



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR HOSTING

Q: Do I get to choose the park I volunteer in?

Answer: Possibly. The application has five spaces for you to list parks or areas that you are interested in. You may add more if space permits, or you may attach an extra sheet of paper. Be as flexible as you can. Some parks fill up quickly. We suggest you list some favorites as well as something more general like “Any Park” or “Anything on a lake” or “Eastern Washington only.”

Q: How long can I host for?

Answer: As long as you want.

Q: How long can I host in one park?

Answer: Host positions are approximately 30 days. Longer assignments of up to 90 days are possible if the host and park staff both agree and at the discretion of the park or area manager.

Q: Why can't I host for 12 continuous months in one park?

Answer: 1) There are rules against establishing residency in State Parks; 2) We want to encourage volunteers to become familiar with more state parks; 3) We want to encourage parks to become familiar with new hosts; 4) We want the experience to be fun and not just “a job.”

Q: Will there be a criminal background check run on me?

Answer: Yes

Q: Why does State Parks need to run criminal background checks?

Answer: Volunteers are required to have federal background checks in accordance with [RCW 79A.05.030\(10\)](#). As a volunteer, you will be acting as an agent of Washington State Parks. Host positions often have access to money or unsupervised access to children under sixteen years of age, developmentally disabled persons or vulnerable adults. Upon receiving your completed information, a criminal background check will be performed. Cleared applications will be mailed out to the region and parks of your choice.

Q: What are my duties?

Answer: Duties vary from park to park and from season to season. It is difficult to list specific duties because it depends upon the park's needs at the time you host. Generally, hosts answer questions and provide information to visitors, assist with reservations (if offered at park), and provide light maintenance such as litter pick-up. When you arrive at your hosting assignment, your park supervisor will provide you with specific job details.

Q: Do I have to clean toilets?

Answer: No. Hosts don't typically clean restrooms. This is park staff's responsibility. However, you may be asked to monitor the cleanliness of restrooms and stock paper products when needed.

Q: What will my hours be?

Answer: This will vary from park to park. Generally, each person can expect to work a minimum of 28 hours per week. You will not be asked to perform host work for more than 40 hours per week. However, we believe most hosts actually put in many more hours than they record. You may have some maintenance duties that only last a couple of hours a day, but you will probably be available and answering questions and providing information to the public throughout the day and into the evening. Please record all of these hours on your timesheet.

Q: Do I get to have days off?

Answer: Yes. Days off will usually be during the week and will vary with the seasons, the number of hosts assigned at the park, and staff's days off. Staff will try to arrange your schedule whenever possible for you to take two days off in a row. Your personal time is important and staff encourages you to take a real break and leave the park to visit the local sites, see a movie, or play a round of golf. Other considerations will be made to accommodate your personal schedule and any other commitments you have arranged prior to your hosting assignment.

Q: Do volunteers get paid?

Answer: No. Washington State Parks does not pay a stipend to volunteers. Please note there may be an occasion for you to be reimbursed for your expenses. For example, if you host at our San Juan Island parks, you may be able to be reimbursed for your ferry fees. Ask the park manager about this ahead of your assignment.

Q: Will I have full hook-ups?

Answer: Not in all parks. You will be provided full hook-ups (Water, Sewer, Electricity) whenever possible. However, there are a few parks where sewer is not possible at this time. Water and Electricity is available at all host sites, but you may have to travel to a dump station in or near the park to clean holding tanks. A few parks even have telephone and cable or satellite TV hook-ups. Please see the amenities available at each park in our Volunteer Opportunities brochure.

Q: When will I know if I have been accepted to host?

Answer: Once your application has been received, it will be distributed to the parks you have indicated. The park will contact you to discuss your skills and experience, and to explain the needs of the park. They will also schedule your assignment. Don't be alarmed if you haven't heard from any of the parks. Each park plans their host calendar differently. Some may have

everyone lined up a year in advance, while others wait to plan theirs. You are always welcome to contact them directly to inquire about hosting.

Q: Is there a recruitment time?

Answer: We recruit year-round for hosts and volunteers. In the early fall, we send an “all-host” mailing to all current hosts as well as those that have hosted for us in the past. This is a great time to update any changes to your application or add any new parks where you would like to host.

Q: Do I need to attend any training?

Answer: The Volunteer Program offers an annual “Camporee” held in the spring. It is a three-day event offering training in host duties, park rules, and working with the public. Information is mailed out in the late winter for this training. This event is not mandatory, but encouraged. You will also receive some training at the park upon your arrival.

Q: I am disabled. Can I still volunteer?

Answer: Of course. Please let staff know of any disabilities before your assignment so they can find the right place for you.

Q: I travel with a pet. Are they welcome?

Answer: Yes. We welcome pets as long as you pick up after them and keep them under physical control at all times.

Q: Do the park rules apply to me?

Answer: Yes.

Q: Why are hosts required to complete Federal Form I-9?

Answer: Federal regulations require employers to obtain Federal Form I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification) from those who receive remuneration from their organization. Remuneration is identified in the *Employer's Handbook for the Form I-9*, Q.5, p. 21, as: “Anything of value given in exchange for labor or services rendered by an employee, including food and lodging.” Because State Parks offers camping at no charge to volunteer hosts for services performed, the camping at no charge is considered remuneration.

This form requires you to show proof of residency. Please note that a driver’s license alone does not meet the required documents. If you plan on using your driver’s license as proof of citizenship, you will also need to show a second document from column C on form I-9. For your identification safety, we advise you not to carry your social security card with you and suggest something else from the list such as a copy of your birth certificate. You will be asked for these when you show up at your park assignment. To read more about Form I-9, please visit the website at www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf.

Q: Does the state report the value of my free camp site to the IRS?

Answer: No.

Q: Can I deduct any expenses related to volunteering on my Federal Income Tax Return?

Answer: See Federal Publication 526, "Charitable Contributions." Please visit the website at www.irs.gov/publications/p526/index.html.

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