

Hands-on restoration

by Bartshe Miller



Jody Aas' 5th and 6th grade class with Committee staff down at the LeeVining creek delta.




On May 17th the Lee Vining Elementary 5th and 6th grade class helped plant Jeffrey pine saplings along Lee Vining Creek. This is the second year in a row that Jody Aas' class has planted trees along the creek. This particular section of Lee Vining Creek has been slow to revegetate decades after diversions and fire destroyed a once-lush riparian corridor.

Restoration began in the classroom where the students learned the finer points of Jeffrey pine planting: digging a good hole, pointing the tap root down, measuring the root collar level with the ground, and properly watering the tree. After a quick review the class met Committee staff down by the creek to plant the trees. With buckets, shovels, and saplings, we were able to plant over 60 pines during the course of the morning. Carefully and methodically the students dug holes, checked the depth, placed trees, watered, filled, and watered again. All of the trees planted that morning were given the best chance of survival with a proper root burial. These Jeffrey pines now join the surviving Lodgepole and Jeffrey pines planted last year in the same area.

There was one other important point in the restoration process that some of the students pointed out. It is in fact important to name the individual trees when you plant them. Not all Jeffrey pines are named "Jeffrey"—some are named Rex, David, Steve, and Tom (6th grade boys don't usually assign girl names to trees they plant themselves).

During the course of the summer other students as well as Outdoor Experiences participants from Los Angeles will come to Lee Vining Creek to water these trees—helping them to establish roots in the cobble and sand floodplain of the delta. Some of these trees will survive, rising above the burned Jeffrey and Lodgepole snags that used to shade a healthy stream system.

If you find yourself in Lee Vining this summer, and want to continue where the Lee Vining 5th and 6th graders left off, please stop by the Mono Lake Committee. We will be happy to show you where the trees are and we'll even provide the buckets. 



Photos by Bartshe Miller