

## **Tillamook Forest Center greets 250,000 visitors**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 29, 2011  
11-48

### **Distribution: Major Media**

Contact: Jim Quiring, 503-815-6817

The Tillamook Forest Center greeted its 250,000 visitor during the second week-end in July – early in only its sixth year of operation.

“This is a significant milestone,” said center director Jim Quiring. “We are very proud of having reached out now to over 250,000 people, offering fun family activities, education programs for young people, and an environment in which to learn more about the Tillamook State Forest and its history.”

Quiring also acknowledged the partners who have contributed to the Center’s ability to host this number of visitors. Because of the overall state’s declining budget situation, the Center has had to close during the winter months these past two winters and was only able to be open five days per week during the summer of 2009. However, since that time, partnerships with the Tillamook School District, the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps and the Oregon Youth Employment Initiative, combined with some federal stimulus funding, provided critical support for the Center. In addition, the Tillamook Forest Heritage Trust and a cadre of dedicated volunteers have given additional support needed to operate seven-days-per-week from Memorial Day through Labor Day, both last summer and again this year.

“Since we opened, volunteers, alone, have contributed over 18,000 hours to the Center’s operations,” said Quiring. “We could not have served this number of visitors without them and all of our valued partners.”

Among the 250,000-plus visitors to the Tillamook Forest Center are more than 26,000 students who have come to the Center for school programs. These educational programs have been highly successful, with total student participation actually increasing even though, with reduced operating hours, fewer numbers of programs could be offered.

“The most popular of our programs are those that guide students to learn about the trees and history of the Tillamook State Forest,” Quiring said, “which provide memorable ways for them to not only learn about forests but to connect with them through personal experience.”

Another exciting result of the Tillamook Forest Center has been the meaningful experiences of nearly 18,000 visitors who have participated in the Center’s special interpretive programs – staff-and guest-guided walks and talks in and around the Center, interpreting the history and diversity of life in the Tillamook State Forest and the many values of forests in our lives. The Center’s Gift Shop continues to provide visitors with books, games, and other tools for learning about forests, as well as enter memorabilia, with sales of about \$360,000 over the past five years – the profits from which are returned to the Center for operating costs.

The Tillamook Forest Center opened in 2006, offering visitors the opportunity to explore the Tillamook State Forest, and to learn about its history and its many values in our lives. The Center showcases the legacy of the historic Tillamook Burn and the public spirit behind a

monumental reforestation effort. The Tillamook State Forest is managed by the Oregon Department of Forestry to produce timber revenue for counties, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat.

Through innovative programs and hands-on exhibits, visitors can gain a greater understanding about what a forest is and how it works, and how people have shaped, and, in turn, been shaped by the Tillamook State Forest. Outside, there are trails, a suspension bridge across the Wilson River, and a 40-foot tall fire lookout tower that offers a unique view of the area and the surrounding forest canopy.

Earlier in April of this year, the Tillamook Forest Center celebrated its fifth full year of operation. The Center's anniversary came during the Oregon Department of Forestry's 100<sup>th</sup> year, which the agency is celebrating throughout 2011 with a variety of displays, exhibits, and activities that focus on the agency's Centennial and history. This includes a special Centennial exhibit that is on display at the Center.

Among the other programs and events scheduled at the Tillamook Forest Center this summer are programs on tree identification, fire look-outs, butterflies, and the Center's Annual "Return from the Burn" event on August 20 and 21 – always a special event – that will this year have family-friendly activities, a vintage 1930 Ford Model AA fire engine/pumper truck, and an appearance by Smokey Bear.

Admission to the Tillamook Forest Center is free, as are most of the Center's programs and events. Donations to the Tillamook Forest Heritage Trust, which go to support Center operations, are welcomed.

The Tillamook Forest Center is located near Milepost 22 on Highway 6 between Forest Grove and Tillamook. It is currently open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week, through Labor Day.

More information about the Tillamook Forest Center, including programs and special events, is available by going to its website: [www.tillamookforestcenter.org](http://www.tillamookforestcenter.org) or by calling the Center, toll-free, at: 1-866-930-4646.

###