

**Volunteer Programs Focus Group**  
**October 12, 2011**

**1. What recent trends and other critical factors related to volunteer programs (good or bad) are important to the future development your parks?**

- Unions and guilds concerned when volunteers might assume their work. Need to reconcile what unions are able to do with what volunteers are willing to do.
- Technology assistance (e.g. EnviroCorps and Volunteer Match).
- Need regular volunteer project list.
- Volunteers require training and supervision.
- Volunteer work can create liability issues and administrative overhead.
- Dedicated volunteers are wonderful, but often significant turnover with lost training.
- Communication is critical to successful volunteer situations.
- Volunteer coordinator needed; staff is best choice (over volunteer).
- Pierce County designated a 'County of Promise' with a commitment to the children and youth through:
  - Ongoing relationships with caring adults.
  - Safe places with structured activities during non-school hours.
  - A healthy start for a healthy future.
  - Marketable skills through effective education.
  - Opportunities to give back through community service.

**2. How can volunteer programs help make the park system financially self-sustaining? What are the best organizations to provide the necessary support?**

- Requires investment of staff time for preparation, management, and supervision.
- Partnerships.
- Accomplish projects that wouldn't otherwise get done.
- Work with community non-profit and service organizations.

**3. What kind of support facilities and services are needed for volunteer programs? Can the facilities and services be integrated into the park system or should they be elsewhere?**

- Volunteer and Visitor Information Center helpful (volunteer opportunity list on GHGuide.com).
- Projects list from PenMet.
- Network (University Place volunteer example).
- Communication list: Chamber.
- Newcomer packet.
- Meeting rooms and home (VVIC).
- Volunteer coordinator function or person with each entity.

**4. What type of volunteer programs might best benefit the park system?**

- Well-defined work with supervision.
- Appropriate work/project scope (i.e. for scouts of particular age).
- Targeted organization with own supervision (need appropriate project).
- Avoid painting, especially indoors (requires appropriate volunteer group).
- Community service organizations (bring targeted skills and supervision).
- Volunteer groups and individuals feel ownership in facilities and can provide:
  - Security eyes and ears.
  - Park hosts
  - Maintenance
  - Fundraising
  - Education programs (docents).
  - Planning input.

## **5. Why do volunteers volunteer and what do they need?**

- Because they're asked.
- They believe in and relate to the cause.
- Public service (desire or requirement).
- To give back.
- A feeling of ownership.
- To provide mentoring/coaching/teaching.
- Social interaction.
- Exercise.
- Build resume.

### **Volunteers need:**

- Thank you.
- Recognition:
  - Individual recognition award for time of service.
  - Volunteer recognition event.
  - Permanent via signage where appropriate.

## **6. What are the biggest obstacles to achieving your goals with volunteer programs in parks?**

- Staffing to support volunteer program.
- Organizing.
- Training.
- Supervision.
- Reporting.
- Recruiting.
- Retention.
- Motivation.
- Funding for above.
- Appropriate projects
- Tools and supplies.

- Timing: Matching Organization and Volunteer schedules/needs.
- Weather.

**7. Inventory of Volunteer Sources:**

- Church groups.
- Community service organizations.
- Schools: PTSA, Senior projects, community service requirements.
- Private businesses.
- Individuals and families.
- Sports groups.
- Youth groups.
- Senior groups.
- Scouts.
- Non-profits.
- Fraternal organizations.
- Business associations.
- Staff and families.
- Home owner associations.
- Environmental groups.
- Government commissions.
- Utility providers.
- Military groups.
- Prison groups.
- Court-ordered community service.

**8. What are your top 2 or 3 priorities relative to playgrounds and/or special needs?**

- Staffing to coordinate volunteer function.
- Volunteer opportunities list
- Recognition for volunteers
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