Martin fire area gets a healthy crop of sagebrush

By Michelle Cook
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More than a year after the Martin fire in northern Humboldt County, restoration efforts are well underway. Part of the restoration program is to plant a keystone species — sagebrush — to a land scarred by wildfire. And a large part of that program is the Sagebrush in Prison program headed by project coordinator Shannon Swim.

Swim oversees a group of inmates at the Lovelock Correctional Facility who have volunteered to plant sagebrush seeds, care for them and harvest them to be planted across the West. Swim says the purpose is to restore wildlife habitat especially for the sage grouse while also engaging state prison systems. Swim said the program not only grows desperately-needed plant material, but also teaches inmates a bit of ecology along the way.

“We go into these institutions and we teach the inmates how to grow the sagebrush which includes how to sow, how to care for it, and then we also have this whole educational aspect where we teach them not just how to grow but why we are growing,” she said.

According to BLM Public Affairs Specialist Heather O’Hanlon, between Oct. 27 and Nov. 9, the BLM planted 246,000 sagebrush seedlings on 2,240 acres within three separate areas of the Martin Fire. The Prison project provided 110,000 of those plants for the Martin Fire rehabilitation efforts. An additional 176,000 seedlings came from four different prisons in Lovelock and Carson City and Herlong, Calif. to rehabilitate the Holloway Fire. This was the largest seedling acquisition from the prison system to date, O’Hanlon wrote in a follow-up email.

The sagebrush species — See BRUSH, Page Five —

Over 350 species of animals, birds and lizards depend on sagebrush. Some of these species are sagebrush obligates which means that without access to the bush these species die. Sagebrush obligate species include the greater sage grouse, the pygmy rabbit and the black-tailed jack rabbit.

Junior engineers build catapults —

The Jr. Engineers at the library were challenged with another science-based problem solving project last week: how to build a snowball launching catapult out of recycled materials. Above, Quincy Rowberry, 6, puts pieces of recycled material together to build a snowball catapult. For more photos, see Page 28.

Services for those who served

Veteran resources in Winnemucca

By Ashley Maden
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There are several active veterans organizations in Winnemucca that help to provide services for veterans, community service and provide scholarships to highschool students.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is an organization of U.S. war veterans established September 29, 1899 (120 years ago) in Columbus, Ohio. The VFW has — See VETS, Page Five —

Craig “Skip” Becker, Adjutant, VFW Post 12116, National Guard Family Assistance Center Specialist Barbara Stanton, American Legion Auxiliary and Lewis Trout, Commander, American Legion Post 5, represent organizations geared toward helping veterans in Winnemucca.

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By Michelle Cook
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The program started as a pilot program in Oregon in 2014 and by 2016 northern Nevada had its own program at three prisons.

According to the program staff, the program aims to help inmates develop life skills and prepare for reentry into society. The program includes job training, academic assistance, and career counseling. Participants are also provided with job placement assistance and financial aid.

The program has been successful in reducing recidivism rates among participants. Inmates who participate in the program are more likely to find employment and less likely to return to prison.

In addition to these benefits, the program also has a positive impact on the local community. Inmates who participate in the program are more likely to support the local economy by purchasing goods and services and paying taxes.

The program is funded through grants and donations from individuals and organizations. The program also accepts volunteers who can assist with various tasks, such as tutoring and mentoring.

The program is always in need of donations and volunteers. To learn more about how you can support the program, please visit the website or contact the program staff.