

Gems

from the Youth, Volunteer and Hosted Programs Conference

(Paraphrased Excerpts from Speeches, Discussions and Conversations)

April 15-17, 2008, Salt Lake City

Reasons to Volunteer.....

- **Extensive research indicates the reason most people volunteer is because someone personally asked them to volunteer.** (*Alison Young, Special Assistant to the President, Deputy Director USA Freedom Corps*)
- **The reason most volunteers continue to volunteer is because of recognition.** Recognition can be in the form of awards, thank you letters, recognition events, volunteer memorabilia, website features, a verbal “Thank you” and handshake, etc. (*Young*)
- **Many volunteers value educational and social experiences.** If you can provide those along with the work projects, volunteers will be more satisfied with their experiences and more likely to return. (*Young*)
- **Families and groups of friends need group volunteer opportunities.** (*Dr. Emilyn Sheffield, Professor, Department of Recreation and Parks Management, California State University Chico*)
- **Many people are willing to pay for the opportunity to volunteer.** Individuals pay for some volunteer opportunities. Corporations are sometimes willing to pay to have their employees volunteer and have a team-building outdoor experience. (*Easley*)

Impacts and Influences Changing Volunteerism in the US...

- **Changes in size and the composition of the population will have the greatest impact on lands and landscapes. We need to assure that all our programs, including volunteer, youth, and hosted programs reach these changing audiences.** The US population today includes more urban dwellers, more individuals from ethnic and racial minorities, more technologically capable individuals, more people unfamiliar with the outdoors, than it did in decades past. (*Sheffield*)
- **If we don't provide volunteer opportunities for baby boomers, they will form their own non-profits and invest their efforts there.** They work hard, want a cause, and like to be in charge of something. We should take advantage of all that skill, talent and energy. (*Sheffield*)
- **Volunteers who know why the work they are doing matters are more satisfied with their experience.** For example one group of kids said, “We don't do weeds.” Once they learned about invasive species, they willingly “did weeds.” (*Sheffield*)

The Business Side of Volunteer Programs....

- **Track budgets and accomplishments.** Document the quantity and quality of work accomplished. It is extremely important to report accomplishments accurately and consistently across programs. (*Young*)
- **Consistent, annual training is necessary to sustain a volunteer program.** Hands-on training is best. People who volunteer to do outdoor jobs, learn the most from hands-on training outdoors. (*Alan Hill, Public Liaison, Backcountry Horsemen; Young*)
- **For massive volunteer projects, divide into subgroups and work on individual aspects or sections of the project.** The Florida Trail Association provides a good model with 18 chapters working on different sections of the trail. (*Michelle Mitchell, FS Florida Trail Coordinator; Deborah Stewart-Kent Executive Director, Florida Trails*)
- **Feed crews well, especially if they are doing physical labor.** Editor's note - That does not mean you need to provide all the food. It could be donated or potluck, but be sure to include it. Florida Trails reps say their motto is "We eat first." (*Mitchell and Stewart-Kent*)
- **A cooperating nonprofit can train volunteers and/or manage a volunteer program to do projects for an agency** They can even provide standardized volunteer training for a number of land management agencies. (*Carol Majeske, R4 Wasatch Cache NF, Recreation Manager; Richard Middleton, Volunteer, Cottonwood Canyons Assn; Ann Baker Easley, Executive Director, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado; Amy Nichols, Interagency Volunteer Team, Southern Nevada Agency Partnership*)
- **Americorps can provide members to oversee volunteer programs.** The Mt Hood NF now has four Americorps volunteer coordinators working 11 months a year. Cost to the Forest Service for each coordinator is \$14,000 a year. (*Shelley Hakanson, Mt. Hood NF Youth, Volunteer, Hosted Program Manager*)
- **Include partners in all phases of planning volunteer projects.** Ask them how they want to help and tell them what help we need. When appropriate, include them at Forest Leadership Team meetings. (*Miggins; Art Pope, Executive Director, Northwest Youth Corps*)
- **Volunteer programs should augment our programs, not take their place.** (*Jim Bedwell, Director of Recreation, WO*).
- **For safety and resource protection reasons, the Forest Service needs to oversee volunteer projects on National Forest lands.** Check volunteer websites. Some volunteers, passionate about their cause and impatient working with the government have launched their own projects without telling the Forest Service. (You too, can have a new trail on your Ranger District!) (*Hakanson*)

- **The new business rules on accomplishment reporting in the Forest Service include a unified target reporting system.** The volunteers and partners accomplishment database is to be launched in 2009. (*Jan Engert, Director National Partnership Office, WO; Ransom Hughes, YCC and Hosted Programs Manager, WO*)
- **A new Forest Service “Volunteer Program Guide” is soon to be released by the Missoula Technology and Development Center.** It will be available in hard copy, on CD and on the web. (*Lisa Outka-Perkins, Sociologist, Missoula Technology and Development Center*)
- **A new Forest Service website on volunteering will soon be up.** (And now it is, at <http://www.fs.fed.us/volunteer/>) (*Ginger Hamilton, RI Volunteer Coordinator*)
- **It is best to have variety of programs** – YCC, volunteer and hosted. When funding, capability or enthusiasm wanes in one group or another, there are others to keep going. (*R5, 6, 10 breakout group*)
- **FS Safety policy is the same for volunteers as it is for employees.** It is the responsibility of all FS employees that this policy is followed. (*Hakanson*)
- **YVH programs and partners are covered by federal Civil Rights laws.** Be inclusive. Conduct outreach in alternate formats and other languages. Provide barrier-free projects and events. Ensure partners do the same. (*Coyote*)

Engaging Today’s Youth...

- **Youth can be wonderful volunteers** – selling merchandise, leading trail hikes, working in visitor centers, helping with light maintenance, designing interpretive media, working on plant restoration, etc. (*Sarah Miggins, Executive Director, San Bernardino National Forest Association, Children’s Forest Youth Leadership Programs*)
- **One option in using youth as volunteers is to not pay individual youth stipends, but to help groups earn money for their clubs.** You may need to do this through a nonprofit. (*Erin McGlinchey, Director of Communications, National Forest Foundation*)
- **The most successful volunteer and hosted programs for youth have parental support.** Kids are more involved and committed if their parents support the program. (*David Gross, YVH Programs Coordinator, Mt Hood NF; Pope*)
- **In Youth Conservation Corps, crew leaders are the most important link to success. Pay them accordingly.** We pay a GS 5 salary. (*Gross*)
- **Conservation youth programs reach underserved audiences.** Region 6 documented stories from employees who are minorities and people of color. One overwhelming similarity among them was that many started on their career paths as youth working in conservation programs such as YCC and YACC. (*Gross*)