Colorado State FOREST SERVICE

Colorado State Forest Service
5060 Campus Delivery
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-5060
970.491.6303; FAX 970.491.7736
http://csfs.colostate.edu/

NEWS

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Contact for Reporters: Ryan Lockwood
970.491.8970
ryan.lockwood@colostate.edu

Motorcycle club plants 1,900 seedling trees in High Park burn area

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – The Sleigh Riders, a Greeley-based motorcycle club best known for delivery of donated toys at Christmas, planted 1,900 seedling trees in the High Park Fire burn area Saturday. The trees were planted in the Stove Prairie vicinity as part of a coordinated volunteer effort led by the Colorado State Forest Service.

The seedling trees, a mixture of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir grown at the CSFS Nursery in Fort Collins, were planted on private properties impacted by the fire. The planting will help accelerate regeneration and ultimately protect water supplies, restore wildlife habitat and reduce flooding and erosion.

"We ride these roads a lot for relief and soul searching," said Charley Barnes, founder and president of the nonprofit Sleigh Riders. "We wanted to give back, and also be able to ride this road in 20 years and see what we planted."

The Sleigh Riders' primary function is an annual Christmastime Motorcycle Toy Run that began in 2006. Each December, the police-escorted parade winds through Greeley as more than 350 motorcycles deliver donated toys to families in need.

Mike Hughes, assistant district forester for the CSFS Fort Collins District, led the weekend planting efforts; additional volunteers from the Environmental Ministry Team at Plymouth Congregational Church in Fort Collins also contributed to the effort. Hughes said the affected landowners were extremely appreciative of everyone's efforts.

"The Sleigh Riders and other volunteers worked hard and really planted a lot of seedlings," Hughes said. "There's nice moisture in the ground now, so these trees have a great chance at survival."

Other landowners in the High Park burn area recently received more than 4,000 seedlings from the CSFS-administered Restoring Colorado's Forests Fund, which provides trees through donations from Colorado businesses and private citizens.

To help provide seedlings for planting on lands impacted by the High Park Fire and other natural disasters, citizens can donate to the Restoring Colorado's Forests Fund at https://advancing.colostate.edu/RestoringColoradosForests.