

PEAR Team Meeting 8 – Meeting Notes– January 17, 2024 12-2 pm

Welcome & Icebreaker – Melinda/Janette 12:05 pm

Icebreaker asking the group to respond to the prompt below.

- Name
- Pronouns
- Role(s) if you like
- What is a quality that you appreciate about yourself?

Facilitators Present:

Janette Chien, she/her, State Parks DEI Director

Melinda Posner, she/her, State Parks DEI Manager

PEAR Team Present:

Lynn Makowsky, she/her, Riverside State Park Program Specialist 2

Megan Grisso, she/her, Social Worker, Community Member

Reco Bembry, he/him, Big Tent Coalition

Jeff Vassallo, he/him, Parks Area Manager

Stacey Coltrain, she/her Ranger 1 Sequim Bay

Curt Fackler, he/him, community member

Kristi Hamilton, she/her, community member

Amber Forest, she/her, Park Ranger 4

Cassandra Alarcon, she/her, Admin Assistant 3 Operations

Clare DeLong, she/her, Communications Director

Observers Present:

Tonna Jensen Sigler, she/her, State Parks Administrative Assistant

Paul Ruppert, he/him, Parks Volunteer Program Manager

Agenda

Janette welcomed the group at 12:05 and reminded the group that we will record the presentation part of the meeting. Janette started the meeting with our check-in and shared that we have Paul joining us today.

- Equity Impact Review (EIR) Topic: **Volunteer Program**
- Q&A
- Small group work
- Closing

Janette also reminded the team of our community norms. We can work to support one another to be accountable for these norms. Please reach out if you would like to make any adjustments to these community norms.

Volunteer Program

Janette welcomed and shared that Paul has enjoyed working for Washington State Parks for 29 years. During this time, he worked as a Park Aide, NW Region WCC Coordinator, legislative liaison, and most recently, a Park Ranger 3 and Kitsap Area Operations Manager at Blake Island Marine State Park. His proudest moments at Blake Island have been to make Blake Island into a welcoming, family-oriented park and providing food storage lockers at each campsite to limit park visitor and wildlife conflict so park visitors and wildlife can coexist. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family and pets, traveling, and exploring the great outdoors, tending to his gardens and relaxing on the beach with his toes in the sand. Paul accepted his role as the Volunteer Program Manager in November of 2022. He manages the analysis, planning/creation, implementation, and monitoring of the volunteer program.

Thank you so much for joining us Paul and being our first Equity Impact Review (EIR) project of 2024.

Paul shared from the Volunteer Staff Manual that, “State Parks Welcomes All Volunteers. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission provides equal opportunity to all persons. We are committed to creating and sustaining an environment that includes, welcomes, and respects diverse identities of race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and more. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, persons over 40 years of age, disabled and veterans and people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are invited to apply. This applies to all aspects of the recruitment, utilization, development, and treatment of volunteers.

The Volunteer Program lives within our Parks Development Division. This program consists of

- Partners & Strategic Initiatives Manager – Licia Sahagun
- Volunteer Program Specialist – Paul Ruppert
- Volunteer Program Assistant – Cindy Gauthier
- Volunteer/Host Coordinator – park staff

As of 2022 the Volunteer Program had a total of 190k volunteer hours. Paul shared that we have a variety of volunteers including:

- Individual volunteers
- Group volunteers
- Park Hosts
- Marine Hosts
- Interpretive Hosts
- Youth Volunteers

Paul shared that the agency is not currently accepting court ordered volunteers.

How we recruit volunteers

- Volunteer web page
- Recruitment flyers and postcards at all parks
- Networking with park visitors
- State Parks Facebook page sends out notices for park host openings.
- Word of mouth and relationships – with other volunteers and/or parks staff.

What can volunteers do?

- Beach/litter pick up
- General Maintenance
- Trail Maintenance
- Invasive weed removal
- Habitat restoration
- Gardening/landscaping
- Interpretive assistance
- Park store assistance
- Per Policy 70-50, Volunteers will not displace or supplant agency employees.

The Hiring Process

- Complete a volunteer application packet.
- Pass state and federal background checks.
- Connect with the parks.
- Rangers hire their own approved volunteers.
- Hiring is based on:
 - Park needs
 - Availability
 - Abilities
 - Interests

Paul shared that processing an application can take between 2-6 weeks due to the paperwork and background check process.

Benefits of Volunteering

Paul shared that there are so many benefits to volunteering.

- Connects you to other people.
- Good for your mind, body and spirit.
- An opportunity to give back.
- Brings fun and fulfillment to your life.
- Discover and develop new skills.
- Helps lower and manage stress.
- Learn more about job opportunities.
- Earn a Discover Pass.

Volunteer Training

Training depends on what time of work the volunteers will be doing. All volunteers are trained on:

- Park Rules and Regulations
- Safety Tips, PPE
- Timesheets
- Job specific duties as required.
- Park Hosts also receive the Host Guide

Paul shared that we have an annual Host Camporee training event that brings staff and volunteers together for learning and networking. Paul also reviewed all of the policies that volunteers are required to complete.

Q & A

- Curt shared that working with Volunteer Program staff has been a pleasure.
- Reco- How might we conduct Camp Host and related training closer to areas where BIPOC community members frequent... "strategically" increase BIPOC such as Millersylvania State Park, Dash Point State Park, Lake Sammamish State Park?
 - Paul- we try to go back and forth between eastside and westside locations to make it easier for our volunteers. Our Camporee for 2024 is planned to be at Millersylvania.
- Kristi asked how do you enforce the nonsmoking policy?
 - The enforcement of any of the Volunteer Program Policies is dependent on our parks staff.
 - Paul shared that eastern Washington might have other restrictions on smoking for fire safety. Parks have competitions for who can pick up the most cigarette butts.
- Janette asked what are the demographics of our volunteers, age, race, etc?
 - Paul shared that it depends on the type of volunteers. Park Hosts are typically retired over 65, and generally white. Many campground hosts are also veterans. Location in the state also has a factor on demographics.
- Melinda asked what data do we need to collect to watch trends overtime?
 - Paul there is a box on the application but it's not something we have historically tracked.
- Janette asked Curt as a Camp Host, what is your experience do campers know what a host is?
 - Many campers think hosts are paid staff.
 - Hosts are appreciated because campers can find us when staff aren't around after hours.
 - Hosts are sometimes the first contacts for campers. They only educate what they do not enforce.
 - Paul- it is vital volunteers have all the information they need from staff.
- Janette asked Curt as a Camp Host What do you which you would have known?
 - Curt shared that he likes different opportunities. He also is a camp host in AZ and it seems like they allow hosts more opportunities.
- Amber shared that Paul is so great to work with. We could not get our work done without our camp hosts. We are so thankful and grateful that they are such good partners.

- Melinda shared that it is so helpful to have Paul, staff and camp host volunteers all a part of this meeting.
- Janette asked- What is the greatest highlight of doing this volunteer work and what are the challenges?
 - Curt-highlight is that the parks in WA always look so nice!
 - Paul-shared that volunteers are amazing to help get projects done! We need volunteers to do this work.
 - Lynn shared that volunteering is a great opportunity to get introduced to different job opportunities.
 - One challenge is enforcing the Discover Pass in more urban areas.

Janette prompted the group with these questions to think about during their 10-minute break.

- Recruitment-What strategies can we explore to make our volunteer community more diverse?
- Training- What kinds of DEI-related trainings or events should we engage volunteers in?
- Other feedback on the volunteer program?

10 minute break back at 1:12 pm

Small groups -share out

Recruitment-What strategies can we explore to make our volunteer community more diverse?

- Reach out to different organizations
- Reach out to groups that apply for donations
- On Free Days, flyer to give out on free days, marketing, park offices, QR code, consistency
- School programs, youth programs, high school fair, libraries
- Frat, Sorority
- Urban League
- Black People who hike, Outdoor
- Afro (partnerships with REI), GirlTrek
- Skillsbridge program
- Be at community hosted events
 - Unity in the Community
- Affinity groups at orgs (amazon, microsoft, etc)
- Going into schools -provide an overview of our Volunteer Program to attract students. Local Parks staff to present at schools for specific projects etc.
 - Connect with career counselors for Juniors/Seniors
 - Some schools have community engagement requirements.
- Outreach to colleges
- Do we have administrative volunteer opportunities? A lot of the volunteer work seems very physical.
- Lake Sammamish program – bringing staff into libraries to put interpretive bags together.

- Other volunteer opportunities where we come to them? Bring the Parks to the people.
- Connect with local city Parks and Recreation
- Making volunteer program part of intentional career pathways program

Training- What kinds of DEI-related trainings or events should we engage volunteers in?

- Hosts don't really interact with other volunteers, and there are usually one 1 host at a time.
 - Bring other parks together
- Find POC in a Community that could help bridge the gap from Parks to their group
 - Where language might be a barrier
- Make sure volunteers are aware of the PEAR team
 - They don't get an email
- DEI Create an event with activities
 - Unity in the Community in Spokane
- Cultural Competency Training
 - Understand cultures and dynamics of people who are visiting

Other general feedback on the program? Questions?

- Tracking demographics better for volunteers and park users
- Barriers to volunteering
 - Time
 - Gear
 - Transportation
- Partner with DOT, city buses, shuttle services to get shared transportation.
- Beach clean-up volunteers don't have to go through application -event waiver one-time event

Janette shared our 2024 PEAR workplan with the schedule of EIR's.

Closing

Take a moment to who you want to affirm and pop it in the chat.

- I affirm my cat
- affirm all of you for being here - first meeting of 2024 - and digging into "new" topics\
- I affirm Janette and Melinda for being such great facilitators and Paul for a great presentation!
- Thank you, Cassandra, for such a great job in Group 1!
- I want to affirm this group for showing up month after month and being so engaged! And Paul for presenting! And Curtis for sharing his experience too! AND ALL the wonderful volunteers!
- Affirmation/Appreciation to Janette & Melinda's commitment to this work, Paul for Volunteerism Program Curt for your service the balance of our team for awesome commitment (time & effort)
- I affirm all the great volunteers willing to help out



PEAR Team Meeting 8

January 17, 2023



Let's check in!

- Name
- Pronouns
- Role(s) if you like
- What is a quality that you appreciate about yourself?



Agenda

- Equity Impact Review (EIR)
Topic: **Volunteer Program**
- Q&A
- Small group work
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Community Norms	Practices
GOAL ORIENTED & STRUCTURED MEETINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators provide agenda, meeting notes, and organization • Time checks – limit tangents to keep us on track • PEAR Team meetings recorded during presentation portions
THOUGHTFUL PARTICIPATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center PEAR goals to empower discussions • Raise your virtual hand • Balance speaking and active listening • Open-minded observations and feedback, lean into curiosity, ask questions before assuming, seek to understand • Use accessible language (explain acronyms, terms, etc.) • Practice compassion, patience, and understanding • Trust the process; be open to feedback • Trust that we are stronger together than alone
RECOGNIZE EACH PERSON HAS UNIQUE EXPERIENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak your truth • Appreciate everyone’s differences and commonalities • Awareness of diversity within BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community • Awareness of privilege (white, able-bodied, education, etc.) • Notice and re-consider blanket statements
SUPPORT PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgment-free zone • Recognize this is an intergenerational space • Consider the role(s) of silence and its impact in our space • Take care of yourself • Acknowledge intent, assess impact • Honor confidentiality for the group’s contributions





January 2024

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



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Volunteer Program Overview

- Partners & Strategic Initiatives Mgr.
- Volunteer Program Specialist
- Volunteer Program Assistant
- Volunteer/Host Coordinator- park staff

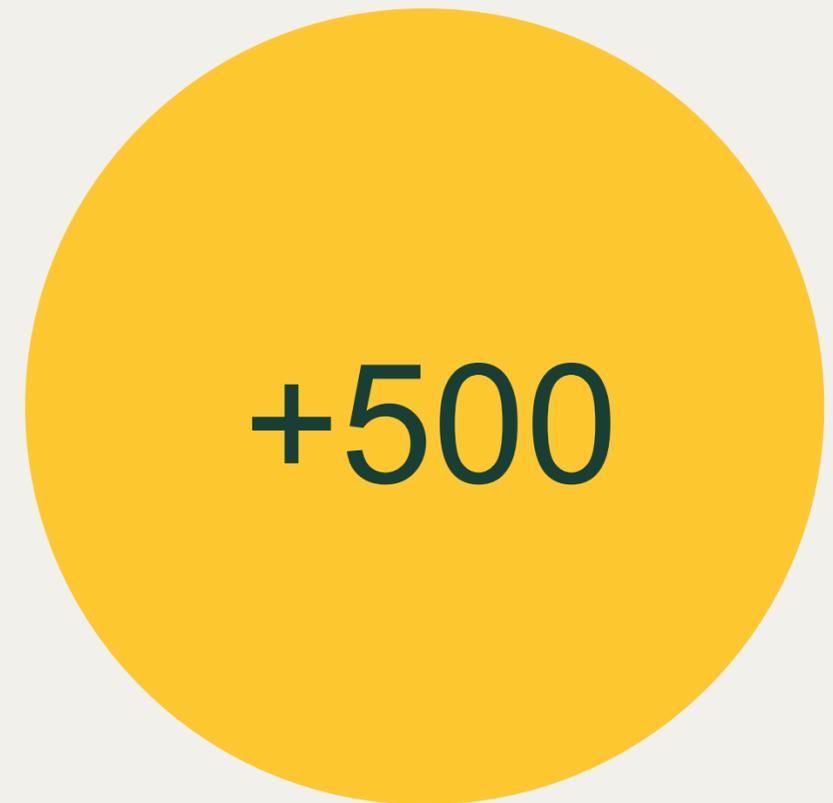
2022 VOLUNTEERS



VOLUNTEER
SERVICE HOURS



VOLUNTEERS



PARK
HOSTS

Types of Volunteers



- Individual Volunteers
- Group Volunteers
- Park Hosts
- Marine Hosts
- Interpretive Hosts
- Youth volunteers

➤ The agency is not currently accepting court ordered volunteers

How we recruit volunteers



- Web page
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What can volunteers do?

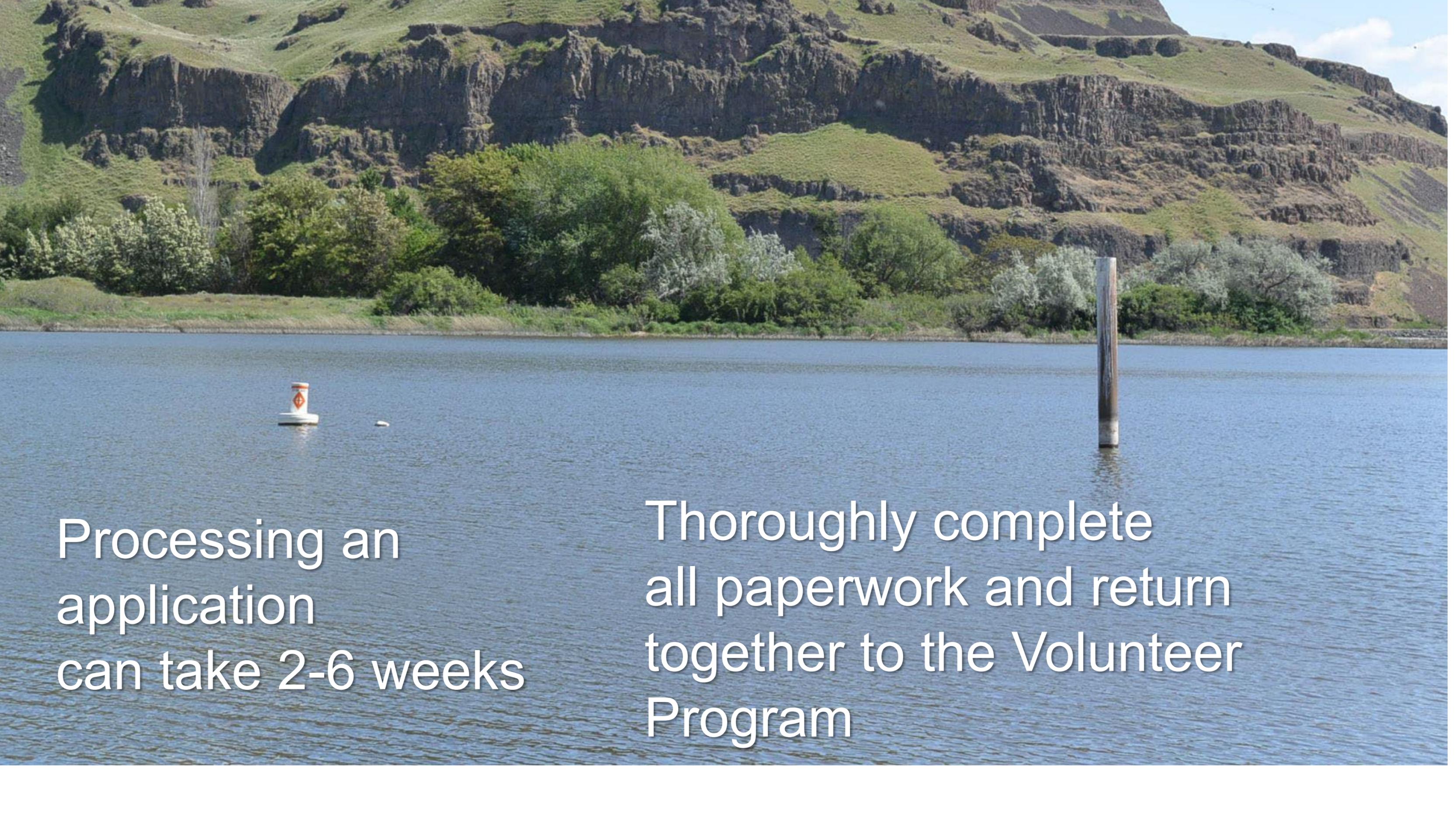
A scenic background image showing three mountain bikers riding a dirt trail on a grassy hillside. The lead biker is in the foreground, wearing a blue and black jersey and a white helmet. Two other bikers are further up the trail. The background features rolling green hills, dense evergreen forests, and distant mountain ranges under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

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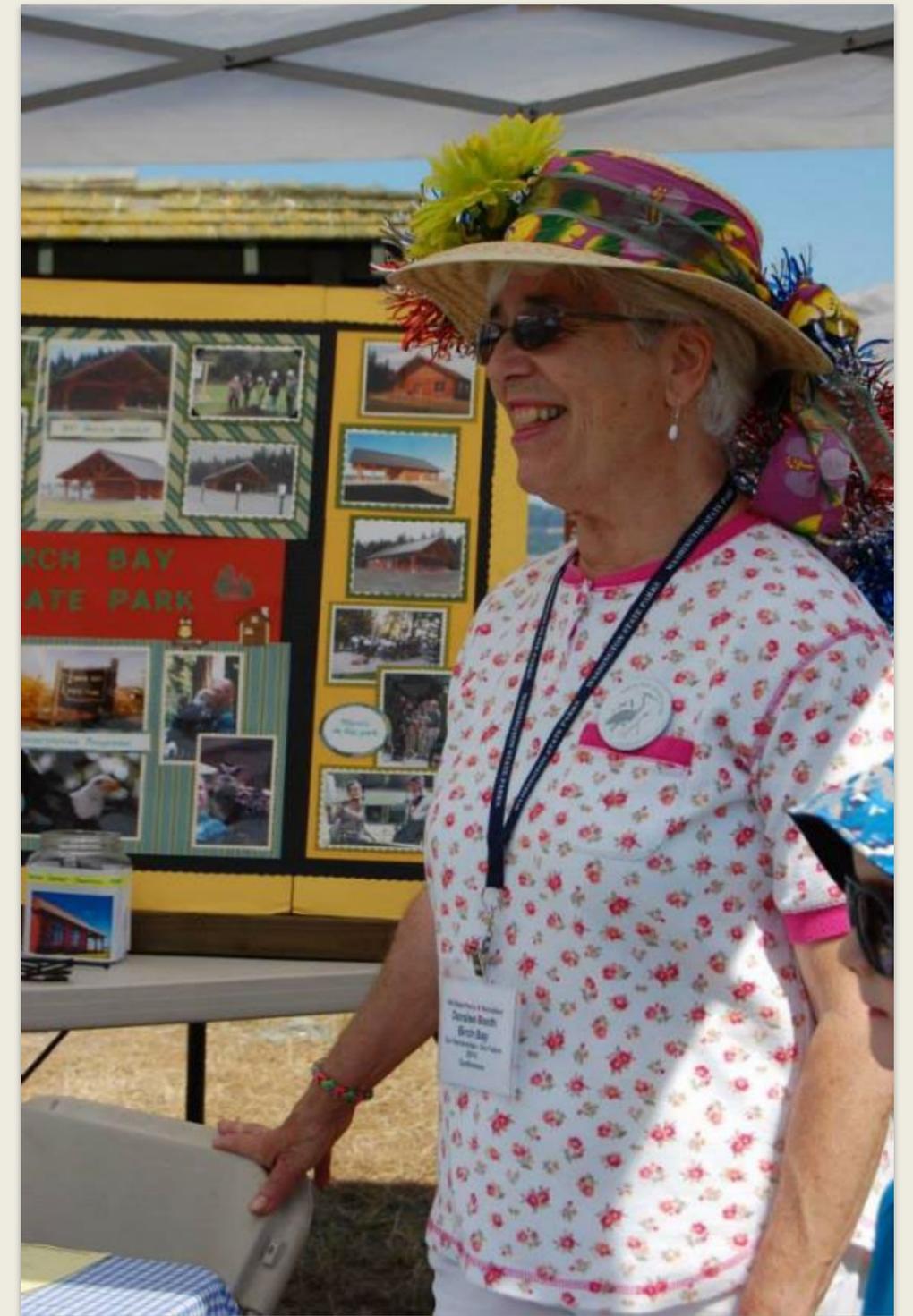


Processing an
application
can take 2-6 weeks

Thoroughly complete
all paperwork and return
together to the Volunteer
Program

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

- Connects you to other people.
- Good for your mind, body and spirit.
- An opportunity to give back.
- Brings fun and fulfillment to your life.
- Discover and develop new skills.
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Volunteer Training



All Volunteers:

- Park Rules and Regulations
- Safety Tips, PPE
- Timesheets
- Job specific duties as required

Volunteer Training- Hosts



Park Hosts:

- Volunteer Policies
- Host Guide
- Safety tips, PPE
- Timesheets
- Job specific training

HOST CAMPOREE 2023

Policies

[Employee Conduct and Ethics](#)

[Violence in the Workplace](#)

[Anti-Harassment and Discrimination](#)

[Criminal Record and Disclosure and Fingerprinting](#)

[Volunteers](#)

[Respectful Work Environment](#)

[No Smoking](#)

[Employee Health and Safety](#)

[Drug-Free Workplace](#)

QUESTIONS?



Contacts

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BREAK!



Questions to consider:

Recruitment - What strategies can we explore to make our volunteer community more diverse?

Training - What kinds of DEI-related trainings or events should we engage volunteers in?

Other feedback on volunteer program?

A photograph of two women hiking on a wooden boardwalk in a forest. The woman on the left is wearing a teal long-sleeved shirt and black pants, and the woman on the right is wearing an orange long-sleeved shirt and black pants. Both are wearing backpacks. The background shows a dense forest of green trees.

Volunteer Program



Small groups - share out



2024 PEAR Workplan / EIR (Equity Impact Review)

Date	EIR Topic	EIR Priority Category
Jan 17	Volunteer program	Visitor Experience / Community Engagement
Feb 7	HR Staff recruitment	Workforce Development
March 27	Interpretation	Visitor Experience / Community Engagement
April 17	(TBD) Parks planning public input process	Community Engagement
May 15	Discount pass programs	Visitor Experience
June 5	Partnerships program	Community Engagement
Aug 21	TBD	
Sept 18	TBD	
Oct 16	Reservations program	Visitor Experience
Nov 20	TBD	
Dec 18	2025 work planning	

Ongoing: DEI Learning, PEAR team feedback, reflection on PEAR team "roles in social change ecosystem"

Future Possibilities: PEAR team community building, participating in Parks events



Closing

