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National Innovation Grant Turns Constructed Wetlands Into Birding and Environmental Education Hotspot

Support Will Bring Student Volunteers to Wetlands for Hands-On Restoration Efforts

One of 48 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will enable the Palouse Audubon Society to turn the Stateline Wetlands, an eight-acre constructed wetland that neighbors the town's wastewater treatment plant, into a destination for migratory birds as well as an environmental education and research site. Habitat restoration activities will naturally enhance the wetlands, encouraging visitation from wildlife and community members alike.

Completed in 1998, the Stateline Wetlands were created to provide tertiary treatment to Moscow Wastewater Treatment Plant effluent and other polluted runoff that currently drains directly into Paradise Creek. Wetland cells were constructed to naturally filter the polluted water through sedimentation, filtration, absorption, microbial metabolism and plant tissue uptake – improving water quality for Idaho and beyond. Local community volunteers, along with University of Idaho and Washington State University students, helped plant the newly constructed wetland with 23,860 native herbaceous wetlands plants.

The \$15,000 grant will power a partnership among the Palouse Audubon Society, University of Idaho Women in Science, Idaho Fish and Game, and the Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute to work together on habitat restoration activities that include planting native species and creating a quarter mile trail system with interpretive signs. Local students from the 4-H, elementary, junior, and high school students, as well as college students will help plant 1,500 plants and shrubs.

“Palouse Audubon Society is excited to be a part of this wonderful project. To be able to partner with the University of Idaho Women in Science, Idaho Fish and Game and the Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute will create an avian paradise within the city limits of Moscow,” said Terry Gray, President of Palouse Audubon Society. “This grant is a wonderful opportunity to help develop and restore an overgrown wetland.”

Restoring riparian areas, planting willows, and reducing cattails, reeds and invasive species will improve habitat for many species of bird, and involving youth in planning, organizing, planting, and construction work at the wetlands will cultivate conservation leadership skills and appreciation for local ecosystems. Overall, volunteer restoration efforts will help transform the field west of the treatment plant into an ecological treasure - a place for migratory and resident birds, a community wildlife park, and an environmental education center for schoolchildren, university faculty, and community members.

“We are thrilled to partner with the Palouse Audubon to improve local bird habitat,” said Chris Dixon, advisor to the Women in Science group at the University of Idaho. “This project allows the young women to take a leadership role in transforming the wetland while increasing their knowledge of everything from

bird and native plant identification, to directing second graders on how to plant a tree, to garnering community support for our efforts.”

The Palouse Audubon Society innovation grant is part of \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative this year. Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. Grantees were selected from scores of applicants across America. Funds were awarded to Audubon organizations that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for environmental quality.

“The real innovation here is bringing back native species to restore natural health, and engaging local students to do it,” said *TogetherGreen* Program Manager Judy Braus.

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About *TogetherGreen*

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to build the promise of a greener, healthier future through innovation, leadership and volunteerism. Nearly 90 projects totaling more than \$2.5 million dollars have received Innovation Grants to protect land, water, and energy resources nationwide. For more information, visit www.togethergreen.org.

About Audubon

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. To learn about Audubon’s nationwide efforts to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, visit www.audubon.org

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. Since 1991, Toyota has contributed more than \$464 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota’s commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit www.toyota.com/community.