



Rebuilding Rainier

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Mount Rainier National Park

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a volunteer program manager is hearing the many inspiring stories of why people volunteer, and what keeps them coming back. The stories are as diverse as the volunteers themselves.

Volunteers contribute to every program in every corner of Mount Rainier National Park. We've documented 751 so far this year, and many of the statistics have yet to be reported! Here are some of their stories, in their own words.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

George Coulbourn is a volunteer patrol ranger at Carbon River. Since 1997, he has recorded 4,120 hours of service.

When I'm asked why I volunteer, I respond that I began for altruistic reasons. Having spent many rewarding days in the Park I felt that I had arrived at a good time for pay back. Doesn't work. Like most volunteer activities, the volunteer gets more than he gives, and the harder he tries, the more he gets.

I spend most of my time in the Carbon River backcountry. Every part of the Park is special, and Carbon is perhaps no more



George Coulbourn, in his Carbon River "office"



Counselors from Camp Solomon Schechter, near Seattle, help with an SCA-led trail maintenance project. (Photo by Susan Newman)

special than any other. However Carbon is unique in that it's generally open and accessible to the average day hiker year round. Consequently the volunteer team at Carbon works year round. So we get the legions of visitors during the summer; but then things quiet down, and the deceptive calm of the wilderness emerges.

Winter visitors are accustomed to walking the road to Ipsut and marveling at the rain forest, or visiting Green Lake in the snow. But this year, because of the November flood, everyone gets to walk (or bike) the road. This year the spectacle is at your feet. The devastation of the flood begins a little more than a mile from the entrance and it's quite dramatic. Unfortunately, only the strongest hikers can make it to the glacier this year. That's now an 18 mile round trip, so more people are going up to Mowich Lake this summer. We're all hoping that visitor access to the glacier will again be available next season.

THE ADVENTURES OF A CAMPGROUND HOST

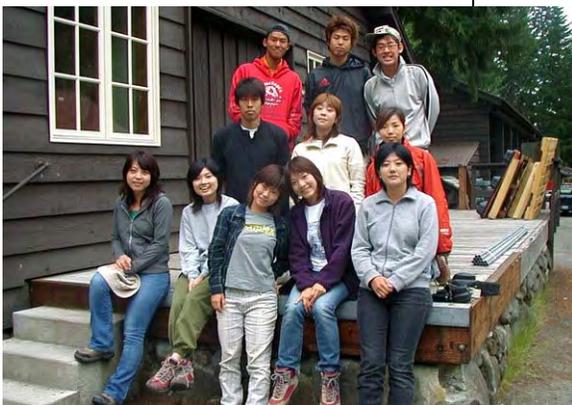
Darlene Chauvin has contributed 1,275 hours of service as a campground host at Ohanapecosh.

In 2002, after 43 years of hospital nursing, I retired. After two months of looking at the walls, it hit me—retirement was meant for doing those things you couldn't do while working—to me that meant RVing and camping. How to combine the two? A friend suggested working as a campground host. I immediately went to Google and got 200 pages of references. Well, that had to be narrowed down—so I chose the west coast, then I chose National Parks, which brought me to Mount Rainier. A phone call confirmed that campground hosts were needed—and I was on my way! Six years later, I am still enjoying my summer "job" at Ohanapecosh campground, commuting 1700 miles from Tucson to report for duty.

Living in a campground for months on end is a different world—you wake up every day to the sound of birds singing, the smell of wood smoke in the air, and the sound of the river. Morning rounds with the campground ranger reveals who the new visitors are, and gives an opportunity to get acquainted, answer questions and clarify campground regulations. There are visitors borrowing things—salt and pepper, mustard, a can opener, firewood, an axe, matches, hiking socks, and almost anything that can be forgotten. I have assisted in searching for lost children, rendered first aid to a myriad of kids who crashed their bikes on the infamous B loop hill, read maps for baffled drivers, and played tour guide on my days off for foreign visitors. A daily walk of three miles around the campground to clean campsites leads to many opportunities to assist visitors and the rangers.

I have seen elk walking the streets of Packwood, where we shop for supplies, chipmunks exploring the inside of the barbecue, squirrels hiding food in the bark of the Douglas fir, birds flying inside the RV, two little snakes living across the road, little green frogs hopping through the yard at night, and Raven, who visits daily to see if I forgot to put some food away. One is always reminded that one is in the forest and must live gently among the usual forest inhabitants.

The mountain is an elemental force that draws me back each year—a dramatic contrast to the Sonoran desert I call home—yet, Mount Rainier is also home to me now. I live in the best of both worlds, and will continue to do so, as long as I'm invited to return.



The Japan Volunteer-in-Parks Association, at Longmire in 2005

WHY WE ARE MEADOW ROVERS

Kirk and Ann Smith have contributed more than 2,396 hours of service, most of it as Meadow Rovers at Sunrise.

When we signed up to help with a visitor survey in 1995, we had no idea that we were beginning more than a decade of meadow roving at both Sunrise and Paradise. However, when we talked to Jack Morrison about the possibility that we might be able to repay the National Park Service for decades of wonderful and enriching experiences in many parts of the country, we were intrigued. All we had to do, he said, was hike the trails of our favorite National Park and help other visitors enjoy and profit from the time they spend. What fun for a couple of retired teachers! Just answer visitors' questions, explain the geology of the Mountain, tell them about its human history, identify its flowers and point out its animals. Yes, we also had to tell people to stay on the trails, but we were happy to take a little grief now and then to keep the occasional meadow stomper under control.

Over the years we've learned there's a lot more to the job. We've participated in our share of medical emergencies, carry-outs, helicopter evacuations and seriously uncooperative visitors, but the reason we come back every year (beyond the fact that we'd be out on the trails anyway) is the pleasure and satisfaction we've had in meeting and helping so many appreciative visitors discover what makes Mount Rainier such a special place to us.

FOOTPRINTS OF J-VIPA IN MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK

Hiroyuki Yamaguchi is president of the Japan Volunteers in Parks Association, which has contributed 18,156 hours of service since 1995.

"J-VIPA," the Japan Volunteers in Parks Association, was founded in 1995. Since then, through J-VIPA and Waseda University in Tokyo, approximately 250 volunteers have been sent from Japan. We are one of many international volunteer associations, but our experience is unique because



our students experience a homestay with park employees. Every summer we stay for two or three weeks, maintaining trails and campgrounds and helping with revegetation. For its dedication and friendship to Mount Rainier, J-VIPA was presented with a regional George B. Hartzog Jr. Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service in 2002.

J-VIPA aims to contribute to the National Parks through volunteering and cultural exchange. Also, J-VIPA introduces conservation methods and the idea of volunteerism to Japan. Our members cannot speak English well and do not have special skills, but many members have visited multiple times. Why? We have a wonderful time with park staff and host families. Individual power is so weak, but our group power is so strong that we have achieved many good works in Mount Rainier National Park. We feel that Mount Rainier is our second home. We are so happy to make a friendship bridge between two countries, and our relationship is getting stronger year after year. We would like to grow old with our American host families and park staff forever. In return, I am looking forward to welcoming our friends to Japan in the near future.

A MOUNT RAINIER AMBASSADOR

Laura Bogar is a member of the Student Conservation Association's Mount Rainier Ambassador program.

Laura Bogar, 17, is spending her summer sharing her passions for Mount Rainier



Laura Bogar, 17, is one of SCA's Mount Rainier Ambassadors.

and for hands-on service to the land. A senior at Seattle's Garfield High School, she is currently serving as a volunteer on a 15-day trail crew based at Ohanapечosh along with a team of other Seattle high school students. In her leadership role as an ambassador, Bogar helps her crew leaders supervise the technical aspects of trailwork, and back at camp, she records the experiences and inspirations of her eight other crew mates. Upon returning to Seattle, Bogar and two other ambassadors, Jaya Ghosh and Julia Sievert, will create a multi-media presentation to share with community groups. Their work will showcase the damage at Rainier and the restoration efforts of local youth.

Bogar began her work with SCA three years ago as a member of the Conservation Leadership Corps (CLC), an SCA program for urban high school students. She and about 40 other Seattle teenagers get together evenings and weekends during the school year to provide service in local parks, learn about regional ecology, and have fun exploring the various outdoor recreation opportunities in Western Washington. The program encourages students like Bogar to build on their years of service by taking on more responsibility and leadership each year. This year Bogar helped with grant writing, event organizing, and project leadership.

Laura has spent previous summers with SCA providing volunteer service at Mount Rainier and Glacier National Parks. When offered the opportunity to travel again to an out-of-state park this summer, Laura insisted that it was important for her to serve locally. Laura

is inspired by the connections we have to our home bioregions and the good work that her fellow youth can accomplish given the right outlets. She looks forward to sharing her experiences and those of other SCA youth with the public.

Visit SCA's website for Laura's blog, information about the Conservation Leadership Corps, and SCA opportunities in the Seattle area.

HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING

Mike Wagner-Gallucci is a member of the Student Conservation Association's Flood Recovery Corps.

Week two of my summer internship with SCA was just as exciting, if not more exciting, than week one. With a full Flood Recovery Corps, we were ready to hit the ground running and give a hand wherever help was needed.

June 2nd was National Trails Day. About 40 volunteers came out with SCA to help with three different trails projects. The project I worked on was the Carter Falls reroute. The flood completely took away a portion of the trail and the trail crew had established a new route. The 15 volunteers from REI that came out to help with this project were eager and excited to work. The project involved re-grading some of the trail to meet the acceptable slope requirements and moving large amounts of soil to other areas that needed to be filled in. The best way to do this was to carry buckets of dirt up the trail. This is not an easy job, nor would many people call it fun, but the volunteers did it with smiles on their faces and did a great job to top it off.

Earlier in the week I spent a day shoveling snow at Sunrise. SCA and an ecology class from Evergreen College were lucky enough to be some of the first visitors to the area this year. Before it could be opened to the public, a lot of snow had to be shoveled. With 30 shovels moving, we were able to uncover the path, buried beneath 6-12 feet of snow, leading into the visitor center. It was almost hard to call what we did at Sunrise work. It was

one of the most beautiful places I have seen. It would be hard to not enjoy being there, no matter what I was doing.

The rest of the week was filled with training about how SCA works. Each of the crew leaders led workshops on food preparation for a backcountry project, the various gear that we will be using, the variety of tools that will be crucial to our projects, and the importance of setting up camp the right way in the backcountry. As week two came to a close, I was only more excited for the valuable learning opportunities that would be in store for the rest of the summer.

HELPING WITH FLOOD RECOVERY

Jean E. Millan has participated in several SCA-led volunteer projects.

I have been visiting Mount Rainier since I moved to Washington in 1983 and have spent many enjoyable days hiking the wonderful trails throughout the park. I consider Mount Rainier like a second home. Then the floods came and the winds blew. My favorite tent camping site at Sunshine Point was gone! Immediately I decided that it was time for me to give back some of myself to the park which has given me so very much joy, peace, and serenity over the years. I have put in eight volunteer days so far and plan to keep adding to that number throughout the summer.

There are many things that need to be done, and I have learned some new skills too. I quickly discovered a very pleasant side benefit to helping repair and re-route the trails I so often hiked—I get to work with an absolutely wonderful group of young people from the SCA! They make the day's work seem to fly, even though I am almost 60 years old and had never done most of the types of trail work before. Payback time is so rewarding to me in so many ways!

VOLUNTEERING ON BEHALF OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

Cecelia Lehmann volunteers with the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) in Seattle.

Shortly after I moved to Seattle three years ago, I stumbled upon the National Parks Conservation Association's Parks

Information Center in Pioneer Square. I picked up as much park information as I could carry and inquired about volunteering. I was so excited to be in an area with three major national parks within a three-hour drive. Within a couple of weeks I was volunteering at NPCA and that summer I headed down to Mount Rainier for my first in-park volunteer experience. I camped at the now non-existent Sunshine Point Campground and spent the day “tabling” at the First Amendment area at Longmire, talking to visitors, letting them know about threats facing the park, and encouraging them to contact their members of Congress.

Since that first summer, I’ve returned to Mount Rainier to volunteer a number of times. In addition to tabling, I’ve volunteered with a large work party from NPCA rebuilding a section of the Wonderland Trail on National Trails Day. I also joined NPCA on National Public Lands Day in September 2006 doing basic trail maintenance around Paradise. I always look forward to another chance to get into the park, whether it’s hiking or volunteering. There is something special about giving back to the park and ensuring that it is protected for future generations to enjoy.

DANGER! INTERPRETATION

James Anderson is a Student Conservation Association intern from Iowa.

This is not only my first summer volunteering at Mount Rainier but also my first visit to the Pacific Northwest. I volunteer through the SCA as a conservation intern, helping out the interpretive staff at the Paradise and Longmire visitor centers. Besides public relations work at the front desk, I also design and lead programs on volcanic geology, subalpine ecology, local history, and other subjects. For me, this interpretation is best when it is dangerous—when it encourages both the visitor and the ranger to look critically at the values through which we filter our “wilderness experience.” By the end of the summer, I hope to have encouraged visitors to make some unexpected connections, and I hope to make some myself.

MEMORIES NEVER DIE

Kathleen Jobson is a volunteer librarian at Longmire. Since 1984, she has contributed 7,362 hours of service.

In 1992, my husband Maurice and I were asked to volunteer. We returned every year—working in a place of such beauty with so many wonderful, special people is a forever joy!

VOLUNTEERING FOR WASHINGTON’S TRAILS

Lauren Braden is the Director of Communications and Outreach for the Washington Trails Association.

Volunteers with the Washington Trails Association have been busy at Mount Rainier this summer, contributing more than 30 days of work on trails around the park, totaling 3,923 hours, with the participation of more than 200 individual volunteers. From reestablishing the Boundary Trail to rebuilding parts of the Glacier Basin Trail, these volunteers put their hearts and souls into repairing trails. For many, the recent storm damage was their inspiration to try trail maintenance for the first time.

Mary Ann Steele from Olympia joined her first WTA work party on the Chenuis Falls Trail in June. “It was a great day for many reasons,” she said. “I enjoyed being in the park, doing something physical and worthwhile, and I met some great people. I have a new appreciation for what it takes to build and maintain trails.”

Mary’s contributions, along with a few hundred others, are already making an enormous difference. At Chenuis Falls where she worked, 500 feet of new trail was created over the course of five work parties. A switchback was installed to get the trail down to the riverbed and an “island” was built in an attempt to prevent the trail from returning to the river.

WTA work parties are coming up on the East Side Trail, Huckleberry Creek, Kautz Creek, Sourdough Ridge, Wonderland Trail, and more! Visit WTA’s website to get in on the action.



Kathleen Jobson manages the Longmire Library.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The July calendar is now full of exciting projects, including road work, trail repairs, 5-day backcountry projects, and two days of family-oriented campground restoration projects. Check out the complete lists and sign up online at www.theSCA.org/Mt_Rainier_Recovery and www.wta.org:

- July 17: Nisqually Culvert Repairs (SCA)
- July 17, 18, 19: Paradise Area Trail Patrol and Projects (SCA)
- July 19, 20, 21: Wonderland Trail Maintenance near Cougar Rock (WTA)
- July 20, 21, 22: Wonderland Trail Reroute near Cougar Rock (SCA)
- July 21, 22: Stevens Canyon Dry Bridge Removal (SCA)
- July 24, 25, 26, 28: Sunrise Trails (SCA)
- July 26, 27, 28, 29: East Side Trail Maintenance (WTA)
- July 28, 29: Longmire Campground Restoration (A family project with SCA)
- August 1-5: Huckleberry Creek Backcountry Trail Maintenance (5-day SCA project)
- August 1-5: Indian Henry’s Backcountry Trail Maintenance (5-day SCA project)
- August 1, 2, 3, 8, 16, 17, 19, 24: Paradise Area Trail Projects (SCA)
- August 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12: Mount Rainier Trail Repair (WTA)
- August 15-19: Ipsut Pass Backcountry Trail Repair (5-day SCA project)
- August 15-19: Laughingwater Creek Trail Maintenance (5-day project with SCA)
- August 16, 17: Wonderland Trail Reroute near Cougar Rock (SCA)
- August 18, 19: Naches Loop Trail (SCA)