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PRESS RELEASE

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Youth Taking Action to Steward a Beloved Local Forest

On a cloudy Monday morning earlier this month at the Otis R. Johnson Wilderness Park, an Anchor Academy student from Fort Bragg High School gently placed a new redwood tree on a hillside clearing where he had just removed several leggy invasive acacia saplings and trailing ivy the hour before. After planting this tree, he stepped back, leaned on the arm of his shovel to admire his work and then moved on to provide some advice to his close friend who was struggling to dig through a rock to get his hole deep enough to plant another tree.

Anchor Academy students and teachers Katrina Tichinin and Tim Anderson worked with other community volunteers to help restore and steward the native coastal redwood ecosystems in this park. “We feel fortunate to get to work with Anchor Academy students on one of their Monday outdoor community service and stewardship projects” said Oona Heacock, Conservation Works Executive Director. “Unfortunately, this area is threatened by dozens of exotic plants that have escaped from neighborhood gardens and established themselves all around this beautiful forest. Thanks to Anchor Academy and the City of Fort Bragg, we can begin to make a difference.” The students learned how to remove young acacia trees and plant baby redwood trees, guided by volunteer foresters Darcie Mahoney and Tom Kisliuk, and welcomed the arriving rains which would help irrigate the newly planted trees. Chantell O’Neal from the City of Fort Bragg coordinated appropriate disposal of the removed invasive plants through the City’s service yard.

Conservation Works Board member Susan Warner said, “This is the first of many projects in the park, and it went very smoothly, with almost 500 cubic feet of invasive vegetation removed by these hard-working kids.” Conservation Works formally adopted the Otis R. Johnson Wilderness Park this year and has been working with the City of Fort Bragg staff to develop plans to remove invasive species. The work engages local middle and high school aged students in environmental education and native species planting and preservation as well as invasive species removal and watershed enhancements of this local park. Eradication of invasive species is a complex process, but Conservation Works hopes that through partnership with the city of Fort Bragg and local youth, the community can develop an ongoing stewardship program for years to come to restore this small watershed, bringing it closer to its natural habitat.

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Conservation Works

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