



## Building Healthy Youth, Forests and Communities

### By the numbers:

- Since 2002, over \$1,344,485 of work value provided in Skamania County
- Since 2002, over 710 summer jobs created

### 2017 Season:

- 28 jobs created, 82 days of work completed during the summer season
- 8 partner agencies provided projects
- .5 miles seed orchard cleared of saplings
- 50 acres of white pine tree pruning
- 11 maintained camp-sites
- 22 miles of trails brushed, treaded, and cleared in the GPNF
- 2.5 miles of road brushed
- 4 acres of noxious weeds cleared from Mt. Adams

### Issue

Despite living in a county that is about 90% forested, many Skamania County youth have little connection with, or knowledge of, the surrounding forest. And, in a county where poverty and unemployment are high, youth have almost no employment opportunities and few chances to gain job experience. At the same time, local forest managers and communities need help completing projects to benefit the health of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

### Response

A partnership between Stevenson-Carson School District, Washington State University Extension 4-H, Skamania County, the Mt. Adams Institute, and the US Forest Service created the Forest Youth Success (FYS) program for youth development and employment. Goals of the FYS program are:

- Teach the fundamentals of forest ecology and forest health management through work in a real-world setting;
- Develop and enhance life skills to increase employability;
- Help participants develop a sense of responsibility for themselves, the forest, and their communities;
- Provide participating youth with basic job skills in a paid-work setting that emphasizes environmental stewardship; and
- Employ local adults as program crew leaders to further community engagement and emphasize positive youth–adult relationships, at a ratio of approximately 5 youth to 1 adult.

Each year, the program employs between 24 and 48 youth to complete forest health projects and is the largest youth employer in the county.

The FYS program is recognized nationally as a leader in youth employability and development. The program has accepted the National 4-H Program of Distinction, and the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents (NAE4-HA) awarded the program a Specialty Team Award in Excellence for Natural Resource and Environmental Stewardship, in 2013.