

# The tree's the thing

## Boeing backs natural conservation efforts in Southern Calif., Pacific NW

By SUSAN BIRKHOLTZ

**F**orests provide quality of life by protecting water supplies, minimizing flood risks and abating pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide. And there are few places in the United States that the benefits of thriving forests are more critical than in Southern California, where car-choked highways and masses of buildings stand in contrast to the beauty of nature. Each year, wildfires plague the region with devastating consequences for forests and wildlife.

That's why Boeing was quick to respond when last year's wildfires destroyed thousands of acres of forests and parklands in Southern California, an area home to nearly 28,000 Boeing employees. Company-matched donations of Boeing employees and retirees to the American Red Cross for immediate relief activities totaled more than \$702,000, which included a large grant from the Employees Community Fund of Southern California.

At that time, Boeing pledged to make a \$1 million contribution toward rebuilding—or in this case “releafing”—efforts in the region. The company fulfilled that pledge with a \$1 million grant to Los Angeles-based nonprofit TreePeople to launch its California Wildfire Restoration Initiative. Rick Stephens, senior vice president, Human Resources and Administration, announced the grant at an early June press event at the nonprofit's Coldwater Canyon Park headquarters in Los Angeles County.

The comprehensive initiative will help mobilize and train urban volunteers to restore and protect the ecosystem in the damaged forest areas of Southern California. This effort, along with similar actions across the world, aligns with Boeing's Environment community-investment focus area objective to promote the conservation, improvement and restoration of critical natural assets and to train citizens to protect and conserve the environment.

Key to the success of TreePeople's initiative are its plans to engage in strategic partnerships with local, state and federal agencies that manage public lands in Southern California, including the Santa Monica Mountains, the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, and the four national forests that serve the counties of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Ventura and San Diego.

“TreePeople's mission is a noble one: to ‘help nature to heal our cities,’” Stephens said. “But after last year's devastating wildfires, TreePeople knew that healing nature would become a pressing priority and began working with people throughout the region to restore these critical areas. Boeing is proud to support TreePeople in this effort.”



Children from a local school participate in a TreePeople Eco-Tour by planting tree seedlings with (from left) Nicole Beaty, a Boeing summer intern; Rick Stephens, senior vice president, Human Resources and Administration; Anne Roosevelt, vice president, Global Corporate Citizenship; John Garamendi, lieutenant governor of California; and Andy Lipkis, TreePeople president. TONY ROMERO PHOTO

Boeing had established a relationship with TreePeople long before this grant, however. In fact, the Employees Community Fund of Boeing California has been a TreePeople proponent for more than 25 out of the nonprofit's 35 years of existence.

Among the innovative TreePeople programs funded by the California ECF are the Elementary Education Eco-Tour Program, which brings city schoolchildren to Coldwater Park Canyon to learn about forests and the importance of their protection and conservation, and the Campus Forestry Program, which funded the distribution of the TreePeople Citizen Forestry Books to school libraries throughout Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. TreePeople also has been a recipient of more than \$600,000 in corporate contributions throughout the years.

Meanwhile, in the Puget Sound region, Boeing recently awarded the Cascade Land Conservancy a \$750,000 grant to support the conservation work of The Cascade Agenda in forests, along creeks and streams and in the restoration of forested parks in the northwest United States.

The grant comes as the conservancy moves into the public phase of a \$20 million Cascade Agenda Campaign. The Cascade Agenda, launched in 2005, is a 100-year regional program aimed at conserving 1.3 million acres of working forests and farmlands as well as revitalizing cities and towns throughout the region.

“This grant reflects the far-reaching promise of The Cascade Agenda and the proven track record of the Cascade Land Conservancy,” said Mary Armstrong, vice president of Environment, Health and Safety and a Puget Sound area resident. “Boeing is proud to continue its long-standing support for the environment because it helps us maintain the Puget Sound region as an attractive, vibrant and competitive place for our employees to live and work.” ■

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