New resources aim to quantify economic impact of forest and watershed restoration in Oregon

UO’s Ecosystem Workforce Program developed the tools to predict and monitor the economic effects of restoration work

EUGENE, Ore. -- (June 28, 2011) – A new set of resources from the University of Oregon are intended to help forest and watershed restoration leaders predict and monitor the local economic impacts of ecological restoration in the state.

The Ecosystem Workforce Program at the UO developed the “Economic Impacts of Restoration Calculator for Oregon Counties” to help restoration practitioners better forecast the economic impacts of field-based restoration spending. Using the calculator, project managers can translate proposed project spending into predicted county-level employment, earnings and overall economic impact of proposed restoration activities. A second tool will measure the ongoing economic impact of restoration.

“In Oregon, substantial investments have been made in forest and watershed restorations projects over the past 20 years, but the impact of that work has been measured for its ecological value, not as economic impacts,” said Cassandra Moseley, director, UO Institute for a Sustainable Environment and the Ecosystem Workforce Program, who led the development of the tools.

Recent research conducted by the Ecosystem Workforce Program at the UO found that every $1 million invested in restoration by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) supports 16.3 full-time equivalent jobs, along with $589,000 in wages and $2.3 million in overall economic activity (http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/downloads/WP24.pdf).

“By combining traditional economic analysis tools with data collected from actual restoration projects, the calculator tells a more complete story about the economic impacts of restoration than what was previously possible,” said Moseley.

Because the calculator is intended to be used as an estimate for future projects and does not monitor economic impacts of project spending, the Ecosystem Workforce Program has developed a second tool to enable restoration practitioners to monitor the actual economic impacts of restoration.
The “Quick Guide to Monitoring the Economic Impacts of Restoration and Stewardship” is designed to provide interested parties with a framework for setting economic goals, selecting monitoring measures, collecting data, and reporting and using monitoring results. This guide describes how to obtain and utilize detailed information about job numbers, job quality, wages, contracting and subcontracting opportunities, and local capture of contracts and jobs.

According to Jon Souder, executive director of the Coos Watershed Association, a local non-profit organization dedicated to restoring the Coos River Watershed in western Oregon, “We have desired for quite some time to have a tool to determine the economic benefits from our work. The quick guide and the calculator will enable us to demonstrate how we’re achieving our mission to support environmental integrity and economic stability through our watershed restoration efforts.”

Developed with funding from the Meyer Fund for a Sustainable Environment, the calculator tool and monitoring guide are geared toward watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, forest and watershed restoration collaboratives, tribal natural research managers and other land managers and agencies.

The calculator and monitoring guide are available for download at: http://ewp.uoregon.edu/economy.

**About the University of Oregon**
The University of Oregon is among the 108 institutions chosen from 4,633 U.S. universities for top-tier designation of "Very High Research Activity" in the 2010 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The UO also is one of two Pacific Northwest members of the Association of American Universities.

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