Acorns to Oaks: Oakland Zoo Teams Up with CAL FIRE to Plant Trees

Acorns to Oaks was established to help Oakland Zoo plant a minimum of 200 trees, 100 of them oak trees, and repair and restore urban parkland, create accessible open space experiences that are viable and safe for urban children, peak student interest, and provide hands-on experiences that will impress on children the importance of their role in caring for the environment.

Oakland, CA (PRWEB) August 18, 2012 -- Oakland Zoo’s horticulture staff collaborates with 10th and 11th graders at Sustainable Urban Design Academy (SUDA), Girl Scouts of Northern California, and the PUEBLO community group to plant more than 200 trees, 100 of which will be native oaks.

“Our partnership with Oakland Zoo and CAL FIRE is a great example of connecting schools, community partners and state resources to provide for authentic, tangible and meaningful projects that benefit all of the individual participants, the community and the planet as a whole,” said Tim Bremner, teacher at Oakland Unified School District.

Grant funding of $29,500 was awarded to Oakland Zoo by CAL FIRE, which developed the urban forestry program, Acorns to Oaks.

“The East Bay Zoological Society was selected for funding under our Urban & Community Forestry Program’s “Leafing Out” grant program in 2010,” said James Scheid, CAL FIRE Regional Urban Forester. “The intent of this specific grant type is to fund the creation and implementation of early stage urban forestry projects or programs. The Zoo is accomplishing this by transforming barren or neglected sites along the entryway to its facility and by creating educational programs for area students. Specifically, they are, encouraging the growth of native, fire-adapted, drought-tolerant species while removing dense thickets of unfavorable ones like acacia, eucalyptus and pine. While this project does not fund the removal of said species, it does promote the practice of removing vegetative fuels that can create a fire hazard. Additionally, the zoo can be commended for salvaging larger logs removed from the hillside and utilizing these pieces for various zoo and school garden projects. In tying these concepts in with core elements of youth tree planting and stewardship, the visibility given to urban forestry ecosystem services should provide for a lasting legacy not only with those directly involved with the project but with the many urban residents that visit the zoo for years to come.”

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The ultimate goal of this partnership is to create pilot programs designed to educate the community about the importance of urban forests, urban greening, sustainable design, ecosystem land management, and create opportunities through classes and workshops to restore and reforest areas within the Zoo with oak trees. In addition, the project was created to address the gaps in science education faced by all children, but especially the most at risk children.

The trees selected for the Acorns to Oaks project are oak and other species native to the Bay Area. The trees also easily adapt to the open spaces found in Knowland Park. All plants are fire resistant. In addition to
purchased plants, acorns were collected by the SUDA students, grown in special tall pot nursery containers, and replanted at the zoo as a part of their school project.

ABOUT OAKLAND ZOO
The Bay Area's award-winning Oakland Zoo is home to more than 660 native and exotic animals. The Zoo offers many educational programs and kid's activities perfect for science field trips, family day trips and exciting birthday parties. Nestled in the Oakland Hills, in 500-acre Knowland Park, the Zoo is located at 9777 Golf Links Road, off Highway 580. The East Bay Zoological Society (Oakland Zoo) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization supported in part by members, contributions, the City of Oakland and the East Bay Regional Parks. For more information please visit our website at http://www.oaklandzoo.org
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