

State Parks Department Honors Volunteers

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission has announced the recipients of the 2011 Volunteer Recognition Awards for outstanding volunteer service.

State Parks works with volunteers throughout the state to continue enhancing agency efficiency and to stretch funding. Last year, volunteers performed 271,260 hours of work, equal to 130 full-time employees. The following individuals and groups received recognition for their contributions to the state parks system. [Page 1 : State Parks Department Honors Volunteers](#)

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VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

• Sammye Kempbell (Coupeville, Wash.) has cared for the tide pools at Deception Pass State Park's Rosario beach and provided interpretation for guests for the past eight years. Kempbell mapped where the marine life was most abundant and helped put in the first trail markers. She has volunteered more than 300 hours at the tide pools for nearly every low-tide during summer. She also assisted the interpretive specialist with school group visits in the spring.

HOST OF THE YEAR

• Larry Sullivan and Judy Irwin (Green Valley, Ariz.) have volunteered at Spencer Spit State Park since 1999. In 2007, they created a Junior Ranger Program specific to the park. They crafted three different books for three age levels: "Eager Beaver Goes Camping," "Little Beaver Activity Book" and "The Junior Ranger Activity Book." The books describe how to earn a Junior Ranger badge and include the Junior Ranger Pledge. Activities include writing a poem, a word search, a Saltwater Beach Nature Hunt, a birding check list and an activity on Exploring Spencer Spit State Park. Every year, they prepare a "Nature Center" to display photos of park employees, native plants in the park, birds that talk (stuffed birds from the Audubon Society), shells from the beach, big rounds of cedar for stools and activities. They also lead children's activities about clams, birds, trees, campfire cooking, and crafts.

INTERPRETIVE HOST OF THE YEAR

• Jim and Margaret Funkhouser (Livingston, Texas) volunteered at the Fort Columbia Interpretive Center, the Commanding Officer's House Museum and Battery 246 during the summer since 2008. Mr. Funkhouser gave World War II living-history tours as a work soldier, using the uniform he purchased at his own expense. He researched and developed an interpretive tour about Battery 246, giving more than 70 tours to nearly 700 visitors in 2011. Mrs. Funkhouser created an interpretive program to share a variety of information about Fort Columbia to park visitors. She promoted Junior Ranger activities and developed an educational activity to engage youths and adults

in a scavenger hunt through the historic Commanding Officer's House Museum. In 2009, the Funkhousers donated a memorial bench to Fort Columbia in honor of their son, Captain James "Alex" Funkhouser, who died in service during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Funkhousers represent a strong military tradition, and this small memorial to family and the military was replicated in the Funkhouser's everyday service to Fort Columbia State Park and its visitors.

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

• Sharon Stewart (Burbank, Wash.) has volunteered with Washington State Parks for 15 years. She and her husband, Ron, began hosting in 1996 at Moran State Park. Over the years, the couple served as hosts at many parks, including Fort Flagler, Ike Kinswa, Yakima Sportsman, Sacajawea, Cape Disappointment, Millersylvania and former state park Lyons Ferry. After her husband passed away 2003, Stewart continued serving as park host and also started volunteering at the State Parks Headquarters and Southwest Region offices. Stewart has donated nearly 18,000 hours of service to State Parks, helping park visitors, leading tours, promoting the agency, coordinating RV shows and recruiting new volunteers. Stewart has recruited many volunteers to serve at Sacajawea State Park's Interpretive Center and the many special events at the park. Prior to Stewart's efforts, the park recorded less than 1,000 volunteer hours annually. Within the first year of her volunteering at Sacajawea, the volunteer hours more than tripled. By 2008, Sacajawea was in the top 10 parks for volunteerism, with nearly 10,000 volunteer hours annually.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

• Rick Colombo (Stanwood, Wash.) began volunteering at Deception State Park after 30 years in the Navy. Colombo volunteered as an interpretive intern from April through August 2011 to gain experience for his next career, working as a parks professional. He started by providing tide pool interpretation for school groups and other visitors. After graduating from Beach Naturalist Training, he organized a volunteer cadre to lead beach walks throughout the summer. He and his fellow naturalists talked to more than 12,000 visitors during low tides. Colombo presented Junior Ranger programs every Saturday during the summer, created and presented programs at the amphitheater to hundreds of visitors each Saturday evening, and assisted with the Arts in the Parks Program by coordinating background equipment and set-up, and serving as emcee for events that drew hundreds of people each performance. Colombo completed other projects such as building sign boards to advertise special events or park information; creating maps of the park for bulletin boards; developing and distributing advertising for the programs; giving interpretive talks at the bridge to special interest groups; installed blinds and shades in the shelter at West Beach; and purchased a cart for taking Beach Naturalist gear to the tide pools.

SIGNIFICANT VOLUNTEER ACHIEVEMENT

• Marilee Johnson (Chandler, Ariz.) and Judy Miller (Deer Park, Wash.) volunteered their time and efforts to correct and update a catalogued accession program for the historic artifacts held at Fort Flagler State Park. Under close guidance of State Parks Curator Alicia Woods, Johnson and Miller spent hours locating, organizing and correctly cataloguing hundreds of irreplaceable artifacts. Their work included correcting the accessioning and cataloging, as well as completing the inventory at the museum. The project they worked on was "the wholesale electronic reorganization of the Museum's inventory," according to Woods. The project is not yet complete, but the inroads Johnson and Miller made have left the database and the objects in such a condition that others with some training can continue their great work.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION BY AN INDIVIDUAL

• Christine Longdon (Stanwood, Wash.) began volunteering in 2008 by presenting marine and

environmental education programs at Camano Island and Cama Beach state parks, including programs for the second-grade education days in 2009 and at the 2010 October Harvest Festival. Her passion for a clean environment inspired her to organize an event she named CamOcean in 2010, to align with World Ocean Day, which was originated to raise public awareness about stewardship of our marine environment. Longdon spent four and a half months preparing for this event, which included a multitude of hands-on activities and speakers. She contacted and scheduled all presenters, getting commitment from 26 organizations and individuals representing many aspects of the environmental education circle. Offerings at the event included displays, live music, low tide beach and forest walks, speakers, activities and crafts for children, storytelling, face painting and boat rentals. The park tallied 1,035 cars entering the park for the 2010 event, with a total of 3,622 visitors. Longdon went on to organize the second CamOcean day in 2011 with a focus on the environment. "This event is now one of the most successful events the park has hosted since its opening in June 2008," said State Parks Interpretive Specialist Tina Dinzi-Pederson. Longdon used her computer graphics skills to create flyers, poster and signs to publicize the events.

SPECIAL MENTION

• Eric Harrington (Westport, Wash.) began volunteering in 2006 with Port Townsend Marine Science Center (PTMSC) at Fort Worden State Park to test various cord materials for use on crab pots at the Fort Worden pier. The goal was to learn which cords would degrade fast enough to allow trapped marine creatures to escape abandoned crab pots. Harrington tested more than 70 cords every week, and in the process educated pier visitors about the problem of derelict crab pots. He quickly became a "go to" volunteer serving as a marine exhibit guide, doing building maintenance, and representing PTMSC and Fort Worden at the Port Townsend Farmer's Market. Harrington's business expertise, leadership and commitment to any task he undertook led him to be nominated to the PTMSC Board of Trustees in 2008. He has served as board president since 2009, donating hundreds of hours to the position. Harrington guided the PTMSC in an extensive strategic planning process and through the launch of PTMSC's Orca Project. Even while serving on the board, Harrington has continued to volunteer at Fort Worden and PTMSC, promoting visitor education, helping with set-up at lectures and encouraging other volunteers.

The PTMSC is a member of the Fort Worden Life-Long Learning Center, which combines public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private enterprise working in partnership to promote conservation, creative learning, and community development at Fort Worden State Park.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

• Charles and Shirley Rhoades (Centralia, Wash.) have been camp hosts at Rainbow Falls State Park during the summer season since 2003. They have contributed a combined total of 13,000 volunteer service hours. "When on host duty, they provided their best service and always went out of their way to make sure park visitors had an enjoyable stay," said Park Ranger David Rush. The couple played a key role in helping to restore the park and Willapa Hills Trail after the flood of 2007. At one time or another, Mr. Rhoades assisted with a project at every park within the Southwest Region.

• Bob and Linda Putts (Tacoma, Wash.) have volunteered for State Parks for the past seven years, with most of their time spent at Sun Lakes-Dry Falls State Park. The Putts answered visitors questions, alerted ranges of emergencies, spent extra time cleaning campsites after busy camping weekends (whether it was raining or 100 degree temperatures). Mrs. Putts made an extra effort to pick up puncture vine seeds (goat heads) out of campsites, so campers wouldn't step on them or get flat bike tires. The couple helped beautify the park and cleaned campsites to ensure they

were ready for the next visitors. Mr. Putts helped in-coming campers, answered questions, helped unload vehicles, educated visitors about park rules and even fixed flat tires. He made it a point to have the latest weather, lake, fishing, and golf course reports, and knowing places to eat. The couple helped with the two-day Flood Fest at the Dry Falls Visitor Center during the last weekend of June. Mr. Putts also helped collect the extra vehicle fee from campers and explained why and where to pay the fee. "Bob and Linda were dedicated to assisting the public and making their camping experience the best they could," said Park Ranger John Ashley.

• Joann Wilson Fritz, (formerly of Port Townsend, Wash.) This is a posthumous award for Joanne Wilson Fritz, who passed away on Jan. 4, 2011; she was 83. Fritz volunteered with the non-profit Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum (CAM) at Fort Worden State Park for a few years before becoming a board member in 2003. Because her father Joseph Wilson was in the U.S. Army Coast Artillery, she and her family traveled the world and finally landed at Fort Worden. "She was a 1946 Port Townsend High School graduate," said Museum President Alfred Chiswell. Fritz donated more 10,000 hours in the nearly eight years she served on the CAM board. In 2010 alone, she volunteered 1,400 hours toward CAM's work in support of Washington State Parks. Her dedication to detail allowed CAM to continue enhancing Artillery Hill tours and restoration work on the Harbor Entrance Control Post and the Artillery Hill Viewshed project. Fritz led museum tours and talked with children about all things Fort Worden. "Her love of Fort Worden and respect for the Coast Artillery led her to join CAM where she quickly proved invaluable as board treasurer, front desk volunteer and an all-around get-things-done person. She has been a mainstay to the CAM and Fort Worden, and her sense of humor and dedication will be sorely missed," said Museum President Alfred Chiswell.

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GROUP OF THE YEAR

• Whidbey Island Retired Chief Petty Officer Association, RCPOA, (Oak Harbor, Wash.) has volunteered at Rasar State Park since 2001 contributing a total of 2,100 hours. While camping in the park ten years ago, group members realized the newly opened group camp still needed work. They began to make improvements, and in 2011 the group officially adopted the park. They have maintained trails, added recreational amenities, and revitalized natural resources, showcasing the caring nature of this association. They removed 4,000 feet of barbed wire and replaced it with a habitat-friendly wire to protect wildlife. Each spring, the RCPOA spends a weekend doing the annual spring cleanup. In 2011, the firewood sales were higher than normal, and the park was going to run out of wood before the busy Labor Day weekend. The ranger contacted the RCPOA and a week later 197 bundles of firewood were produced, which resulted in adding \$1,379 to the park funds. The RCPOA also participated in a joint effort with park staff to upgrade the amphitheater. The results included the addition of electricity and new benches, expanding the area, installing a screen, constructing a podium and re-graveling. The RCPOA installed the electricity and built and installed the log-framed screen. "The physical labor and projects the group has accomplished are amazing as stand-alone efforts, but the cumulative effect of what they do and who they are as individuals and as a group provide the example of how volunteers can serve as the backbone of state parks," said Park Ranger Debbie Wyman.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION

• Friends of the Columbia River Gateway (Long Beach Area, Wash.) incorporated as a 501c3 nonprofit organization in 1994 and have been dedicated to supporting living history events, guest speakers, temporary exhibits, and concert events at in the Long Beach Area (LBA) state parks. For the past several years their average annual contribution to the LBA has been nearly \$8,000, which

has literally allowed these special events and services to take place. They have staffed the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center since before the expansion and renovation, and after the expansion, began operating the LCIC book and gift store. They later began operating the North Head Lighthouse Keeper's Gift Store. "Revenue from the gift stores has supported the parks significantly," said Parks Interpretive Specialist Steve Wood. The Friends adopted Benson Beach at LBA to help with annual volunteer beach cleanups. The Friends have supported LBA volunteers by reimbursing park staff for the monthly barbecues they hold to thank park volunteers. A sub-group of the Friends, Keepers of the North Head Lighthouse (Keepers), was recently formed by local citizens to generate public support to restore the North Head lighthouse. They have generated financial support through specialty retail items. The total amount of time they have contributed is difficult to estimate, but the group has dedicated 17 years worth of time and effort to support LBA parks.

SIGNIFICANT VOLUNTEER ACHIEVEMENT

• Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust (Lake Sammamish Area, Wash.) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and preserving lands alongside I-90 from Seattle to Snoqualmie Pass and beyond. The Trust has accomplished much of its work at Lake Sammamish State Park. Through an Adopt-A-Park agreement, the Trust developed a nursery to plant, water, weed and pot native plants for future use along the I-90 corridor. Members potted native trees and shrubs boasting an inventory of 23,000 plants. The group involved a significant number of local students and corporate groups in restoration and maintenance along Issaquah Creek and planted trees at two Lake Sammamish State Park volunteer events. Some of the major projects the group was involved with include the Snoqualmie Tunnel grand re-opening celebration, rebuilding retaining walls at Olallie State Park and made tread improvements along sections of the Twin Falls trail. The group has provided decades of trail improvement and restoration at Iron Horse State Park-John Wayne Pioneer Trail and improved the 12-mile Squak Mountain trail system, including installing more than 65 trail signs, raised 800 feet of turnpike trail above wet areas, performed stabilization work on equestrian trails and installed 150 drain dips to keep water off trails. The benefits of all these hours of labor, while clearly felt in these area parks, also go to the public. Instead of facing unbroken urban development while traveling on I-90, all are rewarded with a continuous, beautiful green corridor.

SPECIAL MENTION

• HDR (Seattle, Wash.) is an employee-owned architecture, engineering and consulting firm from Seattle. During the summer of 2010, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) cook shelter at Deception Pass State Park was restored through both a generous donation and the help of volunteer support. The shelter had been damaged as a result of more than 80 years of recreational use and northwest weathering. HDR's technical staff offered expertise in log structure restoration techniques, and HDR volunteers performed hands-on construction work, which included splitting cedar shakes from salvaged old-growth cedars, removing deteriorating logs, cutting and chiseling upright log posts to fit tight, and reroofing the entire structure. This is actually the second such restoration project this group has completed. In 2009, HDR restored another CCC kitchen shelter at Deception Pass.

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission manages a diverse system of more than 100 parks and several recreation programs, including trails, boating safety, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. The 99-year-old park system will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2013.