

# Students learn the ABC's of watershed restoration

The Bulletin | Posted: Wednesday, September 17, 2014 8:18 am

Fourteen high school students stayed late on Friday, Sept. 12, to add their sweat equity to the second phase of Patagonia Public School's Watershed Living Lab science project.

Located on campus in an area that was prone to erosion, the project involves building terraces, preparing the soil, laying irrigation lines and planting low-water-use, native plants that attract butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinator species. Some of the plants include milkweed, evening primrose, desert willow and honeysuckle.

The project is funded in part by Patagonia Union High School and a grant from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The project started last summer and the initial phase was completed by the Borderlands Earth Care Youth group, comprised of kids from Patagonia and directed by Caleb Weaver, ecological restorationist with Borderlands Restoration.

"The plants that were started during Phase 1 have flourished during the monsoon season and are starting to attract the target species – butterflies, hummingbirds, beetles and moths," Weaver said. "This second phase is going to expand the area and add to the plant inventory." Further plans include additional terracing, work benches, shade trees and seating for an outdoor classroom.

"Funding and the availability of volunteers are going to determine when we can complete the final phases," said Denise Blake, superintendent for Patagonia Public Schools. "The project is allowing the students to experience real world, hands-on, job related science. In the future, students will be able to conduct field studies on plant growth, insects and other species that are attracted to the living laboratory."

The Watershed Living Lab got its start when Kathy Pasierb, curriculum specialist with Patagonia Public Schools, felt there was a need to connect the students to real world science. She wrote curriculum and students were guided to make plans for the creation of a model watershed. Lessons on native pollinator species were held at the Nature Conservancy.

When asked about working on the project, participating students said the work was difficult but



## watershed restoration

Patagonia students and volunteers construct the terracing for Phase 2 of the Watershed Living Lab.

rewarding.

“When I look at the results, I’m glad that I am part of the project,” Senior Carlos Mingura said.

Senior Iliana Castro and Freshman Eden Lattazanio agreed, saying they are proud of what they accomplished, and noting that it required a lot of hard work.

*(Submitted by Liz Collier of Patagonia Public Schools.)*