



NEWS RELEASE

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Youth ChalleNGe Academy teenagers assist in post-fire reforestation

(KAMIAH) – Cadets from the Idaho Youth ChalleNGe Academy in Pierce endured the cold rain and snow to protect tree seedlings planted on lands burned by wildfire in the Clearwater Basin.

The 16- to 18-year old cadets joined Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) foresters in maintaining protective sleeves called vexar tubes on young tree seedlings that were planted last spring. The planting project is part of reforestation efforts on private lands affected by the 2015 Clearwater Complex Fire.

The IDL foresters taught the cadets about forest management practices, and the cadets used their newly acquired skills to scale steep slopes and hand inspect each seedling. Seedling protection is critical in the area in order to fend off life-threatening damage caused by foraging elk and deer. The vexar tubes are installed during planting and must be maintained biannually to ensure effectiveness. The cadets made sure the branches were protected and the bamboo stakes would withstand the coming snow load.

Approximately 27,000 ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir seedlings were planted on 90 acres in the Lolo Creek drainage as part of a larger restoration project that will bring more than 130,000 seedlings to areas hardest hit by the catastrophic fires in the Clearwater Basin. The planting projects target burned private forestlands that are at extreme risk of landslides, insect and disease outbreaks, and weed invasions. The projects complement recovery plans and restoration work on nearby federal and state lands.

The replanting project activities are funded by a USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration grant. The cadets' assistance is part of the *Service to Community* opportunities offered by the Idaho Youth ChalleNGe Academy to benefit local communities.

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