



Contact:

Jennifer Flaster, (802) 672-2700
jennifer.flaster@yahoo.com

Dave Stack, (406) 541-6374
nationalforest@montana.com

October 21, 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF FOREST SERVICE HISTORY ANNOUNCES STEM EDUCATION PROGRAM AT NATIONAL COAL COUNCIL MEETING

Missoula, MT –Today, the leadership of the National Museum of Forest Service History (Museum) announced plans to expand its education programs and exhibits to foster greater interest in STEM education. STEM education encourages students to pursue college degrees and select careers in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

The announcement was made at the semi-annual meeting of the National Coal Council (Council) held in Washington, D.C. The Council functions as a federal advisory council to the Department of Energy and represents more than 100 coal corporations, associations, utility companies and university research centers.

The Museum's Collections, Education and Exhibit Programs will feature a century of cooperation between the U.S. Forest Service and the energy, wildland fire and aviation, technology, mining, ranching, transportation and recreation industries. The future workforce of the Forest Service, as well as each of these industries, is largely dependent upon STEM education. The National Science Foundation "estimates that 80 percent of the jobs created in the next decade will require some form of math and science skills."

"The museum community, through internships, education programs, on-site experiences, field programs and summer camps must work with the business and education community to more fully engage students, to peak their interest and advance their skills in STEM," said Gray Reynolds, president of the Museum. "The National Museum of Forest Service History has a responsibility to develop educational and interpretive programs and experiences that support STEM education in K-12, undergraduate and graduate education."

A recent report from Tapping America's Potential, a coalition of 16 of the nation's leading business organizations, shows that the U.S. is losing its ability to innovate and, in effect, its ability to compete. The report, Gaining Momentum, Losing Ground,

indicates that little real progress has been made toward the goal of doubling the number of students earning bachelor's degrees in STEM subjects. In 2008, the nation's universities awarded 225,000 degrees in these areas –not enough by today's standards and far from the projected 400,000 degrees needed by 2015.

The announcement came as the Museum board is developing its interpretive and conservation education programming for the National Conservation Legacy and Center. STEM education is an important component of understanding the natural world and equips future leaders with the knowledge they will need to make challenging resource management decisions.

“The next generation of public land stewards from the public, private or nonprofit sector will require this knowledge. We are here today to discuss working together with members of the National Coal Council to ensure that the future stewards of our nation's forests and grasslands have both a context in conservation history and a skill set for problem solving and balancing the resource needs of our nation,” stated Reynolds.

“The coal industry's support of STEM education is an important area for collaboration with the Museum. The many stories of conservation related to our National Forest System Lands provide us with ample opportunities to engage students in these areas -- to inspire them to envision careers in firefighting, mining, science, engineering and technology,” said Ellie Hill, a Montana State legislator and member of the Museum's board.

The Museum's board members used this forum to share plans for the construction of the National Conservation Legacy and Education Center in Missoula, Montana. The goal of the Center is to invite the public to explore the Forest Service's history, people, and innovations and to connect lessons learned from the past to the present and future stewardship of the nation's natural resources.

Senator Larry Craig (Ret.), and member of the Museum's board, summarized the Museum's interpretive themes for National Coal Council members. “At the Center, we will have a forum to share how the Forest Service and its many cooperators and partners have shaped conservation in the U.S.,” said Craig. “The economic, social, environmental and policy decisions related to coal production and the National Forest System lands over the past 100 years demonstrate how the agency's unique “multiple use” philosophy has guided the nation's approach to public lands, and the key role national forests and grasslands have played in the development of the country.”

“The Center will play a valuable role in strengthening our society and shaping our local and national dialogue and action on behalf of conservation,” said Dave Stack, Executive Director and Vice President of the Museum. “As we share our nation's conservation legacy through interpretive and education programs and exhibits, we strive to create intellectual connections between the public and our public lands.” Stack continued, “We appreciate the opportunity to work with partners including the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Foundation, Bibb: Engineers, Architects and Constructors and other members of the

National Coal Council to pass on to current and future generations the stewardship of our National Forests and Grasslands.”

The Relationship of Coal Production to U.S. Forest System Lands

The U.S. is entirely self-sufficient in coal. One-third of the coal produced in the United States comes from the nation’s largest coal reserve in the Powder River Basin. Part of this reserve lies within the Thunder Basin National Grassland, managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Powder River Basin coal is delivered to 124 power plants in 24 states.

In 2009, 19 percent of our domestic coal production was extracted from National Forest System lands. This amounts to approximately 224 million tons of coal, valued at \$6.25 billion, creating over \$500 million in royalty returns to the U.S. Treasury. This is the largest return to the Treasury of any Forest Service program and represents an important multiple use value from these lands.

About the National Museum of Forest Service History

The National Museum of Forest Service History, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1988, is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and interpreting the entire national history of the USDA Forest Service for the education and enjoyment of the general public, scholars, and historical researchers.

For more information, visit www.nmfs-history.net
