

CORVALLIS Gazette-Times

Santiam State Forest gets grant to aid reforestation efforts

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Reforestation efforts in the Santiam State Forest will be boosted by a nearly \$1 million grant from a national nonprofit. The Oregon Department of Forestry said that the additional funds will help the agency plant about 2 million more seedlings next year in the forest that was heavily damaged by the 2020 Labor Day fires.

The \$927,000 comes courtesy of American Forests, a nonprofit founded in 1875 that says on its website it has helped plant millions of trees in all 50 states.

“Part of what makes this partnership so great is that their mission aligns with replanting and restoring the Santiam and that’s a wonderful opportunity for a partnership,” ODF spokesman Jason Cox said. “American Forests was certainly very proactive in reaching out to us to see what we needed and how they can help.”

The 2020 fires burned more than a million acres of forests across Oregon, over 16,000 of which were in the Santiam Forest. The fires burned in a mosaic patchwork, with state, federal and private lands affected by the Lionshead, Beachie Creek, Riverside and Holiday Farm fires.

The Santiam State Forest spans portions of Linn, Marion and Clackamas counties.

“This generous gift enhances ODF’s capacity to restore the Santiam to a healthy, resilient, working public forest for the people of Oregon,” ODF State Forests Division Chief Liz Dent said in a press release. “We are grateful to American Forests for this historic investment in Oregon’s public lands.”

Replanting in the Santiam Forest started last fall, with both aerial seed drops conducted by helicopters and hand-planting crews that put seedlings directly into the ground. ODF estimates that these efforts led to 395,000 seedlings planted via hand crews since last November.

The state's reforestation efforts have been the subject of a legal challenge by conservation groups, which argue that human intervention in reforestation leads to ecological concerns. Linn County, as well as several other counties in the state that rely on timber revenue, have participated in the lawsuit on behalf of the state.

This grant from American Forests will help plant 2 million more, and the goal is to plant 4 million seedlings to “fully replant and restore the Santiam.”

Officials said the replanting season tends to begin in mid-to-late fall.

Source:https://www.gazettetimes.com/news/local/santiam-state-forest-gets-grant-to-aid-reforestation-efforts/article_a999422f-ba36-5a4f-8981-499ed50083f2.html