



# NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Forest Service, Northern Research Station

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## **“Project SMART Summer Institute” Receives Funding to Introduce Rural and Urban Youth to Environmental and Forestry Sciences**

**Newtown Square, PA, April 5, 2011** – The U.S. Forest Service announced Monday that Project SMART Summer Institute - 2011 has been awarded \$30,000 in More Kids in the Woods funding to support environmental and forestry education and mentoring. The 4-week program provides young people more opportunities to experience the great outdoors, learn about nature, and build a lasting commitment to conservation and land stewardship.

“The value of expanding our programs for children must not be underestimated,” said U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. “Young people are tomorrow’s stewards of our public lands, and we have a duty to help them develop a lasting connection and passion for conservation of America’s great outdoors.”

Project SMART Summer Institute focuses on high school juniors and seniors who are talented in math and science. In addition to environmental and marine sciences, Project SMART Summer Institute offers programs in bio and nano technology and space science. Students participating in the environmental and marine sciences program come from rural and urban areas of New Hampshire, New England and other states. This funding will directly support participation of minority and underprivileged youth in the program.

The 20 environmental and marine sciences students will conduct research and monitoring of terrestrial and aquatic systems in the White Mountains and study topics involving forest management practices, climate change and its impact on forest productivity, and monitor forest health using ground and remote sensing techniques. Students will continue research projects during the academic year, and will present their findings at a regional high school science symposia to compete for tuition scholarships.

Project SMART Summer Institute is a unique opportunity for Forest Service scientists to reach out to students from diverse backgrounds about possibly considering forestry and environmental sciences as areas of higher studies and careers at the point when students are making serious decisions about higher education.

“Before you pursue a career in forest science you have to be captivated by forests,” said Michael Rains, Director of the Northern Research Station. “For some participants, Project SMART Summer Institute is the first opportunity they have to be captivated by nature.”

Learning science and its societal applications and implications in a rural environment of the University of New Hampshire, while also learning about the geography and cultures represented by their peers, is one of the greatest opportunities the program offers to young students, according to Dr. Subhash Minocha, a professor of plant biology and genetics at the University of New Hampshire and director of Project SMART Summer Institute.

“We have really focused on creating diversity in this program, and diversity comes at a cost,” Minocha said. “An upshot of the summer institute is that the academic learning experience is accompanied by long-lived memories of fun, excitement and development of new friendships among the participants and with the university staff.”

The Forest Service has been a leader in conservation education and recreation opportunities for more than a century. The agency’s conservation education programs build on the principles of education, stewardship and skill development that result in career pathways for future stewardship leaders. These same principles support the goals identified in President Obama’s *America’s Great Outdoors* report and by First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Let’s Move Outside* campaign and can also be a catalyst to help combat the rise in childhood obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

The funding, which was already in this year’s agency’s budget, leverage existing partnerships and will be distributed to “*More Kids in the Woods*” projects and “*Children’s Forest*” programs. Nationally, the Forest Service has committed \$1 million to these cost-share programs that build on long-term partnerships that will result in a roughly 2.5-to-1 return on the agency’s investment.

The mission of the U.S. Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.

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