

Steve you have established internal partners within the Department and you've also let them know about the high school, college and tribal programs.

What about external partners?

>> S. Cohn: Let me talk about that.

Some of our relationships with some of our external partners.

Certainly our formal education institutions or partners, but we also foster relationships with nonprofit organizations, and I'll talk specifically about our relationship with Audubon Arizona and our river pathways program.

The river pathways program is a partnership between BLM Arizona, the Arizona Audubon Center and Phoenix union high school district and it's designed to educate high school students about conservation and restoration.

Phoenix union is one of the largest and most diverse high school districts in the nation with over 25,000 students, 94% of whom are minority students.

To date over 200 students these three high schools have been through the program and are long -- our

long-term goal is to introduce students in the entire district to this course of study.

Here's how the program works.

Teachers present a five-module course in riparian ecology as part of their third-year science class.

The curriculum was developed jointly between BLM biologists, Audubon naturalists, and top high school science teachers.

Students learn about the interaction of plants and animals in desert river systems and the challenges of cob -- conserving these resources in balance with the BLM's multiple use mission.

Students who excel and express a desire to learn more are brought to the Rio Salado Audubon Center located immediately adjacent to a 600 acre habitat restoration area in South Phoenix.

Training builds upon the classroom modules with labs and field components, including hands-on resource monitoring and restoration activities on site along the Salt River.

Of this group the most motivated students are further encouraged to participate in on the ground riparian monitoring and restoration activities in the Agua Fria National Monument.

The interns monitor riparian habitat and conduct

other stewardship and conservation work.

This inspires and enables the pursuit of resource careers and strengthens relationships among these students, the BLM and Audubon Arizona.

The program culminates in students and teachers using a BLM riparian monitoring protocol to monitor sites on BLM lands.

The BLM selected six riparian monitoring sites for the students to monitor in the Agua Fria National Monument.

Additionally a video has been developed between Audubon and BLM as an introduction to riparian literacy for students.

The Audubon River Pathways program is high lie as one of the Secretary's high priority projects for the America's Great Outdoors Initiative and Youth In the Great Outdoors.

This program is specifically designed to serve as an entry point into BLM Arizona's natural resources careers pathway.

Additionally, we hired two students in the summers of 2010 and 2011 as Audubon interns.

>> L. Thomas: Thanks, Steve.

Like I said before, very impressive, very

innovative.

Let's take a look at what exactly these students learned.

>> The desert is a place of extreme heat, limited shelter and lack of water.

Yet in the midst of this harsh country, desert rivers flow freely and support an amazing diversity of life.

Stream-side lands support over 70% of all threatened birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians.

These valuable stream-side habitats are called riparian areas.

Not only do riparian areas provide homes for native wild life but also serve as an important resource for people.

The sand, gravel and rocks at the bottom of the stream filter pollutants from our water.

By holding stream banks together, plant roots help slow floodwaters.

Ranchers depend on these areas to provide their cattle with food and water.

People who live in cities use these areas to hike, fish or simply relax.

These special places can that even be outdoor laboratories allowing scientists to determine the effects of these activities on the land.

The Bureau of Land Management, or BLM, is a federal agency in charge of managing public lands.

The BLM takes on the challenge of managing our desert rivers in ways that keep the rivers healthy while letting the public make use of the land.

>> The riparian stream that you see here is being monitored by students from the Phoenix union high school district.

What they're helping the Bureau of Land Management do is to give us vital scientific information through monitoring to enable us to make good management decisions.

>> When I'm out here doing these things for the Audubon, I feel like I'm doing something important for nature, that I'm not just sitting somewhere doing nothing.

>> Monitoring at the foundation -- is the foundation of responsible land management.

Riparian areas or stream-side habitat can tolerate

some disturbance, but if the disturbance is too great, the area will be damaged.

>> You can see where the cars come in and break the banks and it kills all the vegetation.

>> Regular monitoring allows scientists to track the level of disturbance in riparian areas.

This allows them to decide when to allow cattle to graze and when where to place fences to keep out off-road vehicles.

>> One important thing we look at when we determine the health of a stream is the stream-side vegetation.

>> Many cases the roots are the only force holding stream banks together.

Without these root structures, flowing water would pull the soil into the stream, causing it to become warm, wide and shallow.

This would limit the stream's ability to support wildlife or human uses that.

>> I love nature.

It's peaceful.

Nice to hear the stream go by.

>> You do not have to go far to visit one of these valuable riparian areas.

For example, the Agua Fria river, located just 40 miles north of Phoenix, provides wintering and breeding habitat for so many birds that Audubon Arizona has designated it an important bird area.

The Agua Fria river is one of 40 important bird areas in Arizona.

>> Audubon Arizona is the State Office of the national Audubon society.

Our mission is to conserve birds, other wildlife and their habitats and we often partner with organizations like the Bureau of Land Management to accomplish our goals.

Audubon biologists gather and analyze field data in order to determine the health of bird populations and their habitats.

>> The Agua Fria river is on public land.

This means that this river does not only belong to one person or one group; it belongs to all of the

American public.

This provides both unique challenges and opportunities.

Not only do these areas need to be managed for wildlife, but they also need to be managed to ensure that all human activities can continue without infringing upon the needs of other people or species.

This need for management creates countless career opportunities.

Just imagine, you could have a career where you can call a beautiful riparian area your office while preserving one of our state's most valuable resources for everyone.

>> L. Thomas: That was a great video highlighting the important work these students are doing on the Agua Fria National Monument.

Steve, looks like your District Manager Angie helped with the video.

>> S. Cohn: She did.

It means a lot to the youth to have a District Manager from BLM out there on the ground working with them in the field.

It resonates very well with students.

>> L. Thomas: Thank you, Steve.

Angie, you've explained how you're working with other Departmental agencies.

Have you worked with other federal Departments?

>> A. Bullets: We're very excited to tell you about our newest partnership among the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. DA Forest Service.

The Department of Labor manages the Workforce Investment Act.

These are funds or block grants given to counties, tribes and cities to provide underserved youth with meaningful training and work experiences leading to careers.

At a time of extremely high unemployment rates, especially among diverse and economically disadvantaged urban and rural youth, WIA training programs and wage employment may be provide the best opportunity for getting youth educated, trained and on to a successful career pathway.

The Bureau of Land Management is uniquely situated to provide these career opportunities because of

our long-standing tradition in hiring local youth into wildland firefighting and natural resource technician positions.

On February 11, 2010, there was an intergovernmental agreement between the Department of Labor, Department of Interior and USDA to use Workforce Investment Act programs to provide meaningful work and learning opportunities for low-income youth and young adults on federally managed public lands.

This fall, the BLM Arizona entered into an Assistance Agreement with the student conservation association, or SCA, to develop and implement a youth training program.

Then, the City of Phoenix and Maricopa County workforce boards hired a youth provider called Arizona call a teen youth resources, or ACYR.

This fall and spring, up to 15 youth will go through the inaugural training program.

Youth are organized into crews with an SCA professional crew leader for 12 to 16-week training program.

The workforce boards in Phoenix and Maricopa County will pay for their wages for work materials and tuition assistance.

At least minimum wage is paid using WIA funds handed down from the federal Department of Labor. This includes four weeks of training and 8 to 12 weeks of on-the-job training, completing valuable projects on public lands.

Upon graduation, the youth will receive a resource management field certification and be eligible for a Red Card.

The certificate will be recognized by the Forest Service and Interior agencies and cover not only wildland firefighting but also wildland -- wilderness first aid, leave no trace, field data collection methods, chainsaw certification, trail design and construction and off-road four-wheel driving, among other skills.

And here's the best part...

While these low-income youth are getting paid to go through the program and getting work experience in land management agencies, they'll also be getting up to 16 credits from the Phoenix College, some of which are designed to feed into the program we mentioned earlier, which is called the environmental and natural resource stewardship certificate.

And the Work

>> L. Thomas: Thanks, Angie.