

NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region
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Northwest Montana Native Youth Conservation Corps Program: Ready for Another Successful Year

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Staff from Creston National Fish Hatchery in Kalispell, Mont., and employees of the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Natural Resources Department (NRD), from the Flathead Reservation in Montana are gearing up to kick off the Northwest Montana Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program for the 2012 summer season. The official start date for the Northwest Montana Youth Conservation Corps is June 11th. This will be the third year for this eight-week program sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Program, Creston National Fish Hatchery, and the CSKT NRD, Salish Kootenai College.

Fourteen Tribal youths and three Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) students will be hired to assist CSKT NRD resource conservation projects on Tribal and Federal managed lands in northwest Montana. The STEP students will serve as crew leaders and work side by side with the youths on a variety of landscape-based conservation deliveries. The students hired for this eight-week program will gain a wide range of work experience to further develop job enhancement skills. The project includes two weeks at the Creston National Fish Hatchery where they will learn fish production methods, fish biology and the role of hatchery propagation to achieve fishery management objectives. For the remaining six weeks the youths will work on the Flathead Reservation conducting projects that will protect important wildlife habitats and increase their appreciation for the value of wildlife.

As called for in America's Great Outdoor Initiative the Fisheries Program is engaging young people in conservation by providing service-based learning opportunities and creating quality jobs and career pathways to tribal youth both on tribal lands and off, at facilities like Creston National Fish Hatchery.

"The success of this program has been very gratifying. This year over fifty youths applied for just a dozen positions. The word has spread among students that the NW Montana YCC program is a fun and exciting way to spend the summer," said Creston Hatchery Manager Mark Maskill. "As tribal youth witness the growing number of completed conservation projects, they want to become involved in the experience of protecting fish & wildlife on the Flathead reservation. Creston National Fish Hatchery is

happy to be part of this unique partnership and look forward to providing more tribal youths with this outstanding outdoor adventure.”

Austin Moran, Student Temporary Employment Program hire with Creston National Fish Hatchery said, “This is my second year as a crew leader with the Northwest Montana Native YCC Program. It is an honor to come back and work again this year for such a worthwhile program. As a crew leader with the YCC I get to help others better understand the need for conservation of our natural resources and what it means to respect those resources. I also gain additional work skills to help with my own career goals to become a wildlife biologist.”

This Fisheries and Habitat Conservation sponsored program enhances YCC students’ understanding of resource conservation by engaging the youths in the protection and restoration of the fish and wildlife populations. In so doing, the program encourages the next generation of leaders in natural resource conservation.

For more information on the Creston National Fish Hatchery, Salish Kootenai College and Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribe Northwest Montana Youth Conservation Corps Program, please contact Mark Maskill at 406-758-6868.

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