



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Yreka Fish and Wildlife Office

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In Reply Refer To:

December 5, 2017

Mrs. Libby VanWyhe
North Mountain Park Nature Center
620 N. Mountain Ave
Ashland, Oregon 97520

Subject: Support for the Nature Playground at North Mountain Park

Dear Mrs. VanWyhe:

The Yreka Fish and Wildlife Office (YFWO) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is writing in support of North Mountain Park's application for grant funds to construct a Nature Playground at the Park's Nature Center in Ashland, Oregon. Extensive research has documented the powerful role of outdoor play in children's growth and development, from enhancing creativity and imagination; increasing physical, emotional, and mental well-being; and fostering environmental stewardship. Developing the next generation's sense of responsibility for the care of our natural resources is critical to the Service's mission to conserve wildlife, plants, and the habitats they depend upon.

Jennifer Jones is the YFWO Connecting People with Nature and Schoolyard Habitat (SYH) Program Coordinator and has been working with young people in the outdoors for more than 25 years. Her experience has shown the importance of providing children and young adults opportunities for unstructured exploration of the natural world. Jennifer has frequent contact with staff at North Mountain Park as a co-member of a regional environmental education organization and through her participation in events hosted by the Park.

The YFWO supports your efforts to secure funding for the Nature Playground. I sincerely hope that the project will receive sufficient grant funding to move forward, because the addition of Southern Oregon's first fully-interactive Nature Playground to North Mountain Park would be a tremendous asset to the community.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Jones, Wildlife Biologist, at (530) 841-3109, or jennifer_jones@fws.gov.

Sincerely,


Jenny Ericson
Field Supervisor