



Rebuilding Rainier

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Mount Rainier National Park

THE BEST OF TIMES

Kevin Bacher, Volunteer Program Manager

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” So begins Charles Dickens’ classic novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. The words are an apt description of fiscal year 2007 at Mount Rainier National Park! Last fall, we experienced the worst flooding in the park’s 107-year history. The response showcased the best that the community and the National Park Service could offer. Park rangers pulled together to rebuild and recover, many working far outside their official position descriptions. Letters and e-mails and phone messages flooded in from individuals and community groups who wanted to help.

It took several months before the park’s infrastructure was repaired enough to reopen to the public, and a few months more before the snow melted enough to actually do much. Even so, when the time came, people stepped up in record numbers to follow through on their offers of help. Many volunteered for the first time. Many returned to volunteer for multiple projects throughout the summer, and developed a new passion for Mount Rainier that will continue long into the future. Many are already calling to ask how they can sign up for next year.

For those of you who participated, or who weren’t able to do so but supported us in spirit, this newsletter is dedicated to you. You are part of a 90% increase in volunteer support for Mount Rainier National Park. You are the ones who have made our volunteer program one that has attracted notice all over the country. You are the ones who will continue to make Mount Rainier a model for citizen participation in national park stewardship. These are your stories; these are your accomplishments; and these are some very good reasons to be proud of your personal partnership with Mount Rainier National Park.



Volunteers of all ages helped with ten different projects on National Public Lands Day, including the ongoing historic restoration of the Longmire Campground.

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY

Jill Baum, Program Director, SCA Mount Rainier Recovery

After a tremendously successful summer, the first season of the Mount Rainier Recovery program came to a triumphant close on September 29 with a final, festive day of hands-on service and celebration.

More than 150 enthusiastic individuals of all ages showed up on this chilly autumn day to honor the park and National Public Lands Day and do one more favor for the mountain. Most of the volunteers were people who had served the park this summer and were returning to connect with others who had been part of this effort. The feeling of camaraderie was evident in smiling faces and cheerful conversation as we worked on projects of re-routing a washed-out trail, clearing debris from a flooded campground, and planting willows in flood-damaged areas.

Park Superintendent Dave Uberuaga spent the day smiling broadly and thanking volunteers. After a celebratory barbeque dinner, he addressed the group, expressing deep gratitude for everything the attendees and others have done to help the park this season. More than 1,700 volunteers have come to the park's aid this year, contributing an unprecedented 84,000 hours of service. Over half the trail work completed in the park this summer was done by volunteers. The monetary value of this service donated to the park exceeds 1.5 million dollars.



Congressman Norm Dicks welcomed volunteers at Longmire on National Public Lands Day.

SCA is honored to have been a leader in the Mount Rainier Recovery effort this year, and we're already working to build on this momentum for even greater accomplishments at Mount Rainier in the coming year. We would like to extend our most sincere appreciation to all of you who have contributed your time, energy, or savings to SCA and the Mount Rainier Recovery program.

We'd like to leave you with a few of our favorite memories from the summer. [Here's a link to several videos](#) highlighting the experiences of some SCA members who made this summer such a success. See you next year!

2007 BY THE NUMBERS

Number of volunteers: 1,724
Total volunteer hours: 84,038
Value of volunteer time: \$1,577,393

Individuals: 312 people, 43,464 hours
Groups: 1,412 people, 40,574 hours
Recovery VIPs: 701 people, 4,244 hours
International VIPs: 24 people, 1144 hours

SCA volunteers: 78 people, 27,411 hours

- Conservation Interns: 23 people, 8,951 hours
- Mount Rainier Recovery Corps: 15 people, 9,100 hours
- Conservation Leadership and Gulf Coast Recovery Crews: 40 people in 5 teams, 9,360 hours

Program highlights

- ADA Assessment: 1,248 hours
- Archeology: 375
- Campground Hosts: 2,136
- Campground Maintenance and Restoration: 1,583
- Cultural Resource Assistance: 201
- Culvert Clearing: 244
- Education Program: 1,834
- Exotic Plant Control: 2,630
- Flood Documentation and Compliance: 1,424



- Front-country Patrol: 4,211
- Greenhouse: 1,324
- Historic Research: 133
- Japan Volunteers-in-Parks Association: 990
- Lakes, Aquatics, and Fish Crew: 1,110
- Library: 823
- Meadow Roving: 3,741
- Mountaineering: 3,076
- Revegetation: 1,343
- Search and Rescue: 321
- Seed Collection: 259
- "Sherpa" projects: 241
- Trail Repair: 41,062
- Visitor Services: 3,000
- Wilderness Cleanup: 197
- Wilderness Information Center: 358
- Wilderness Patrol: 4,464
- Wildlife Surveys: 440

SCA Mount Rainier Recovery Corps

Total hours: 13,343.5

- Volunteers: 108 projects, 701 people, 4,243.5 hours
- Volunteer Crew Leaders: 11 people, 3,963.5 hours
- Additional Corps Projects: 93, for a total of 5,136.5 hours

Campgrounds Opened: 4
Campsites cleared or maintained: 346
Backcountry campsites constructed: 4
Historic cabins deconstructed: 1
Road culverts cleared: 222
Roadside erosion control: 40,660 sq ft
Oxeye daisies eradicated: 10,422

St. John's worts eradicated: 12,596
 Bull thistles eradicated: 139
 Seedlings planted: 2,000+
 Trails brushed: 39,670 ft
 Trails raked: 79,700 ft
 Ditches cleared: 7,808 ft
 Drains cleared: 1,242
 Check steps constructed: 27
 Retaining walls built: 9, totaling 124 ft
 Stumps removed: 110
 Trail reroute constructed: 3,600 ft

SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It's been a very good year! Here are some highlights of what we've accomplished, together, over the past year:

Increased volunteer participation.

In fiscal year 2007, 1,724 people volunteered at Mount Rainier National Park, contributing 84,038 hours of service valued at \$1.58 million. Last year, 924 people volunteered, contributing 43,844 hours of service. The previous record for volunteer hours was during the centennial year of 1999, when volunteers contributed 56,659 hours of service.

Positive feedback.

Volunteers at Mount Rainier this summer had overwhelmingly positive experiences participating in the stewardship of their National Park. Many of them wrote to the park to express their appreciation, and many more returned multiple times to participate in flood recovery projects. Media coverage of the volunteer program, and its role in the park's flood recovery efforts, was also extremely positive.

A productive partnership with SCA.

Mount Rainier National Park formed a partnership with the Student Conservation Association to recruit, coordinate, and serve as crew leaders for teams of volunteers engaged in flood recovery projects. 701 people participated in projects led by SCA's Mount Rainier Recovery Initiative. Along with the crew leaders themselves, they contributed 13,344 hours of service, valued at \$250,000. Long-term benefits of the partnership include increased volunteer participation and stronger community support of the park and its volunteer program.

A successful partnership with the Northwest Parks and Public Lands Storm Recovery Coalition.

The Northwest Storm Recovery Coalition, formed after the floods of November 2006, included Mount Rainier National Park along with the Student Conservation Association, Washington Trails Association, Washington's National Park Fund, National Parks Conservation Association, and The Mountaineers. The members in this partnership helped recruit volunteers, publicize recovery efforts, coordinate events, and raise funds



Volunteers spent National Public Lands Day cleaning up the flood-damaged Sunshine Point Campground.

for the volunteer program and the recovery work in general. Approximately \$250,000 in contributions were raised by members of the coalition. This partnership will continue to benefit the park in years to come.

returned to Mount Rainier for a thirteenth year this summer. Its members completed several volunteer projects including building picnic tables, assisting in the greenhouse, and installing a sophisticated "bio toilet" donated to the park by the Japanese non-profit organization Groundwork Mishima.

Increased participation by community groups.

Forty-one community groups participated in our volunteer program over the past year, up from 24 last year. Many of these groups also made financial contributions to our volunteer program or to the park's flood recovery fund.

Increased participation by SCA volunteers and interns.

A record 81 individuals served in the park over the past year through the Student Conservation Association: 23 as Conservation Interns, 15 as volunteers and project leaders with the Mount Rainier Recovery Corps, 3 as staff members, and the rest as members of five high school programs, including three Conservation Leadership Corps teams and two groups who came to Rainier after first working with the Gulf Coast Recovery Corps. Students for these programs were recruited from diverse populations of urban youth in cities such as Seattle.

Rebuilding Mount Rainier's trails.

More than half of the trail work accomplished in the park this year was completed by volunteers. Volunteers helped reopen the Wonderland Trail by early August. In all, youth corps volunteers



Volunteers plant trees to restore areas affected by flood-related construction near Kautz Creek.

for the volunteer program and the recovery work in general. Approximately \$250,000 in contributions were raised by members of the coalition. This partnership will continue to benefit the park in years to come.

J-VIPA Returns. The Japan Volunteers-in-Parks Association

alone contributed 26,698 hours of work on Mount Rainier's trails.

Cost savings for flood recovery efforts.

Volunteer participation enabled the park to utilize less expensive solutions to recovery projects. For example, volunteers carried wooden bridge planks into Stevens Canyon, saving the park from having to contract for a helicopter to do so. By focusing on basic repairs and maintenance of roads, trails, and campgrounds, volunteers allowed park crews to focus on more complex repairs.

Preservation of wilderness values.

Volunteer projects helped preserve Mount Rainier's wilderness values. At Ohanapecosh, they removed old telephone cables deteriorating in the forest. Along the Nisqually Road, they cleared clogged ditches and culverts by hand, protecting sensitive species like toads and salamanders from damage by heavy equipment. They rebuilt trails using cross-cut saws and other hand tools instead of power tools. At Sunrise, they cleared snow by hand from around historic rock walls and structures, protecting them from possible damage by heavy equipment.

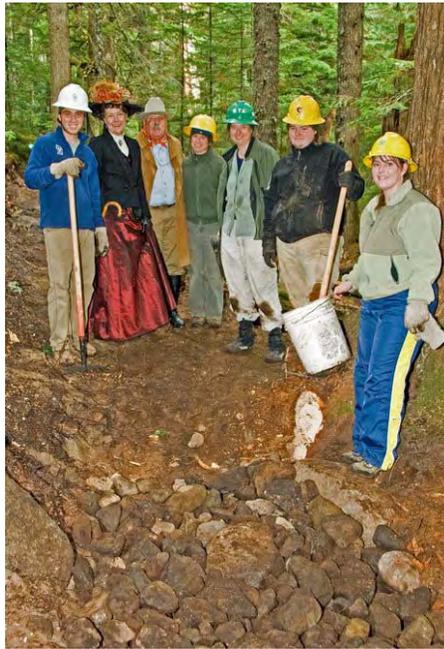
Long-term volunteers.

There are now 18 active volunteers who have contributed more than 2,000 hours apiece to Mount Rainier National Park. Three have contributed more than 10,000 hours each. Twenty-five have been serving as volunteers continuously for more than ten years. So far, 37 individuals have earned Volunteer Passes for serving at least 500 hours since the start of the year.

THINKING AHEAD:

PLANNING FOR 2008

Planning continues for next year's volunteer program. We're excited about our accomplishments this year, and hope to continue this momentum into the future. Many dedicated individuals will continue to work within park programs, helping to build and patrol trails, manage the park's library, serve as campground hosts, and assist visitors in the visitor centers. In addition, here are a few strategies we're working on that should make our volunteers even more effective, diverse, and skilled:



President and Mrs. Teddy Roosevelt showed up to cheer on the trail crews on National Public Lands Day! (photo by John Chao)

Embedded Volunteer Coordinators

Volunteer coordinators will be hired next year to work within key park programs, identifying projects and recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers. Their goals will be to expand volunteer opportunities and to leverage the talents and leadership of park staff through partnerships with volunteers. Such positions could be filled by park staff, interns, or volunteers. Contact Volunteer Program Manager Kevin Bacher if you know someone who might be interested.

Programs that could benefit from these new positions include meadow rovers at Paradise and Sunrise; trail repair; wildlife and aquatic surveys; roads and campgrounds maintenance; historic restoration of rock walls and the Longmire Campground; exotic plant management; revegetation; and greenhouse assistance.

Mount Rainier Recovery Corps

In addition to the embedded volunteer coordinators, a small Recovery Corps will be hired again this year through the Student Conservation Association to respond to last-minute needs and to help with large projects throughout the park.

Training Opportunities

A major goal for the coming year is to provide greater opportunities to our volunteers and volunteer coordinators for

training and professional development. We're still working on the details, but possible courses include volunteer program management, wilderness first aid, ropes training, mountaineering, trail construction, Leave No Trace, risk management, interpretive skills, and meadow roving. Much of the training will be offered in the spring, so keep your May calendars open!

Other Priorities

Restoration of the Longmire Campground will continue in 2008, to provide a dedicated space for volunteers and groups to camp. Much of the prep work will be completed throughout the summer by volunteers themselves. Partnership with youth programs, like SCA's Conservation Leadership Corps and the Northwest Youth Corps, will continue to be a priority. We'll be looking for ways to recruit new and diverse volunteers, through creative outreach efforts and partnerships with local community groups. And finally, we'll be exploring ways to take advantage of new technologies, like web-based blogs, discussion groups, project calendars, training materials, and volunteer registration.

Have an interest in contributing to any of these initiatives, or great ideas for how to make them happen? We'd love to hear from you!

MOUNT RAINIER RECOVERY POSTERS COMING SOON!

Those of you who were at the volunteer celebration on National Public Lands Day witnessed the official unveiling of a poster being developed to commemorate the work of volunteers in helping to rebuild Mount Rainier. Ranger Doug's Enterprises, based in Seattle, will produce the poster, and has donated many hours of work to design it. Through generous donations from the members of the Northwest Parks and Public Lands Storm Recovery Coalition, it will be distributed to anyone who participated in Mount Rainier's volunteer program this past year.

The poster is in its final stages of development. Watch our website—and your mailbox—for the final version of the poster to be released soon!



Volunteer Pilla Leitner and others clean up the Sunshine Point Campground during National Public Lands Day.

WINTER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

One of the most common questions I receive—and one of the most difficult to answer—is “what can I do to volunteer for Mount Rainier National Park during the winter?” It’s a difficult question because so many of our park operations shut down or scale back during the winter months. Most of the park is buried by snow, which rules out trail building, biological surveys, revegetation, meadow roving, and most backcountry patrol. Our campgrounds and most of our visitor centers are closed.

A few programs remain active through the winter, but need little volunteer assistance. We work with a few volunteers in the greenhouse, and some of our summer meadow rovers return to help with public snowshoe walks. Our museum curator sometimes has projects that volunteers can help with, scanning, sorting, and cataloging historic documents, photos, and artifacts. The education program, of course, is most active during the autumn and spring school year, and is always interested in hearing from small numbers of people with an interest and background in working with curriculum-based education. For information about any of these programs, visit the volunteer pages on our website, or contact the [Volunteer Program Manager](#).

One of the most active volunteer programs during the winter is Nordic Patrol.

Through a partnership with the Washington Ski Touring Club, volunteers skilled in skiing and snowshoeing patrol the snowy wilderness above Sunrise, marking routes, roping off dangerous areas, and assisting visitors. Information about the program can be found at www.wstc.org.

For most of the winter, one of the best ways to support Mount Rainier National Park is to participate in the work of our partners in the community. The [Northwest Parks and Public Lands Storm Recovery Coalition](#) is a great place to start. The National Parks Conservation Association is active year-round with citizen-based advocacy efforts on behalf of all of our national parks. The Mountaineers likewise support public lands throughout the state, and sponsor many volunteer and recreational projects throughout the year. The Washington Trails Association sponsors volunteer projects at lower elevations during the winter, gradually moving back up into the high country as the snow melts in the spring. The Student Conservation Association (SCA) provides lots of opportunities for service, especially for young people. Ask how you can help with the fundraising efforts of Washington’s National Park Fund. Many other local groups also support public lands and offer many ways to get involved. New volunteer opportunities will begin appearing at Mount Rainier next spring. [Watch our website](#) for the announcement

of long-term positions like campground hosts and mountaineering rangers. Summer internships will soon be posted on SCA’s website, including this summer’s Mount Rainier Recovery Corps and volunteer coordinator positions. Short-term and recurring projects, especially trail repair, will start recruiting volunteers in late April or early May, though the calendar won’t start filling up until late June when trails and meadows start melting out at high elevations.

Along with our regular programs like meadow roving, exotic plant management, and trail repair, we’ll also start recruiting this winter for participants in a “Volunteer Response Team,” which will include individuals willing to be contacted for assistance with a wide variety of projects as needed. We may need half a dozen people, for instance, to install or remove seasonal wayside exhibits for a day, or to help carry supplies in to a backcountry cabin, or to assist with a special event. In time, the Volunteer Response Team may form the core of a community of volunteers who will provide leadership and support for Mount Rainier’s volunteer program long after the great floods of 2007 are a distant memory.

Meanwhile, watch for the announcement of spring training opportunities, and get ready to hit the trails more knowledgeable than ever about how to make a difference in the stewardship of the park.

And finally—don’t forget that Mount Rainier National Park remains open all winter long, with plenty of opportunities to enjoy winter recreation and magnificent snow-covered landscapes. Come enjoy your park, and get inspired for another great year of participating in its protection!

