



# Updraft

February, 2006

Center for Wildfire Education, Training, Research and Interpretation

## *The Web of Life: Fire Ecology Program Finding Success at the Columbia Breaks Center*



Dear Fire Interpretive Center,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to go visit this beautiful place. I had a lot of fun walking the trails and looking at each plant. I have never realized that nature was a fun place to be surrounded by. I felt safe and relaxed there. During this trip I learned many things about our environment.

Thank you,

Jessica Hernandez

215 sixth grade students from Eastmont School District's Clovis Point Intermediate School learn about the "Web of Life" at the Columbia Breaks Center in Entiat.

More inside . .

# The Web of Life . . .

The environmental education unit for the Eastmont School District's intermediate school students consists of 3 sections: 1) a three-week study of the flora and fauna of the shrub-steppe/ponderosa pine ecosystem; 2) a one-week study of fire ecology showing how fire is just as much a part of the ecosystem as plants and animals, and 3) a one-day field trip to Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center where students see what they have been learning during the 4-week study.

During the first 3-weeks of study, students met in the library for one period each day learning about how plants and animals have adapted to this ecosystem. The guiding questions are: 1) What organisms live in this ecosystem? 2) What physical and behavioral characteristics have enabled them to survive the harsh conditions of their environment? 3) What things, both organic and inorganic, do these organisms need to survive? 4) How are all the plants and animals interdependent? 5) How does altering any part of the environment change the "web of life" that these organisms have created?

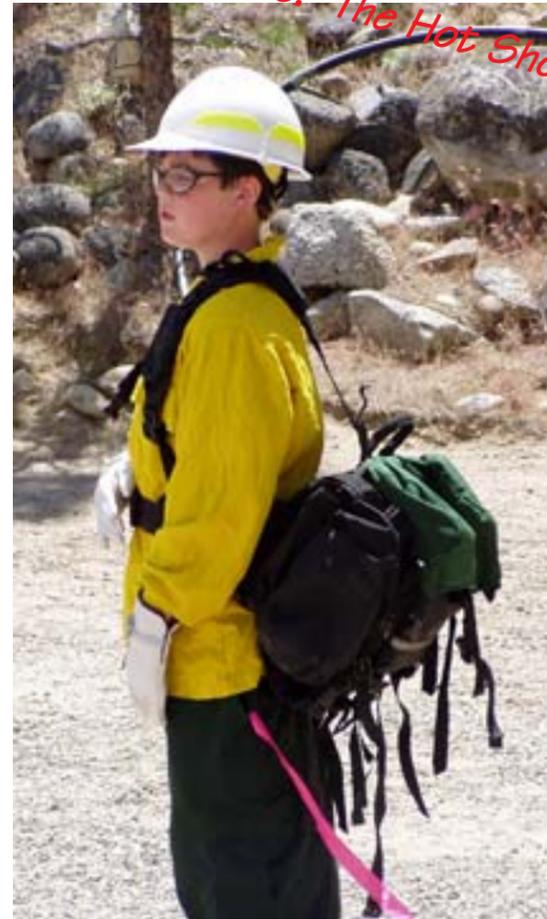
Each student picks a plant and an animal and becomes an "expert" on those organisms. They share their information with the rest of the class, which makes a list of the general ways in which plants and animals adapt to their environment. They then create a class mural, each team of 2-3 students creating one panel of that mural. On their panel they include the plants and characteristics of the shrub-step/ponderosa pine ecosystem. They then place their animal on the mural and include everything it needs to survive. When completed, the students' panels are placed side-by-side on a wall to create one large mural. The students then take yarn and make connections between everything drawn on the mural—creating a "web of life."

The final week is devoted to fire ecology, using the curriculum materials provided in the "firebox" created by the Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center. The purpose of these materials is to show how fire is a vital part of our environment, how living organisms must adapt to it, and how people have influenced the role of fire in the past 100 years.

The field trip day is an opportunity to take everything the students learn and put it together in a "real" setting. They travel to the CBFIC site to hike the interpretive trail. Information cards are placed along the trail that reinforce/review what the students learned in the classroom. The students read and discuss the information and then are required to answer questions on a handout they are carrying. They also got to climb up into an old fire lookout where they hear information from individuals who have spent summers in lookouts spotting fires. At the end of the hike, students gather in the site's amphitheater where they participate in presentations from crews and individuals from the U.S. Forest Service, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and members of the CBFIC board.

The field trip is a wonderful example of how schools, government agencies, and a private foundation can work together to enhance the education of our students. CBFIC was also able to pay the costs of buses for the field trips through grants it has received for this education program.

*By Dave Spies, Teacher/Librarian at Eastmont's Clovis Point Intermediate School and CBFIC Board Member*



*A student models the clothing and gear of a hot shot crew.*



*#3 Favorite: The Trail*

*"I learned that it is a big responsibility being a firefighter. My favorite part was when we walked around the shrubsteppe on the trail."*



*Mrs. Mooney models a smokejumper's suit while Matt Lyons, a smokejumper, explains the gear.*

*Dear Columbia Breaks Interpretive Center,*

*Thank you so much for donating the money for us to go to your beautiful, cool site. Thank you for letting us go up in the tower, use binoculars, and walk up the trails.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lucas Rimmer*

Students sent letters to CBFIC telling what they learned and about their favorite part of the field trip. Here is what they said.

*"I learned how plants and animals depend on each other to live. For example, some animals depend on plants for shade and for food."*

*"I learned that it is really important to keep the forest safe and healthy for those people who live nearby the forest and for the forest. My favorite part was Mrs. Mooney, our teacher, dressed up as a smokejumper."*

*"What I learned was how many amazing and horrible things a fire can do. I learned that the three main kinds of trees in our ecosystem are Ponderosa Pines, Douglas Fir, and Lodge Pole Pines."*

*"My favorite part was the amphitheater and the hot shots."*

*"I learned that sometimes fires are good for forests."*

*"I learned that old Badger Mountain lookout was more than 70 years old."*

*#1 Favorite: The Lookout Tower*



*Forest Service employee, Judy Murrey in Chelan Butte Lookout, talks with students about life in the lookout tower.*

*"What I learned was how the lookout people survived the whole summer in a little room."*



## *Smoke Signals From The President*

It hardly seems possible that another year has passed. But it has. 2005 was a good year for Columbia Breaks and we are looking forward to an even better 2006.

The education program is growing as noted in this edition of the Updraft. We are proud of this program. We have integrated the curriculum with other natural resource topics, which makes it easier to include in the busy school schedule. Wildfire is an integral element of all of our systems here. It is well received by both students and teachers. We look for even more participation in 2006.

We have completed the natural amphitheater on the site and utilities are ready to install this spring. Additional work was done on the two lookouts, the "Trail of Fire and Forest" and the kiosk signs. We are anxious to begin on-site programs this season. Our trail is one of Audubon Society's "Birding Trails of Washington State" and we plan to expand the trail system by developing a 5.5-mile loop trail up and over the bluffs above the site.

**We will have a building on the site in 2006.** Senator Linda Evans Parlette and Congressman Mike Armstrong were successful in getting us a \$150,000 state capital fund grant to build a Visitor Contact building. This will finally give us a presence on the site. In addition to giving out information about our program we will give fire prevention messages, regional visitor information and be able to develop on-site programs. Actual work will start this spring.

Now our challenge is to expand our operating budget to fully staff the facility. Volunteers and interns will help, but our goal is to raise the funds to hire a director. The North Central Washington Economic Development District is helping by funding a grant writer to find a source of funding to cover the first three years of operations. We hope they are successful.

In the meantime we continue our own fundraising. The 2005 Sponsor's Program raised nearly \$5,000 and this fall's "Firefighter Appreciation Night" raised another \$6,000. We appreciate your past support and trust it will continue. There are several ways to participate: the Sponsor's Program, Membership, Buy a Piece of Land, donations and volunteering. **We need your help.** Thanks for your consideration.

*By Arnie Arneson  
CBFIC Board President*

*Mark your Calendar for:  
Saturday, October 28, 2006  
for the annual Columbia Breaks  
"2006 Firefighter Appreciation" dinner/auction  
5:30 p.m.  
Cashmere Community Center  
Cashmere Wa*



Center for Wildfire Education, Training, Research and Interpretation

## Vision & Mission Statement

The Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center will provide a variety of quality learning experiences, interpretation, and research opportunities through active and dynamic exhibits, field trips, talks and lectures, demonstrations, and interaction with interpreters, researchers, curators, and fire managers.

The Center will examine and explain the role of fire in ecology and natural processes with particular emphasis on the Pacific Northwest, and will showcase past, present, and future interactions of people with the world of fire.

Emphasis will be placed on informing visitors on all aspects of natural, prescribed, and human caused fire.

The programs, interpretive exhibits, and facilities will be designed to serve the following audiences and customers:

- Local community (residents, schools, and colleges)
- Tourists
- Agency personnel
- Researchers (local, regional, and national)

The Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center will be professionally staffed by paid employees and volunteers and will operate in a self-sustaining capacity through cooperation with other public agencies and private partnerships.

### Board of Directors

**Arnie Arneson**

*President*

**Dave Spies**

*Vice President*

**Maggie Bailey**

*Secretary*

**Randy Uhrich**

*Treasurer*

**Dave Anderson**

**Mike Asher**

**Steve Goetz**

**John Huselton**

**Wayne Long**

**Bill Moody**

**Steve Tift**

**Peggy Whitmore**

Visit our website at [www.wildfirecenter.org](http://www.wildfirecenter.org)



Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center Foundation  
P.O. Box 3773  
Wenatchee WA 98807

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
WENATCHEE, WA  
PERMIT NO. 257