new way to the waters of Opal Creek Ancient Forest.

Our hope is that you will all come experience Opal Creek, either through camps, workshops, or spending time by the fire in the cabin! It is an “awesome place!” ■

Expeditions *continued from page 1*

expeditions, workshops, and cabin rentals with the ancient forests of Opal Creek providing the backdrop for it all. Students have overcome physical challenges to be rewarded by fabulous views of the Oregon Cascades. Memories have been made, connections with the wild world have happened, and our participants returned to their homes and normal lives changed by their experience in the forest.

The work we do at Opal Creek is about much more than just the precious watershed that was protected. We are incredibly fortunate to have this amazing living laboratory to share

with our students. Our main hope and focus is to have these students, regardless of age, be bit by the “wilderness bug.” Hopefully their taste of the ancient forest inspires them to go out exploring other areas and encourages thinking about stewardship and conservation in their own back yards.

We strive to keep the costs of our programs reasonable, so as to make the experiences at Opal Creek available to all. Wilderness should not be for the elite. It is part of us all. The costs of running our programs and maintaining our historic mining town are double the fees

we earn through our programming annually. We rely on our faithful donors and foundation support to make up the rest.

This giving season we will be asked to support a variety of meaningful causes, all equally important in the continued improvement of our society. I want to ask you to consider the gifts that wilderness has given you over the years, and make a gift to Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center. With your support we can continue to share the wilderness bug with thousands of students every year, passing along the very special gift of wilderness. ■

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Did you know...

The rain has returned to Opal Creek, and with it the beautiful fruits of the forest. Chicken of the woods, golden chanterelle and lobster mushrooms abound. This bounty is enough to make any mycophile smile, but this year promises something more. Morel mushrooms (genus *Morchella*) are prized the world over for their delicious flavor, especially in French cuisine. Though they are typically found in deciduous forests, these honeycombed fungi also like to bloom in recently burned areas. This connection is not completely understood, because it remains unclear whether morels are saprotrophic or mycorrhizal. Saprotrophic mushrooms break down organic matter, returning nutrients to the soil. Mycorrhizal mushrooms form symbiotic relationships within the forest, connecting their mushroom roots (mycelium) with tree roots to create a nutrient exchange system.

The Motherlode fire caused some anxiety in Jawbone this summer, but hopefully it will also provide premium morel hunting ground, even if we don't know exactly why. There are many types of morel: black, yellow, grey, and even toxic false morels. False morels can cause stomach problems and loss of muscle coordination, even cardiac arrest, so foragers must be careful to tell the true from the false. One helpful tip: if the cap is wrinkled instead of honeycombed, stay away.

THEIR OWN WORDS

“After visiting Opal Creek my students and chaperones committed to new habits when they returned home. Many are choosing to cut shower times in half, turn off lights, open the fridge less and one parent is all set to start composting. Opal Creek was more than a field trip – it was an inspiration to bring a piece of it home through better choices in how we live.”

– Lisa Sheldrake, Central Valley Christian School