



## TAKE OWNERSHIP MESA COUNTY



MESA COUNTY



A STUDY BY THE MESA STATE COLLEGE  
NATURAL RESOURCES AND LAND POLICY INSTITUTE  
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**TAKE**

**OWNERSHIP**

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**A report on the consensus for a Cooperative Volunteer Program.**

**Prepared by the Natural Resource and Land Policy Institute**



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## **Executive Summary**

Since the 1980s, government has been under increasing pressure to do more with less. Citizen opposition to increased taxes and a growing belief that government is both inefficient and ineffective have fueled these citizen demands. Although polls reveal that citizens hold local government in somewhat higher regard, all governments (federal, state and local) have suffered from citizen's distrust of how their tax dollars are spent. In an effort to improve performance, governments at all levels have adopted many popular reforms designed to make government run more like a business.

One of these populist reforms is that bureaucracy should treat citizens more like businesses treat their customers. Public agencies have been encouraged to identify their citizen clientele, determine what that clientele expects of them and then craft programs to meet those needs. Finally, these agencies have been instructed to develop performance measures to determine how well agency outcomes are meeting their customer's needs. While this strategy may very well improve the performance of government bureaucracy, it poses a significant problem for democratic government. When citizens are encouraged to see themselves as customers of government they tend to ignore their role as owners of government. Consequently, citizens develop a customer attitude towards government. As good customers, citizens demand that government return to them goods and services that far exceed what they pay in taxes. It is not unlike the willingness to snap up bargains at the grocery store and yard sales. People like a good deal.

The citizen/customer attitude does force bureaucracy to constantly strive to do more with less. But as citizens, we also have another important role to play in our representative democracy. We are first and foremost owners of our government, not customers. The role of an owner stands in stark contrast to that of the customer. Consider the small business person who has an opportunity to expand their business. He or she can hire additional employees to help handle the increased workload or they can roll up their sleeves and work longer hours to meet the increased demand. As owners, citizens face the same decision. Do we take on the responsibilities of ownership and roll up our sleeves and go to work? Or do we demand that government expand to meet our increased demand for services?

Citizens have every right to expect public lands agencies to meet their needs for use of public lands. But, particularly in light of the current economic recession and the reduction in resources available to meet our needs, government officials need to encourage citizens to act like owners and step up and work to provide the public lands settings that we want. Citizens working in partnership with local government and public land agencies can produce these results and restore our trust in limited government that works.

A cooperative volunteer program can assist in reminding citizens of their role and responsibilities as owners of government. In addition, a cooperative volunteer program can also assist in nurturing trust between local, state and federal agencies operating in Mesa County. A cooperative volunteer program has a unique opportunity to involve local, state and federal agencies in a partnership to improve access and use of all public lands, parks and trails in Mesa County. The interviews conducted for this study indicate an underlying sense of competition and distrust between the various government officials that have responsibilities for public lands. While some of this competition is healthy, the inability to jointly move forward on a number of projects has fostered an unhealthy environment that makes collaboration more challenging.

A successful cooperative volunteer program can help maintain a healthy intergovernmental climate that fosters cooperation not only in the effort to increase volunteerism but also to work through other issues that beg for a collaborative solution. A series of small successes in this one program can lead to much larger successes in others. However, building a cooperative volunteer program will not be easy. Lack of funding and staff, a sense of distrust of other government entities and concern about citizens' willingness to step up are significant barriers to getting a cooperative volunteer program started. Fortunately, Mesa County has taken a leadership role in starting a cooperative volunteer program by hiring a Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator. What remains now is to work on expanding this new position to ensure that it best meets the needs of all the agencies in Mesa County who have responsibilities for public lands. A successful cooperative volunteer program will build trust between local, state and federal land agencies in the county, maximize limited resources and help foster county residents' sense of ownership in the community.

Methodology: To estimate the interest in a cooperative volunteer program, investigators from Mesa State College conducted a series of interviews with public land managers and/or their volunteer coordinators. Interviews were also conducted with county, city and town managers and other personnel to assess local government interest in participating in such an effort.

To get a better understanding of both the potential and the hurdles of implementing a cooperative volunteer program, three well established coordinated volunteer programs were examined. Investigators visited the Public Lands Institute (PLI) located at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where they met with the Executive Director and several senior staff members. Interviews were also conducted with staff members of Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado (VOC), a state-wide coordinated volunteer program, and with the Tamarisk Coalition, an organization that has coordinated volunteer efforts for a variety of federal and state land managers.

Consensus: Every government official interviewed for this study indicated some level of interest in creating a cooperative volunteer program. Mesa County has already contributed funding for the program and Fruita expressed a willingness to provide some funding if requested through



their normal budgetary process. The City of Grand Junction, due to the current recession, could not commit funds but offered to help with other resources. The BLM was willing to provide funding for specific volunteer activities that occur on BLM land. The USFS, the NPS and the state agencies who participated in the study do not have funding available right now but did not rule out participating at a later date. Likewise, the loss of revenue and concerns over the success of a cooperative volunteer program has caused the town of Palisade to take a wait-and-see attitude.

This somewhat lukewarm response should not be seen as a reason to stop pursuing the development of a cooperative volunteer program. Rather the fact that no one said “no” should be seen as a sign that a start-up program that is small but effective with a well developed plan to expand as it demonstrates success can build the trust necessary to gain the participation of all other public lands agencies in the area.

Issues: Several issues must be resolved to ensure the successful creation of a cooperative volunteer program. The first and greatest issue is funding. A source of sufficient funding must be identified. Further these funds must be available for uses that may cross jurisdictional boundaries. Participating agencies and local governments must also agree to provide representatives to serve on the program’s Board of Directors. Agreement must be reached on how to share resources and identify projects. Program objectives and appropriate staffing must be determined. Agreement on an appropriate volunteer database and a timeline for program expansion must be agreed to by the Board of Directors. Finally, a cooperative volunteer program must augment existing volunteer programs without allowing loyal volunteers of one agency from drifting to another agency participating in the cooperative volunteer effort.

Reasons to Proceed: Despite the fact that many public land agencies already have existing volunteer programs, there are a number of advantages to augment these efforts with a cooperative volunteer program. Aside from the philosophical argument made above, a cooperative volunteer program can provide numerous concrete benefits as well. First, all the agencies have similar needs ranging from trail maintenance and construction to volunteer training that can be better served through a consolidated effort. All public land agencies have concerns about the accuracy of reporting volunteer hours. A volunteer coordinator can assist in improving the accuracy of the reports. A cooperative volunteer program can assist participating agencies in identifying volunteers with needed skills. Eventually, the creation of specialized task forces to assist participating agencies with graffiti removal and invasive weed removal will help reduce costs and improve the community. Further down the road, the cooperative volunteer program can develop education and outreach programs that will benefit all participating agencies and the public.

In the area of recruitment, the joint program can consolidate but keep separate agency volunteer lists to facilitate the promotion of events and the recruitment of volunteers to participate in them. As the program grows it can expand its recruitment efforts to support trail host and adopt-a-trail programs. Recruiting more corporate sponsors and employee volunteer days can also be a role for the volunteer coordinator. Development of a joint volunteer registration form will provide needed information to participating agencies on volunteer skills and availability.

The need for help with volunteer training was expressed by most officials interviewed in this study. Crew leader training, power tool training, herbicide applicator's certification are but a few of the classes that a volunteer coordinator could facilitate for participating agencies. A greater need for land agencies is for a volunteer coordinator to fully supervise from start to finish the entire volunteer event. This would include promotion and registration through supplying everything needed for the event to evaluating, thanking volunteers and reporting on the event. Public land agencies do not have the staff to do this. Beyond providing limited technical advice agency staff are not able to assist in supervision of volunteer activities.

A cooperative volunteer program can also assist participating entities with database management, greatly expanding the capacity to query volunteer lists for specific skills, interests and availability. A joint database could also improve the accuracy of data input while maintaining the security of each participating agencies' list of volunteers. Program evaluation of volunteer activities could also be improved. A volunteer coordinator could develop and utilize evaluation tools that track volunteer satisfaction with an event as well as tracking the outputs and outcomes of each volunteer activity.

Next Steps: Mesa County's Public Land Volunteer Coordinator cannot possibly provide all of the services identified above. However, with time, additional funding and more staff, these services can be developed and implemented for the benefit of all participating entities. To further evaluate the possibilities of developing a cooperative volunteer program in Mesa County representatives of all the public land agencies and local governments who participated in this study should select representatives to an Exploratory Committee. The purpose of this committee would be to determine the feasibility and means for creating and implementing a cooperative volunteer program.

To make this determination the Exploratory Committee will need to research available funding sources to include potential in-kind contributions and the use of volunteers to meet initial staffing needs. The committee will also need to determine the organization's initial structure to include the make-up of the Board of Directors and staffing needs. Policies such as criteria for the selection of volunteer events will need to be established. Selection of appropriate volunteer database software will also be needed. The development of a timeline and budget from initial implementation to full development of the cooperative volunteer program will have to be

developed. Finally, the Exploratory Committee will need to agree on appropriate performance measures to evaluate program success.

Mesa County has taken a good first step towards the development of a cooperative volunteer program. With the assistance of other local governments and public land agencies, the county's efforts can be expanded to provide even greater benefits for participating agencies and the citizens of Mesa County.



## **Introduction**

Mesa County is the home of hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands. From the stunning rock formations of the National Monument to the lush forests of the Grand Mesa, the scenic beauty of the county attracts many visitors annually. National Conservation Areas (NCA) such as McInnis Canyons and the newly created Dominguez-Escalante NCA provide both recreational opportunities as well as wilderness protection to vast tracts of pristine lands. The Colorado River as it flows through the Grand Valley is protected from development by a series of state parks connected by a river-front trail system designed to maximize both visitor and local enjoyment of the outdoors for fishing, boating, biking or just taking a walk to clear your mind. Several wildlife refuges provide habitat for many species of wildlife. Local governments have contributed to the enjoyment of the outdoors through their development and management of local parks, trails, watersheds and through the provision of many outdoor recreational opportunities. Yes, Mesa County is truly blessed with its wonderful public lands, but maintaining this system is a challenge for federal, state and local public land managers.

To protect and enhance the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities of Mesa County's public lands, agencies must rely on the help of volunteers who are interested in preserving our national heritage and promoting recreational opportunities. Public land managers are responsible for everything from protecting undeveloped land, constructing and maintaining trails, trailheads, campgrounds, recreational facilities and roads to protecting wildlife habitat, removing invasive species and providing trail host programs. Snow removal, litter control, trash removal and conducting special events are just some of the routine tasks that must be performed. Constricting budgets, greater user demand and a workforce too small to keep up with the area's needs require land managers to increasingly rely on volunteer efforts to meet the needs of the public.

Federal agencies such as the Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service (NPS) have personnel whose responsibilities include coordination of volunteer activities. Likewise, state agencies such as the State Parks (CSP) and the Division of Wildlife (CDOW) also have personnel dedicated partially or entirely to coordinating volunteer activities. The volunteer efforts of these agencies are well developed, although some are limited in scope. Volunteers are recruited, trained and participate in both single events (such as trail maintenance) or ongoing programs such as adopt-a-trail or campground host programs. Records on volunteer activities are kept and annual reports are filed recording the extent of volunteer activity.

Volunteer programs within local governments in Mesa County are not as formalized as the state and federal agencies in the area. Volunteers are utilized on more of an ad-hoc basis. Different event planners utilize volunteers to help with crowd control and clean up, and there is a trail host program for the Riverfront Trail. However, for the most part, formal volunteer programs do not exist.

As the population of Mesa County has grown, the appreciation of public lands and the desire for greater recreational opportunities has grown as well. In addition, both the size and number of special events, such as the wine festival or the Fruita Fall Festival, have also increased. Area land managers met in the spring of 2008 to discuss the possibilities of coordinating volunteer efforts across state and federal agencies as a way of efficiently meeting the increasing demands of the public. Mesa County officials, sympathetic to the needs of federal and state land managers and recognizing the role public lands play in economic development, authorized the creation of a Public Land Volunteer Coordinator position. This person assists land agencies in their volunteer activities.

Separate from the County's decision to hire a volunteer coordinator, the BLM secured funding to investigate the willingness of public lands agencies to participate in a cooperative volunteer program. The BLM decided to include local governments in the investigation as well and asked Mesa State College to conduct the research for this project.

## **Methodology**

To estimate the interest in a cooperative volunteer program, investigators from Mesa State College conducted a series of interviews with public land managers and/or their volunteer coordinators. Interviews were also conducted with county, city and town managers and other personnel to assess local government interest in participating in such an effort.

To get a better understanding of both the potential and the hurdles of implementing a cooperative volunteer program, three well established coordinated volunteer programs were examined. Investigators visited the Public Lands Institute (PLI) located at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where they met with the Executive Director and several senior staff members. Interviews were also conducted with staff members of Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado (VOC), a state-wide coordinated volunteer program, and with the Tamarisk Coalition, an organization that has coordinated volunteer efforts for a variety of federal and state land managers.

A complete list of all who were interviewed for this study can be found in Appendix I. A list of the interview questions can be found in Appendix II. Notes from all the interviews are contained in Appendix III. From this research, investigators obtained a good understanding of the pitfalls and potential for a cooperative volunteer program in Mesa County. Such a program would not be designed to replace existing agency volunteer efforts, rather its purpose would be to augment and support these efforts.





### **Types of Volunteer Events**

Volunteer events can be classified two different ways. First based on the number of volunteers needed, a volunteer project may be classified as large - requiring more than twenty-five volunteers; medium - requiring ten to twenty-five people; or small - requiring less than ten volunteers and individuals requiring one or two volunteers. An example of a large volunteer effort would be a trail maintenance event typically conducted by VOC. A medium-size volunteer event may be a tamarisk removal event conducted by the Tamarisk Coalition. A small volunteer effort may involve a service club in the adopt-a-trail program. Individual volunteers are often used to staff an agency's welcome desk or as campground hosts.

Another way to classify volunteer activities is by time. One way to distinguish events is to determine whether it is a single event with a start and end date or ongoing. A single volunteer event lasts usually one to two days. Some special events like the Fruita Fall Festival may last longer. Ongoing volunteer activities do not have a specific start or end date. Volunteer activities such as adopt-a-trail or adopt-a-lake programs fall into this category, as do volunteer activities at welcome centers.

The significance of classifying volunteer activities is that different activities put different levels of stress on full-time agency staff to recruit, train and supervise the activity. For instance, large and medium size volunteer events require a great deal of preparation time to recruit volunteers and supervise their activities. These activities are generally too time-intensive to be handled by public land agency personnel alone.

On the other hand, ongoing volunteer activities like adopt-a-trail programs may require little supervision but help is needed in soliciting various groups to enroll in the program. Public land agencies involved in trail host programs may need assistance with recruiting, training and scheduling activities. Generally speaking, one of the biggest problems for public land agencies is their inability, due to lack of staff, to supervise volunteer activities. Many times throughout the interview process agency personnel lamented that they have had to turn away volunteers because they did not have the staff available to supervise a volunteer project.



## **Elements of a Volunteer Program**

A fully developed volunteer program contains the following elements:

- Recruitment
- Training
- Project identification
- Supervision
- Database management
- Program evaluation
- Recognition program
- Outreach/education

Liability is also a concern for all volunteer programs. While most volunteer work is not dangerous, accidents do happen and provisions must be made for injuries when they occur. The following describes each of these elements in greater detail.

Recruitment: Public land agencies recruit volunteers for a variety of needs. Federal and state agencies employ various recruitment techniques. Most allow volunteers to register through a link on the agency website. Public service announcements (PSAs) are also used to alert potential volunteers of an upcoming event. Electronic organizational newsletters are used by both public lands user groups like COPMOBA and organizations like the Tamarisk Coalition to attract volunteer help. Fliers posted in local gear shops and word-of-mouth through user groups whose members directly benefit from a particular volunteer activity are most helpful in recruiting volunteers for specific volunteer events.

Local governments are far less organized in their efforts to recruit volunteers. Individual departments are generally responsible for recruiting volunteers. At this level of government, there is a greater tendency to utilize the county sheriff office's Workender Program for performance of specific tasks like graffiti removal. Word-of-mouth is the most frequent means of soliciting volunteer support. As Palisade Town Manager, Tim Sarmo, stated many special events have an established core of citizens who organize the volunteer activities with little or no supervision.

Large and medium-sized volunteer events on public lands generally occur with the assistance of organizations like VOC and the Tamarisk Coalition (TC). Both organizations keep lists of volunteers that are notified of an event and both use PSAs to alert potential volunteers of upcoming events. Both of these organizations, as well as all public land agencies and local governments, could benefit from the recruitment of more volunteers possessing specific skills. Currently TC does not allow its volunteers to operate any power equipment. When these skills are needed they rely on the Western Colorado Conservation Corp (WCCC) to provide these

services. While this organization is not technically a volunteer group, they do provide services at very reasonable rates.

Public land agencies and local governments could also use help recruiting volunteer groups for ongoing programs such as trail or campground hosts and adopt-a-trail or lake programs. The BLM has expressed a strong desire to begin an interpretive and educational outreach program that would require volunteers with both public speaking skills and knowledge of both public land issues and general federal land agency responsibilities. Another recruitment issue that may be addressed by a cooperative volunteer program is the difficulty with soliciting volunteer help during the work week. Seniors citizens will readily volunteer during this time but there are limits on what they can do.

Assistance with the creation of volunteer task forces to deal with problems like graffiti removal, invasive weed control and limited law enforcement help could also be very beneficial to public land managers. Removal of graffiti from natural rock can be difficult and may require the oversight of someone with an archaeological background to protect ancient rock art. Retired law enforcement officers can provide “neighborhood watch” type services to public land managers and local police.

A cooperative volunteer program may also help with better utilization of non-traditional volunteer programs. For instance, the Fruita city government has used the Colorado National Guard to help repair an existing reservoir dam, local governments are using the workenders program for graffiti removal, and the Tamarisk Coalition has used WCCC when the use of power tools is needed for tamarisk removal. However, these programs are generally deluged with requests for assistance. A cooperative volunteer coordinator may assist with maximizing the use of these groups across public land agencies. A cooperative volunteer coordinator could also work with corporations to get them to sponsor an employee volunteer day to be done during the work week. Both Chevron and Choice Hotels currently do this.

Finally, a cooperative volunteer program could use a jointly developed volunteer sign-up form that would solicit more than just contact information. Information on the types of activities in which a volunteer is willing to participate, and days and times the volunteer is available, could also be requested. Additionally, the form could be used to identify a volunteer’s specific skills, including anything from being a licensed electrician or having a PhD in Archaeology to knowing how to run a power sander or chainsaw. Added to the database, this information becomes a valuable tool for linking skilled volunteers to projects that suit both the requesting agency’s needs and the volunteer’s schedule and interests.

Training: Assistance with volunteer training is an area where almost all officials interviewed said they needed help. At the top of this list was crew leader training. Large and medium-sized

volunteer events require help with supervision. The ability to take a large group of volunteers and assign them in small groups to a crew leader is essential for ensuring the proper supervision of volunteer efforts. The VOC currently provides crew leader training once or twice a year but this is not enough. A cooperative volunteer program could benefit all public land officials if it could provide more regularly scheduled crew leader training.

Training in other areas is also critical for improving the contribution of volunteers to public land management. A number of officials interviewed stated that training participants in both trail host programs and adopt-a-trail or lake programs to look for and report conditions like trail erosion or invasive or endangered species locations would significantly add to the value these programs provide. Currently, NPS is the only federal agency that provides interpretive services. A number of both and local officials expressed an interest in both interpretive and other outreach programs. A cooperative volunteer program could be used to help facilitate this effort.

Specialized training for volunteers to include everything from proper power tool operations to herbicide handler certification programs could be coordinated through a cooperative volunteer program. While some of this training, such as the certification needed to use herbicides is provided through state operated website training, the volunteer coordinator could help encourage volunteers to get this certification and update their volunteer profile when the training is completed. User groups will often provide training classes as well. A volunteer coordinator could help advertise these trainings sessions to ensure that as many volunteers as possible would increase their knowledge of the skills most needed by public land agencies.

Safety training is another area where a cooperative volunteer program could be useful. Ensuring that an adequate number of volunteers at a volunteer event have first aid training helps in the event of an accident. More importantly, crew leader training of volunteers on the safety practices involved in any specific activity is another critical aspect of a volunteer program that could benefit public land agencies. Even litter pick-up requires a volunteer to know the proper handling and disposal of dirty hypodermic needles, condoms and other hazardous materials.

Project Selection: Not one government official stated that they needed help in selecting projects that could benefit from volunteer help. This task, everyone said, is easily accomplished by staff. The greater problem appears to be the inability of agencies and local governments to accommodate the flow of suggested volunteer activities coming from user groups as well as service groups like the Boy Scouts. It is the ultimate irony for agencies to turn away free help because they don't have either the financial resources or manpower available to facilitate the effort which, if accomplished, would help stretch their resources further. Officials interviewed expressed their frustration at having to turn down help and acknowledged that this sometimes leads to fostering resentment from valuable stakeholder groups. Funneling these requests through a cooperative volunteer coordinator may assist in linking groups that want to work on

projects with government land managers who can put the volunteers to work. This is particularly important for Eagle Scouts whose service projects may involve extensive supervision.

Most land managers conceded that without the help of an organization like VOC or the Tamarisk Coalition they would be unable to organize and supervise large or medium-size volunteer events. More importantly, federal and state land managers expressed the need for help recruiting organizations for ongoing trail host and adopt-a-trail or lake programs. Local governments also would like help with the Riverfront Trail Host program and several also said they could use help with special events. A cooperative volunteer program could assist agencies in meeting these volunteer needs.

Supervision: Regardless of the volunteer activity, supervision of the volunteer effort is the greatest problem facing public land agencies and local government officials. Whether the volunteer activity is a large single event, an ongoing host program or an individual Eagle Scout project, there simply are not enough resources available to supervise volunteer activity. Large and medium-size events require involvement of organizations like VOC or the Tamarisk Coalition to conduct all phases of the volunteer event from recruiting and registering volunteers to providing food, water, equipment and materials to post-event activities, such as recognizing the volunteers, recording their hours worked and evaluating the success of the event.

Equally, if not more, difficult is finding the time to recruit and train user or service groups and individuals to staff adopt-a-trail or lake and trail host programs. Supervision of these activities is usually limited to handing out trash bags or bicycle repair kits. Most time-consuming is supervising the activities of individual volunteers like the Eagle Scouts or the individuals that would like to help with administrative duties in the office. A fully developed cooperative volunteer program may be able to assist with the supervision and expansion of many of these volunteer activities. However, adding on-going volunteer activities to a coordinated volunteer program will significantly increase the volunteer coordinator's work load.

Database Management: Efforts to maintain volunteer databases vary from agency to agency. There are at least two databases that are available for use; Civicore is currently used by VOC who has generously granted access to the county's Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator. The other, called Volgistics is used by the Public Land Institute (PLI), a coordinated volunteer program that operates through the University of Las Vegas (UNLV) in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Many public lands managers have expressed frustration with their current database management software. Officials at CDOW, for instance, are dissatisfied with the inability of their program to query the volunteer list by a specific skill. Local governments in the area do not maintain a volunteer database.

A coordinated volunteer program could assist public land managers in managing their volunteer database. Promoting volunteer events, recruiting volunteers and registering them for a volunteer event are only a few of the things effective database management can provide in managing their volunteer database. Use of the volunteer sign up form to identify specific skills, activities the volunteer would like to participate in, and times when the volunteer is available, is valuable information that can improve the effective utilization of volunteers. With the ability to query the volunteer list for this information the cooperative volunteer coordinator could quickly identify volunteers needed by land managers to fulfill specific needs. Additionally, such a program could dramatically improve the recording of volunteer hours worked and produce more accurate information needed by land managers to prepare annual reports on volunteer activity.

The database could also be used by the cooperative volunteer program to keep lists of volunteers by user and service groups. The goal here would be to track all volunteers associated with user groups like Western Slope ATV. The database could be used to centralize all volunteer activity associated with public lands in Mesa County. This list would also include all volunteers who are associated with any of the federal or state land agencies. Local governments could begin to keep track of volunteers who participate in their special events and public lands activities.

Program Evaluation: There are three types of program evaluations that a cooperative volunteer program could conduct for the benefit of participating public land agencies and local governments. The first is to survey volunteers after an event to determine their level of satisfaction with the volunteer event. This survey, to be completed at the end of a volunteer event, could ask questions like:

- Was the event well organized?
- Were the equipment and materials needed for the work readily available?
- Were instructions helpful?
- Were safety instructions provided?

This is merely a sampling of potential queries. The intent of the survey would be to gather information from volunteers about the volunteer activity in which they participated to assist with volunteer retention. People volunteer out of a desire to do something positive and to spend time with likeminded people. This sense of camaraderie and commitment is easily lost when volunteers are standing around waiting for something to happen.

An equally important evaluation tool involves evaluating an event's success. Questions asked by this evaluative tool relate primarily to measure output. Some questions to answer here are:

- How many volunteers participated in the event?
- How many volunteer hours were recorded?

- Were the event goals for the number of volunteers and their hours worked achieved?
- What was the no-show rate?
- How many new volunteers were added to the database as a result of this event?
- How many miles of trail were maintained, constructed, etc.?
- Were outcome objectives achieved?
- What was the monetary value of the project?

Again, these are only a sampling of the kinds of questions and potential data that a cooperative volunteer program could track for participating land agencies and local governments. Finally, data collected from events and volunteer experience measures could be combined to provide the basis for an annual report on program performance. Such an evaluation could answer questions such as:

- Did the program meet program objectives for volunteer satisfaction?
- Did the program meet program objectives for volunteer retention and participation?
- Did the program meet its goals for:
  - Number of volunteers in database?
  - Number of volunteers with specific skills in database?
- What were the number of:
  - Projects completed?
  - Miles of trail maintained?
  - Miles of trails constructed?
  - Bags of trash picked up, etc...?
  - Miles of trails adopted?
- Costs to the program and to participating agencies could also be calculated on a cost per bag of trash, mile of trail, etc...
- The cost data could be used to determine the savings the volunteer program provided to the community.

Again, these are only a few suggestions on performance measures that could be calculated. These measures could also be used to help gauge the impact of volunteer activity on economic development in the community. Such an analysis would be a bit tricky to develop but could be done. Direct impacts could be measured by increased usage, increased lodging taxes, etc. Indirect economic benefits related to how the increased recreational opportunities and condition of public lands and local parks and trails contributes to the community's effort to diversify its economy by attracting new businesses to the area could also be reported.

Recognition Program: All organizations responsible for managing public lands attempt to recognize their volunteers in some way. For many local governments this may mean simply thanking volunteers at the end of the day. For state and federal agencies volunteer recognition may be more formalized. An annual volunteer recognition event may be planned in the form of a



picnic lunch or a Saturday brunch. Here the contributions of volunteers can be recognized and individual volunteers who have contributed an extraordinary amount of time or effort can be singled out for recognition in front of their peers. Often times, federal agencies will reward volunteers who have worked a set amount of hours (for the BLM this is 400 hours) with a free one-year pass to access federal lands.

In addition to periodic volunteer recognition events, many volunteer organizations like to thank volunteers during an event by providing lunch or an end of the day meal. During this time, volunteers are thanked and raffles are conducted to give away items such as water bottles or t-shirts that are donated by local gear shops.

A cooperative volunteer coordinator could assist all participating land agencies and local governments with developing a joint volunteer recognition day. The volunteer coordinator could solicit donations of food and drinks for the celebration from local vendors. Federal and state agencies could donate free passes for volunteers who have accumulated a certain number of hours worked across all participating agencies. Local governments could issue proclamations recognizing the volunteer program as well as certain volunteers who have performed extraordinary service. For such an event perhaps larger raffle items could be obtained from local merchants as a reward for participation in the volunteer program.

A cooperative volunteer program could also assist participating organizations with recognizing groups that participate in the Adopt-a-Trail program. Sometimes these groups can be overlooked. Individual volunteers who work as trail hosts or in an administrative capacity could also be recognized.

Outreach/Education: Volunteer programs can focus primarily on promoting stewardship of public lands through organizing and conducting volunteer events and promoting the volunteer efforts of others. Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado is very successful using this model to assist public land agencies and other volunteer agencies around the state. The VOC could be instrumental in assisting in the development of a cooperative volunteer program for Mesa County. Other volunteer organizations like the Public Lands Institute in Las Vegas have expanded their organization to include a variety of educational programs. Their outreach programs are designed to build greater community understanding of public land issues. Some of their educational programs are designed to encourage children to get outside. One program exposes urban youth to outdoor recreational activities like fishing, hiking and biking.

A number of participants in this study expressed an interest in associating outreach and educational activities with a cooperative volunteer program. Currently, CDOW and the NPS have the most fully developed interpretive and educational programs. On the other hand, both

the BLM and the City of Grand Junction expressed a desire to utilize volunteers in this capacity. As the cooperative volunteer program grows this should be an element for inclusion.

## Issues

Participants in the interviews raised a number of issues that would need to be addressed before a cooperative volunteer program could effectively meet public land agency and local government needs. Some of these obstacles are significant and would require commitment from participating organizations in order to overcome them. However, the effort may well be worth it. Mesa County has an opportunity to do something that has not been done with other cooperative volunteer efforts. A cooperative volunteer program in Mesa County could be the first to involve federal, state, and local government organizations as direct participants and beneficiaries of volunteer projects. Listed below are some of the issues that must be addressed.

- Funding
- Establishing a Board of Directors
- Staffing
- Barriers to volunteering
- Developing a timeline for growth
- Database management
- Supervision
- Liability
- Institutional barriers

What follows is a detailed discussion of each of these issues.

Funding: Perhaps the greatest issue facing any effort to develop and implement a cooperative volunteer program is funding. Today's economic climate, particularly in Mesa County, limits the ability of local governments to provide funds for new projects. However, Mesa county has already stepped forward with enough funds to pay for Partners to hire a Public Land Volunteer Coordinator. The Coordinator's office is located with Partner's Western Colorado Conservation Corp. It remains to be seen if, in the face of dramatic decreases in revenue, Mesa County will be able to continue this funding for another year. The City of Fruita has indicated that financial support may be possible but any request would have to be part of the city's regular budget cycle. The town of Palisade has also experienced significant decreases in sale taxes, its main revenue source, and is unable to commit funds at this time. Grand Junction is in a similar position as Palisade but offered to possibly contribute to the effort with other resources besides funds.

The state budget is in far worse financial shape than local governments in the area. The Department of Natural Resources has transferred much of its severance tax and federal mineral leasing funds revenue to the state's general operating funds. Neither the State Parks nor the Division of Wildlife are in a position to make funds available for this effort. Federal agencies in the area are also suffering from inadequate financial resources. The BLM has stated that it might

be able to provide funding for volunteer projects directly related to BLM lands but anything more would be difficult to provide.

Another issue with funding a cooperative volunteer program is associated with crossing jurisdictional boundaries. A cooperative program whose participating entities are federal, state and local agencies creates difficulties for federal agencies that are prohibited from spending federal funds outside their jurisdictional boundaries. This is why the PLI in Las Vegas has limited its participating public land agencies to the four federal agencies in its area. One solution to this issue would require extensive accounting procedures to bill each federal agency for work done by the cooperative program directly for the federal agency's benefit. Another suggestion was to seek grant funding that does not have these jurisdictional restrictions. Any such solution will require much thought and a considerable amount of staff resources to overcome.

The Public Land Institute has secured a more permanent source of funding through passage of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. The act authorized the proceeds of public land sales in Clark County, where Las Vegas is located, to stay in Nevada for a number of different programs. Under the act, federal agencies were required to contract out the services needed to implement the programs identified in the legislation. Consequently, the agencies turned to PLI to help with program coordination and implementation. Long term, a similar legislative solution may benefit the cooperative volunteer program in Mesa County.

Another source of income for the PLI has come in the form of donations of equipment. The institute owns, through donations, a houseboat at Lake Mead that is used in its youth educational programs. The PLI has also been the beneficiary of a donated trailer that they have outfitted with all the equipment they need to run a volunteer event. Institute staff need only to pull onto a sight to begin registering volunteers, issuing them equipment, assigning them crew leaders and putting the volunteers to work. There is no reason why a cooperative volunteer program in Mesa County could not solicit similar kinds of donations. In fact, the current Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator is able to utilize the vehicles and equipment owned by the WCC when they are not using it.

In any event, these two funding issues must be addressed before a cooperative volunteer program can realistically move forward.

Board of Directors: There was general agreement amongst all officials interviewed that a Board of Directors consisting of representatives of all participating land agencies and local governments would be needed to provide oversight and guidance to the Executive Director of the cooperative volunteer program. Initially, the Board would assist the Executive Director in the development of a mission statement, strategic plan and performance measurements. Next,

standard operating procedures (SOP) and a realistic timeline for expanding the program would have to be adopted.

A significant part of the SOP would be the method adopted to select projects. The potential for conflict between participating organizations is great if the representatives on the Board of Directors cannot agree on an equitable means for selecting projects. A number of variables to consider in project selection were offered by interviewees participating in this study. One official stated the consideration should be given to the agency that has the greatest ability to utilize volunteers. Another argued that preference should not be determined by an agency's geographic size or budget but by the value of the volunteer project itself. Mesa County was steadfast in its belief that preference should go to those projects that would provide the greatest economic benefit to the community. Regardless of the method of determining project preference, most officials interviewed agreed that everyone participating would recognize that everyone would have to wait their turn, and would in fact do so.

Another consideration in the selection of projects was offered by CDOW officials. Many of their volunteer events involve wildlife surveys that are very time specific. You can't count migratory wildlife when they are not in the area. Officials from CDOW requested that the time sensitive nature of any volunteer project be taken under consideration when prioritizing projects.

Three concerns over the activities of the Board of Directors were identified during the interviews. First, a number of officials worried about the time commitment that would be required of their representative on the Board. Their limited staff, they said, is already over committed and they were concerned that participation on the Board would be too time intensive for the limited results the cooperative volunteer program would produce. Second, several interviewees expressed concern that representation on the Board be limited to those organizations that committed resources to the cooperative volunteer program. The size of the contribution as well as how to proportionally allocate the workload based on different contribution amounts would need to be determined. Finally, a third concern not directly related to the Board of Directors was in regard to the physical location of the cooperative volunteer program. A number of officials, including those interviewed at VOC expressed a belief that an organization that does not benefit from any of the volunteer activities should house the program. This way, no one would have reason to believe that decisions made by the Executive Director were being unduly influenced.

Staffing: Every official interviewed expressed various levels of frustration over their inability to make better use of their volunteers. So it is not surprising that the expectations of a new cooperative volunteer program quickly became unrealistic. There are limits on what one Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator can do. Beyond promoting events and registering volunteers any additional help supervising an event will most likely have to come from organizations like VOC

or the Tamarisk Coalition. To fully develop a successful stand-alone cooperative volunteer program, additional funding to hire the staff necessary to meet the various needs of all the participating agencies would be required. While there are limits to what one person can do, there are also limits on funding available for a cooperative volunteer program.

While the program is being developed and the necessary funding is pursued and secured, the Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator can rely on the assistance of VOC to help supervise projects. Additional staff help may be available through Mesa State's AmeriCorps Program. These volunteers could be very useful in helping with database management as well as project supervision. Due to the needs of the participating agencies and the start-up activities required of any new program, a number of officials expressed the belief that the new Executive Director must have experience as a volunteer coordinator.

Barriers to Volunteers: Officials interviewed for this study expressed concerns that certain barriers may limit their particular agency's use of volunteers. Colorado National Monument officials did not believe they could benefit from large volunteer projects for trail maintenance or construction. They believe that the harsh environment on the Monument, in combination with the difficulty of the work, would discourage volunteers from participating. Officials at the USFS were concerned that the remote location of many of their sites would also discourage volunteer participation. The BLM stated that they had trouble getting volunteers to work on a variety of small projects.

Several land managers stated that one barrier they had to using volunteers was that volunteers were generally available only on weekends. This forces land managers to require over committed staff to working weekends as well, something they were understandably reluctant to do. Another official expressed a belief that today's citizens lacked a sense of commitment to the community so it would be difficult to utilize volunteers in any large effort such as a cooperative volunteer program. The lack of reliability was cited by Palisade officials as the reason that the community didn't use volunteers more. Other land managers stated that they were very pleased with the commitment of volunteers working on public lands projects. Ensuring the volunteers have a good experience will go a long way towards getting and keeping committed volunteers.

Timeline for Growth: Deciding on a realistic plan to develop the cooperative volunteer program could prove challenging as the list of wants from agency officials is quite daunting. The BLM would like more interpretive and educational programs. The NPS would like an invasive species task force as well as a graffiti control task force. Several land managers would like programs to encourage youth to get outdoors. Trail host programs and Adopt-a-Trail or Adopt-a-Lake programs need more volunteers. Help maintaining picnic areas and campgrounds was identified by a number of officials. There were also expressed needs for special events help, facility repairs, trash pick-up, trail maintenance or construction; the list of needs goes on and on.

Creating a realistic timeline to fully develop a cooperative volunteer program will allow land managers to better plan for volunteers as well as staff activity. In addition, a well thought out plan of action will help the program demonstrate success through a series of small triumphs rather than overwhelming a new program with too many demands that cannot be met. This approach will help build confidence in the program. This is important, especially for officials at Palisade, CDOW and the National Park Service who are intrigued with the idea of a cooperative volunteer program but are not sure if such a program will meet their organizational needs.

Database Management: The two largest issues concerning database management for a cooperative volunteer program concern the incompatibility of the programs currently in use and the manpower required to input and track all the data desired by public land managers and volunteer organizations. Two less serious concerns involve determining who can have access to the database and the development of a joint volunteer registration form. None of these concerns are insurmountable, but they will take time and effort to resolve. Each issue is addressed below.

Currently, each land agency utilizes its own means for registering volunteers. A few examples include the BLM and VOC, which use the Civicore database, while the Colorado Division of Wildlife has its own internal database that it is currently looking to improve. Others, such as the Tamarisk Coalition, maintain their volunteer lists on an Excel spreadsheet. Local governments, lacking any formal volunteer program, do not maintain a centralized list of volunteers. However, individual departments do have contact information on individuals and groups that provide volunteer help for certain activities. The first hurdle will be to get all participating agencies to agree to either use or at least provide their volunteer data for a single agreed-upon database.

The initial compiling of all the data, as well as maintaining the database, will be time intensive. The PLI currently has three personnel working to manage their database and it only includes information on four federal agencies! The collection and input of volunteer data will be particularly important for participating local governments who will be building their database from scratch. The volunteer database can be further expanded if the various user groups and other service organizations who frequently provide volunteers for public lands projects are willing to make their volunteer lists available as well.

Resolving the access issue may help with database management. Currently, some land agencies have difficulty accurately recording the hours a volunteer works on a project. Limited staff and other more pressing issues make upkeep of this important information a secondary concern. If volunteers are allowed to access the database to update their profile and record their own hours it would greatly reduce the manpower required to maintain the database. On the other hand, this practice could reduce the reliability of the data as many volunteers will not bother to log their hours. This data is critical for annual reports and every effort must be made to ensure its accuracy.

Another access issue that was raised during the interview process concerns making an agency's volunteer database available to other entities participating in a cooperative volunteer program. While many saw advantages to this practice, others worried about "volunteer drift", the notion that their volunteers may get burnt out working on other agency's volunteer projects. As a result, there is some interest in limiting the ability of participating entities to access each other's volunteer database.

In Las Vegas, the PLI has found a workable solution that limits one agency's ability to access another's database but also allows the PLI to promote the volunteer event of one agency to the volunteers maintained in the database of the other participating agencies. Each participating agency only has access to its own volunteer database, however, PLI staff can access all participating agencies' data. This way an event for one agency can be posted to all participating agency websites so all volunteers listed will be aware of all volunteer activities. Anyone who wishes to register for an event goes to a central location in the database to register. After the event is completed the volunteer's hours are recorded and if the volunteer is not in the sponsoring agency's database his volunteer profile is added. This process helps minimize the duplication of effort for agency personnel in maintaining their database. It also makes end-of-the-year reports easy to compile.

Development of a joint volunteer registration form is critical to maximizing the potential of a good database. Besides contact information, land managers need to be able to identify any special skill sets or training that a volunteer has received. Additional information such as when a volunteer is available or what types of projects a volunteer prefers to do (or has done in the past) will help with volunteer recruitment for a specific event. Any database must be able to successfully run queries of this nature. Having potential volunteers provide this information when they initially register to help on a project is the key means for gathering the data. The other aspect is updating the volunteer's profile as needed. Regardless of the need for more information, any volunteer registration form must still be fairly simple and easy to fill out or people may become hesitant to register.

Supervision: This is easily the greatest barrier land agencies and local governments face when attempting to utilize volunteers. Promoting an event and registering volunteers is time consuming in and of itself, but making sure that there is sufficient food, water, first-aid kits, materials and equipment available to volunteers can also be overwhelming. Then there needs to be sufficient staff on hand to supervise the activity. This is why crew leader training for volunteers is so important. Unfortunately, agency staff are not in a position to provide this. Finally, at the end of the day volunteers need to be appropriately thanked and pertinent information about the project must be recorded for annual reporting.

Agency personnel cannot do all of this. Neither can a single Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator. The success of organizations such as VOC and PLI have come from their ability to provide this level of supervision to public land agencies in their area of operations. A successful



cooperative volunteer program, over time, will need to provide this level of support to all its participating agencies.

Liability: Accidents do happen, even to volunteers. It is only right that when accidents occur during a volunteer event that the entity benefiting from the volunteer activity pay for any cost to the volunteer. Participating entities will need to identify how liability will be handled prior to conducting an event. Currently, there are many different avenues used to provide liability insurance. Federal land agencies use the existing worker's compensation program, while state agencies and local governments work through private insurance programs such as Volunteer Insurance Service (VIS) or the Colorado Intergovernmental Risk Sharing Agency (CIRSA). Larger local governments such as Mesa County and the City of Grand Junction are self-insured. In some cases land agencies issue permits for volunteer activities to user groups, which serves to transfer concerns for liability from the land agency to the non-profit organization conducting the event. A successful cooperative volunteer program will need to ensure liability issues are resolved.

Institutional Barriers: Finally, a successful cooperative volunteer program will need to overcome several institutional barriers. During the interview process it was easy to detect the sense of pride officials with each land agency and local government takes in its organization's accomplishments. While this sense of pride is well earned, officials moving forward with the development of a cooperative volunteer program need to legitimately weigh their organization's needs with the needs of others to ensure everyone's needs are met.

This concern is readily apparent from discussions with local governments who are intrigued by the possibilities of a cooperative volunteer program but skeptical of a partnership with federal agencies. A cooperative volunteer program can go a long way towards building trust that can spill over to other joint projects. Likewise, the county's efforts to implement a cooperative volunteer program, while greatly appreciated by federal land managers, has raised some concerns over the county's understanding of their agency's ability to utilize volunteers. The county's motivation for funding a cooperative volunteer effort is economic development. This goal must and can be aligned with other equally important public land agency objectives. Greater involvement in developing a cooperative program by all participating entities will help ensure that everyone's objectives are met.

Legal barriers such as those raised in the discussion on funding, need to be addressed. Small issues like feeding volunteers during an event becomes a larger problem for the BLM, USFS and NPS who are prohibited by law from expending agency resources for food. Sharing equipment across jurisdictional boundaries may also be problematic.

For all the reasons stated above, some officials interviewed for the study have adopted a wait-and-see attitude towards participating in a cooperative volunteer program. Yet the significant loss of revenue due to the current recession provides an even greater incentive for launching a

joint volunteer effort. Not designed to replace existing volunteer efforts, a cooperative volunteer program can help all participating entities to meet the ever increasing demands placed on them by a growing population. In addition, this effort can foster a level of trust and understanding between federal, state and local officials that can be used to foster other efforts to meet community needs while promoting a greater sense of involvement and ownership amongst all area residents.

## **Conclusions:**

Since the 1980s, government has been under increasing pressure to do more with less. Citizen opposition to increased taxes and a growing belief that government is both inefficient and ineffective have fueled these citizen demands. Although polls reveal that citizens hold local government in somewhat higher regard, all governments (federal, state and local) have suffered from citizen's distrust of how their tax dollars are spent. In an effort to improve performance, governments at all levels have adopted many popular reforms designed to make government run more like a business.

One of these populist reforms is that bureaucracy should treat citizens more like businesses treat their customers. Public agencies have been encouraged to identify their citizen clientele, determine what that clientele expects of them and then craft programs to meet those needs. Finally, these agencies have been instructed to develop performance measures to determine how well agency outcomes are meeting their customer's needs. While this strategy may very well improve the performance of government bureaucracy, it poses a significant problem for democratic government. When citizens are encouraged to see themselves as customers of government they tend to ignore their role as owners of government. Consequently, citizens develop a customer attitude towards government. As good customers, citizens demand that government return to them goods and services that far exceed what they pay in taxes. It is not unlike the willingness to snap up bargains at the grocery store and yard sales. People like a good deal.

The citizen/customer attitude does force bureaucracy to constantly strive to do more with less. But as citizens, we also have another important role to play in our representative democracy. We are first and foremost owners of our government, not customers. The role of an owner stands in stark contrast to that of the customer. Consider the small business person who has an opportunity to expand their business. He or she can hire additional employees to help handle the increased workload or they can roll up their sleeves and work longer hours to meet the increased demand. As owners, citizens face the same decision. Do we take on the responsibilities of ownership and roll up our sleeves and go to work? Or do we demand that government expand to meet our increased demand for services?

Citizens have every right to expect public lands agencies to meet their needs for use of public lands. But, particularly in light of the current economic recession and the reduction in resources available to meet our needs, government officials need to encourage citizens to act like owners and step up and work to provide the public lands settings that we want. Citizens working in partnership with local government and public land agencies can produce these results and restore our trust in limited government that works.

A cooperative volunteer program can assist in reminding citizens of their role and responsibilities as owners of government. In addition, a cooperative volunteer program can also assist in nurturing trust between local, state and federal agencies operating in Mesa County. A cooperative volunteer program has a unique opportunity to involve local, state and federal agencies in a partnership to improve access and use of all public lands, parks and trails in Mesa County. The interviews conducted for this study indicate an underlying sense of competition and distrust between the various government officials that have responsibilities for public lands. While some of this competition is healthy, the inability to jointly move forward on a number of projects has fostered an unhealthy environment that makes collaboration more challenging.

A successful cooperative volunteer program can help maintain a healthy intergovernmental climate that fosters cooperation not only in the effort to increase volunteerism but also to work through other issues that beg for a collaborative solution. A series of small successes in this one program can lead to much larger successes in others. However, building a cooperative volunteer program will not be easy. Lack of funding and staff, a sense of distrust of other government entities and concern about citizens' willingness to step up are significant barriers to getting a cooperative volunteer program started. Fortunately, Mesa County has taken a leadership role in starting a cooperative volunteer program by hiring a Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator. What remains now is to work on expanding this new position to ensure that it best meets the needs of all the agencies in Mesa County who have responsibilities for public lands. A successful cooperative volunteer program will build trust between local, state and federal land agencies in the county, maximize limited resources and help foster county residents' sense of ownership in the community.

Consensus: Every government official interviewed for this study indicated some level of interest in creating a cooperative volunteer program. Mesa County has already contributed funding for the program and Fruita expressed a willingness to provide some funding if requested through their normal budgetary process. The City of Grand Junction, due to the current recession, could not commit funds but offered to help with other resources. The BLM was willing to provide funding for specific volunteer activities that occur on BLM land. The USFS, the NPS and the state agencies who participated in the study do not have funding available right now but did not rule out participating at a later date. Likewise, the loss of revenue and concerns over the success of a cooperative volunteer program has caused the town of Palisade to take a wait-and-see attitude.

This somewhat lukewarm response should not be seen as a reason to stop pursuing the development of a cooperative volunteer program. Rather the fact that no one said "no" should be seen as a sign that a start-up program that is small but effective with a well developed plan to expand as it demonstrates success can build the trust necessary to gain the participation of all other public lands agencies in the area.

Reasons to Proceed: Despite the fact that many public land agencies already have existing volunteer programs, there are a number of advantages to augment these efforts with a cooperative volunteer program. Aside from the philosophical argument made above, a cooperative volunteer program can provide numerous concrete benefits as well. First, all the agencies have similar needs ranging from trail maintenance and construction to volunteer training that can be better served through a consolidated effort. All public land agencies have concerns about the accuracy of reporting volunteer hours. A volunteer coordinator can assist in improving the accuracy of the reports. A cooperative volunteer program can assist participating agencies in identifying volunteers with needed skills. Eventually, the creation of specialized task forces to assist participating agencies with graffiti removal and invasive weed removal will help reduce costs and improve the community. Further down the road, the cooperative volunteer program can develop education and outreach programs that will benefit all participating agencies and the public.

In the area of recruitment, the joint program can consolidate but keep separate agency volunteer lists to facilitate the promotion of events and the recruitment of volunteers to participate in them. As the program grows it can expand its recruitment efforts to support trail host and adopt-a-trail programs. Recruiting more corporate sponsors and employee volunteer days can also be a role for the volunteer coordinator. Development of a joint volunteer registration form will provide needed information to participating agencies on volunteer skills and availability.

The need for help with volunteer training was expressed by most officials interviewed in this study. Crew leader training, power tool training, herbicide applicator's certification are but a few of the classes that a volunteer coordinator could facilitate for participating agencies. A greater need for land agencies is for a volunteer coordinator to fully supervise from start to finish the entire volunteer event. This would include promotion and registration through supplying everything needed for the event to evaluating, thanking volunteers and reporting on the event. Public land agencies do not have the staff to do this. Beyond providing limited technical advice agency staff are not able to assist in supervision of volunteer activities.

A cooperative volunteer program can also assist participating entities with database management, greatly expanding the capacity to query volunteer lists for specific skills, interests and availability. A joint database could also improve the accuracy of data input while maintaining the security of each participating agencies' list of volunteers. Program evaluation of volunteer activities could also be improved. A volunteer coordinator could develop and utilize evaluation tools that track volunteer satisfaction with an event as well as tracking the outputs and outcomes of each volunteer activity.

Next Steps: Mesa County's Public Land Volunteer Coordinator cannot possibly provide all of the services identified above. However, with time, additional funding and more staff, these

services can be developed and implemented for the benefit of all participating entities. To further evaluate the possibilities of developing a cooperative volunteer program in Mesa County representatives of all the public land agencies and local governments who participated in this study should select representatives to an Exploratory Committee. The purpose of this committee would be to determine the feasibility and means for creating and implementing a cooperative volunteer program.

To make this determination the Exploratory Committee will need to research available funding sources to include potential in-kind contributions and the use of volunteers to meet initial staffing needs. The committee will also need to determine the organization's initial structure to include the make-up of the Board of Directors and staffing needs. Policies such as criteria for the selection of volunteer events will need to be established. Selection of appropriate volunteer database software will also be needed. The development of a timeline and budget from initial implementation to full development of the cooperative volunteer program will have to be developed. Finally, the Exploratory Committee will need to agree on appropriate performance measures to evaluate program success.

Mesa County has taken a good first step towards the development of a cooperative volunteer program. With the assistance of other local governments and public land agencies, the county's efforts can be expanded to provide even greater benefits for participating agencies and the citizens of Mesa County.

# **APPENDIX**

## **I**





## Interview Participants

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Tim Sarmo	Palisade
Jon Peacock	Mesa County
Sue Gormley	Mesa County
Brad Taylor	Colorado State Parks
Chris Pipken	Bureau of Land Management
Catherine Robertson	Bureau of Land Management
Joan Anzelmo	National Park Service
Michelle Wheatley	National Park Service
Linda Edwards	Colorado Division of Wildlife
Connie Clementson	United States Forest Service
Clint Kenney	Fruita
Stacy Kolegas	Tamarisk Coalition
Meredith B. Swett	Tamarisk Coalition
Kris Adams	Partners
Peg Rees	Public Lands Institute
Beth Barrie	Public Lands Institute
Tammy Gerber	Public Lands Institute
Laurie M. Kadrich	Grand Junction
Rob Schoeber	Grand Junction
Shawn Cooper	Grand Junction
Anne Baker Easely	Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado
Bevin Carithers	Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado



# **APPENDIX**

## **II**



## **List of Questions**

### **Public Organizations**

1. Description of their lands and facilities
2. Description of their general responsibilities
3. Adequacy of size of their work force to meet these responsibilities
4. Adequacy of their budget to meet their responsibilities for public lands
5. Examples of unmet needs or deferred maintenance
6. Do you utilize volunteers?
7. How do you run your volunteer program?
8. What types of projects do your volunteers work on?
9. Do you have an adequate volunteer workforce?
10. Could you use help coordinating volunteers in the following areas:
  - a. Recruitment
  - b. Training
  - c. Identifying projects
  - d. Supervision
  - e. Program evaluation
  - f. Recognition program
11. Would you be willing to support a community volunteer coordinator?
12. How? Financial support, facilities, administrative support, supplies?
13. What kind of data would you like a volunteer coordination program to keep?
14. Would you be willing to input the data you collect on volunteers into a central data system?
15. Would you be willing to share information on a central website about pending volunteer projects
16. Would maintaining a website to share information about volunteer projects and available volunteers be of interest to you?
17. What do you expect from a volunteer coordination program?
18. Would having a centralized calendar of pending volunteer events where you could post your events be useful?
19. Do you think centralizing volunteer efforts in the Grand Valley may help reduce competition for grant funding?

### **Model Volunteer Coordination Program**

1. When and how did your program get started?
2. What problems did you encounter during the time it took to get your program up and running?
3. What is the current organizational structure of your organization?
4. Do you have a mission statement?
5. Describe the processes you use to provide volunteers for a specific project
6. Do you have a job description for your volunteer coordinator
7. Is it accurate?
8. What is missing or needs to be added?

9. How long did it take to create the volunteer coordinator position?
10. What, if anything, has changed since the volunteer coordination program began?
11. Can you give me a little history of your organization? How did you get to where you are today? What changed and when? If you could, I'd like to create a timeline showing how the organization has changed over time.
12. How do you measure success?
13. Where does your funding come from?
14. What would you do differently if you could?
15. How has your budget changed over time?
16. How do you market volunteer needs?
17. How do you leverage resources?
18. What kind of data do you collect on volunteers and volunteer activities?
  - Who can input data?
  - Who can access data?
19. Do you have a website to schedule volunteer events?
20. Has your organization been able to assist in reducing local competition for available grant funding?
21. What kind of databases do you use for data collection?
22. What kind of data do you track?
23. Could you use help coordinating volunteers in the following areas:
  - Recruitment
  - Training
  - Identifying projects
  - Supervision
  - Program evaluation
  - Recognition program
  - Database management

# **APPENDIX**

## **III**





**Bureau of Land Management  
Grand Junction Field Office**

Interview with:

Catherine Robertson, Field Manager

Chris Pipkin, Volunteer Coordinator

Currently the BLM uses volunteers for large projects like trail or trailhead construction or trail cleanup and maintenance. The BLM also has an adopt-a-trail program. Volunteers from the Friends of the Mustangs currently do patrol work to report on the health and activities of the wild horse herds. Volunteers also help develop springs (water) and do fence repair. There are also one or two volunteers that help out in the office with administrative tasks.

The BLM would like to have more volunteers to help with Interpretive tasks such as: Environmental Education Instructors, Trail Hosts, Bus Tour Hosts, volunteers who could help visitors understand what federal agencies do, volunteers who could hike on trails and interact with other hikers to help them learn about the terrain they are walking on. The BLM would also like volunteers who could provide information on federal agencies and public land issues to classrooms in the local school district. Volunteers could also provide school children with an opportunity to learn about and experience recreating on BLM land through exposure to fishing, hiking, rafting or any other recreational opportunity that might present themselves.

The BLM also needs additional help with receptionist/administrative tasks. The Adopt-a-Trail program needs additional development. More help with trail development and maintenance is needed. Cultural volunteers are also needed to assist with documentation of records and conducting cultural surveys. The BLM could also use help with surveying, inventory, and monitoring flora and fauna.

The BLM believes that an adequate volunteer workforce is available but the volunteers need training and the BLM needs help managing the workforce. For instance, crews working on the Adopt-a-Trail program would be much more effective if they were trained on what should be reported to the BLM like erosion or location of invasive species. Help with training crew managers for large trail projects would also be useful. The BLM expands its capacity by providing the training to crew leaders who in turn train and supervise 6-10 crew members working on large trail projects.

The BLM does not appear to have much difficulty tracking the volunteer hours spent on large projects. They do, however, encounter difficulties with the administrative tasks associated with smaller projects. For instance tracking hours for volunteers working in the office or small groups

of volunteers cleaning up trash on a trail depends totally on self-reporting by volunteers, this is not always done.

Recruitment of volunteers is done online using VolunteerOutdoors.net through a link on the BLM homepage. User groups often sponsor large and small projects and provide members to do the work. The BLM will also contact user groups whose members will benefit from a project to request volunteers. Sometimes the BLM will advertise through the local media that a volunteer event is occurring and anyone interested can show up on location to be put to work.

A big project is defined as one that requires over thirty people. In a typical year the BLM will conduct a total of ten to fifteen projects, at least six are considered big projects. Since volunteers are often told just to show up it is hard to determine how many volunteers commit to helping but fail to show up. For planning purposes the BLM is now encouraging potential volunteers to sign up online for specific projects. This will help determine a no-show rate.

Big projects are often coordinated across all of the BLM user groups that they frequently partner with. Their volunteer list is maintained through VolunteersOutdoors.net (a Civicore web-based database.) Volunteer requests can also be posted there. The BLM would not have a problem with other organizations requesting volunteers from their volunteer lists. The BLM needs help identifying what potential volunteers would like to do for the BLM. They would also like to know what skills and experiences potential volunteers have had. Maintaining a data base with this type of information would be most helpful.

The BLM could also use staff help to train and utilize volunteers more effectively. They need to identify where individual volunteers can be most useful to the BLM. They would like to create volunteer position descriptions and have a way to link the position to an individual volunteer's skills, experiences and desires to help out. A volunteer coordinator, they hope, would be able to screen volunteers to most appropriately match them with the volunteer event that the BLM is seeking.

V.O.C. used to certify crew leaders but the BLM is not sure why or if this is still being done in Grand Junction. A successful crew leadership certification program would require advertising the classes to ensure good participation. Coordination with those who provide the training and promotion of the certification program would be required to ensure adequate participation.

The BLM usually identifies large projects based on needs but user groups can also request certain projects be completed.

Some large projects are supervised through V.O.C. They provide tools, water, food and first aid as well as advertise and recruit volunteers for the event. The project coordinator makes sure that

all needs for the project are met. The Mesa County Search and Rescue team has a very effective procedure they utilize to get the volunteers with the appropriate skills notified that their help is needed. They use text messaging to notify volunteers.

Evaluation of the BLM volunteer program is based on outputs such as the number of volunteer hours recorded, the miles of trail developed or maintained. It would be nice if evaluative tools were better able to measure quality like pounds of trash collected. Surveying volunteers about their experience helping the BLM would also be a good idea.

The BLM does have a recognition program which includes thanking partners after completing a project. Individual volunteers are also recognized after achieving certain thresholds of hours worked. Free national park passes are used to reward volunteers who have accumulated 400 volunteer hours.

A cooperative volunteer coordinator program involving federal, state and local government agencies may be a problem to fund. Federal funding for such a program cannot be used on state or local projects. The BLM can provide funding for their individual projects that are coordinated through the cooperative volunteer coordinator program but sharing the general expense of the program may be difficult. The Public Lands Institute enjoys a funding relationship with federal land agencies as a direct result of legislation. Something specific like this would have to happen for federal money to go to a cooperative volunteer program. Even then, there may be difficulties funding a program that involves state and local partners.

Right now the county is funding a volunteer coordinator with P.I.L.T. monies received from the federal government. If shared funding does occur then a process to prioritize projects must be developed and agreed upon by all participating government agencies. The program should have a Board of Directors consisting of one representative from each participating government agency. This board should be responsible for developing the process used to identify and prioritize projects.



## **City of Fruita**

Interview with:

Clinton M. Kinney, City Manager

The City of Fruita has about one hundred acres of developed park land. This includes developed trails. Fruita also has responsibility for several hundred acres of open space. Over one hundred acres are located in the city adjacent to conservation areas. Another two hundred and fifty acres are located in Glade Park and are surrounded by Forest Service lands. There are a couple of old reservoir sites located on the Glade Park open space areas owned by Fruita. The city has an M.O.U. with the Forest Service explaining each entity's responsibilities for maintaining the open space in Glade Park.

Currently Fruita uses volunteers for building and maintaining trails. They have worked with Tamarisk Coalition volunteers to clear invasive species from trails and open space. COPMOBA helped provide the city with volunteers to build a mountain bike park on a thirty acre parcel of land.

Volunteer help within the city's developed park system usually involves maintenance activities like picking up trash. The Boy Scouts provide a lot of this support. Sometimes the city will use work-release prisoners to help with larger maintenance activities.

The city has many unmet needs that volunteers can help with. In the next couple of weeks the city will produce a report (CPOST) identifying the community's needs for open space and trails. The plan will identify locations for new city parks and trails. Maintenance on current facilities is already being done but there will be many opportunities to help with construction of new facilities.

The city currently does not budget for a volunteer coordinator. Someone in the city's Parks and Recreation Department generally handles volunteer projects on an ad-hoc basis. The current budget allows the city to meet minimum service levels. Because of the recent population growth the city is now involving volunteers more than they did before.

Recently the city gained the cooperation of the Colorado National Guard to help them rehabilitate the dams on their two Glade Park reservoirs. This is a huge project estimated to cost over one million dollars. The National Guard will save the city at least three hundred thousand dollars.

It is easiest for the city to run small volunteer projects proposed by some groups like the Boy Scouts. These groups will usually run the project by themselves. An example would be the Eagle

Scout trash pickup day. In these cases the members of the group are motivated, small in numbers so they are easily directed and highly motivated to do a good job. Large projects requiring a lot of volunteers and small projects involving individual volunteers are much more difficult for the city to coordinate and manage. Some volunteer projects like removing graffiti can be tricky as you don't know how well the volunteer will do the work. Spring Clean-up Day can be hard to manage with around one hundred volunteers assisting with trash pick-up and painting.

The City of Fruita generally has good success recruiting volunteers for projects. The city advertises for volunteers in its newsletter. Parks and Recreation has good success getting volunteers from community organizations that they typically work with. It seems fairly easy to tap into the large number of people participating in the various recreation leagues and their corresponding officials and referees to get volunteers. Western Flyers, an organization dedicated to getting children to participate in outdoor activities provide help recruiting volunteers.

Since the city does not have a formal volunteer program they do not provide volunteers with much training. Consequently, their volunteer efforts do not utilize much in the way of equipment. For trail building the city will use Partner's Conservation Corp. These young people have skills that can be utilized but the city does not keep a list of volunteers with valuable skill sets. However, the city recognizes how useful this would be.

The city does not need help identifying projects for volunteers. They could use help tracking volunteer hours, developing volunteer lists, running volunteer recognition programs and evaluating the volunteer experience as well as the volunteer contribution to the community. Right now volunteers are asked to show up for a particular event at a certain date, time and location. The volunteers are put to work, fed and thanked at the end of the day. A more formal approach to operating volunteer activities would be appreciated.

The City of Fruita might be willing to help fund a cooperative volunteer program if a request was made through the normal budget cycle. City staff starts its budget planning in July and considers request for funding in August. The city would expect to be part of the process to prioritize volunteer projects and does not think this will be a difficult process as long as all partners realize their turn will come. The volunteer coordinator should work for a Board and present a project list to the Board for approval. The Board might tweak the project list but should refrain from wholesale changes.

The City Manager expresses the opinion that sharing resources such as equipment might not be that difficult either. He pointed to the transit authority giving Palisade two busses as an example of sharing between government entities.

The city's volunteers are covered for liability insurance under Colorado Intergovernmental Risk Sharing Agency (CIRSA), a low cost volunteer insurance plan.

Fruita is willing to participate and very interested in seeing where this project will go.





## **City of Grand Junction**

Interview with:

Laurie Kadrich, City Manager

Rob Schoeber, Director Parks and Recreation

Shawn Cooper, Parks Planner-Engineering Department

The City recognizes a great need for additional volunteer support on federal public lands. Trail improvement through both maintenance of existing trails and construction of new trails is of critical importance. Improving the urban interface with federal lands will help improve the community. Currently the City recognizes that the federal agencies in the area lack the staff to fully accomplish these tasks.

Currently the City uses volunteers on a limited basis. The Neighborhood Services Program, which was designed to improve the sense of connection city residents have within their neighborhoods, and the city as a whole, works with Home Owner Associations (HOAs) on volunteer efforts within the HOA area. Program officials do maintain volunteer lists for each HOA they work with. The Police Department also utilizes volunteers on a regular basis and maintains a volunteer list as well. These volunteers may be interested in assisting with larger public lands projects such as developing trails, play grounds or signage.

Beyond these city programs, other departments use volunteers in an ad-hoc fashion for projects that are labor intensive but require limited training. Examples would be cleaning up trash from both undeveloped and developed lands owned by the City. Volunteers have also helped spread mulch along new pathways in developed parks. There are always needs for activities such as this. One example of the City's use of volunteers for activities that do require specific skills is the use of the CSU Extension Service's Master Gardener Program to find volunteers to help trim flowers and prune trees and bushes. The City also has some trail hosts that travel the riverfront trail mostly on weekends. They carry first-aid kits and bicycle tire repair kits to help with any problems they may encounter. The Trail Host Program is run through the Recreation Division.

The City, as well as the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) utilizes volunteers for special events such as the Arts and Jazz Festival and the Fourth of July. But there is a great need for more volunteers to help set up and clean up. Heidi Hamm from the DDA could provide more information on their volunteer needs for special events.

The City has many unmet volunteer needs. Those that pertain to public lands would include a riverfront trail team dedicated to tamarisk removal, and providing other help with general maintenance and trail repairs. There are plenty of opportunities to help build new trails to

include pathways within existing developed parks. Help with improving and maintaining the adjoining land on either side of new and existing trails is also needed.

Part of the problem with volunteer efforts is the amount of staff time that goes into organizing. Like everyone else the city staff is already stretched thin meeting its day to day mission. It would be great if a third party could organize a stand-alone volunteer effort to maintain the City's trail system. This would not have to be an entirely volunteer effort but the commitment of paid staff would be limited. The City would like to build off-road trails. Organizations like COPMOBA and the Colorado Mountain Bike Patrol often help the BLM with construction of these trails and may be willing to assist the city.

The City has roughly three hundred acres of developed parks and another five hundred acres of undeveloped land that it is responsible for maintaining. Currently they have about nineteen miles of developed trails. This does not include pathways maintained within developed parks. The City does not have a formal volunteer program to help maintain and develop their public areas. As already discussed they do use some volunteers for specific purposes. They would like to see an Adopt-A-Park program that is popular throughout the country. Hans Schmoldt of Anode Systems has encouraged the City to develop an Adopt-A-Mile program for its trail system.

The City would also like to see a volunteer guide service to take visitors and city residents on tours of the community to explain the historical and architectural significance of different buildings and locations.

Since the City has no established volunteer program, they could use assistance with all aspects of a volunteer program. Training is a particularly important area for the city. If volunteers do not return to help on a regular basis too much staff time is involved in retraining new volunteers. Keeping a list of volunteers with specific skills would be extremely helpful. This is necessary if we want to use volunteers for more than just picking up trash. It would be great to have a pool of trained volunteers for graffiti removal and to help with the annual flower planting.

The City is self-insured for liability purposes. It considers volunteers as unpaid employees so liability coverage can be extended to them.

The city would be interested in participating in a cooperative volunteer program. The City could lend some staff assistance to such a program but is not in a position to contribute funding at this time. This could change in a couple of years as the economy recovers.

Any cooperative volunteer program that is funded by a variety of government organizations will require participation by representatives from these government entities to help identify and

prioritize volunteer projects. The program will need to separate large one-time events from smaller ongoing volunteer activities.



## **Colorado Division of Wildlife**

Interview with:

Linda Edwards, Volunteer Coordinator – Northwest Region

The Grand Junction office of the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) has responsibilities for organizing volunteers in the entire northwest region. The area borders include the Utah state line to the west, the Wyoming state line to the north and extend eastward to include the Glenwood Springs, Aspen corridor and south roughly along the Mesa, Garfield County southern boundaries. The CDOW volunteer program has been well established over the past sixteen years. Funding for CDOW operations comes primarily from hunting and fishing license fees.

In Mesa County CDOW has responsibility for several State Wildlife Areas. These areas are maintained for wildlife habitat, wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing access. Funding for maintenance of these areas is often cut during budget crisis. These wildlife areas are maintained based on available funding. The division does not build trails in these wildlife areas. The Adopt-A-Wildlife-Area program is not well embraced in the Northwest region.

The Northwest region has over four hundred volunteers that are active. Volunteers are used for a variety of activities based on each volunteer's skills. At an elementary level, volunteers help with trash pick-up, fence removal or installation or planting native flora such as willows. It would be great to escalate habitat improvement projects so wildlife could flourish. The wildlife areas are designed to be a refuge for wildlife – to reduce the stress caused by too much interaction with humans. The division controls what happens in these areas just as it manages hunting and fishing across all state lands. Volunteers have a variety of opportunities to help including work with aquatic projects, species conservation, wildlife assistance and wildlife surveys to name a few. Since much of the work is seasonal, the long stretches between volunteer events causes some volunteers to lose interest and gravitate towards other public lands agencies.

Providing other public land agencies access to CDOW volunteer lists can be both positive and negative. Having more volunteer events year-round will help keep volunteers involved but could also promote volunteer drift to other agencies leaving CDOW short of help during the critical periods that volunteers are needed. Volunteer wildlife rescue teams are a good example. These teams consist of twenty to thirty volunteers who commit to a year of service. The irregular need for their services may cause some to drift away.

The division recruits volunteers through its newsletters, website and staff who often get volunteers through their ongoing interaction with the public. Current volunteers also provide a good source for identifying potential volunteers. The division maintains an active volunteer list that includes contact information as well as a volunteer's special skills.

Many volunteers help with wildlife projects such as placing identification bands on geese. This project involved over thirty volunteers at any one time during its five year time frame. It is not unusual for large projects like this to have at least a one to two year time frame. Smaller projects will involve fifteen to twenty volunteers for projects assisting staff with surveying bighorn sheep or antelope. It is this kind of sporadic volunteer opportunity that hurts our program in terms of volunteer drift. The division has worked with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) to help coordinate larger projects.

There is a variety of opportunities for volunteers to work on wildlife awareness teams. For instance, volunteers are needed to help educate people that are moving into areas already inhabited by wildlife. These new residents need to understand how to live with wildlife; simple things like how to properly store trash, not feed pets outdoors and to leave wildlife babies alone.

All volunteers are asked to fill out an application. They also receive orientation training before starting on any project. This training puts stress on the limited CDOW staff. Consequently, a self-quiz has been developed for new volunteers to help them with the orientation process. Volunteers can then go to the volunteer project list to find volunteer opportunities in which they would like to participate. Then they simply notify the volunteer coordinator of what they would like to do. The database informs volunteers of volunteer opportunities and projects with a minimum of three to five days lead time. Groups like the rescue team may be notified in less time due to the nature of their work.

Currently the volunteer coordinators in the state are working on a new volunteer database that will be accessed by volunteers via the internet. This will ease the access for existing and new volunteers to look for opportunities, enter volunteer hours, and stay updated on any other pertinent information. Volunteers are screened and specific skills are identified. The new database will allow the volunteer coordinators to query skills as well as track volunteer hours and the projects volunteers worked on.

Recruitment efforts could be improved by asking more detailed questions about what volunteers are looking to do. Are they looking for ongoing projects or one – two day events? Something they can do by themselves or an event the whole family can participate in?

The Division is also recruiting volunteers to organize hunting and fishing experiences for women and youth. There are very few instructors for these programs although many are now being trained. Another need is for volunteers to staff the Wildlife Host Program. These volunteers would live on a wildlife area for thirty to ninety days at a time helping to maintain the area and report on wildlife activity. Host programs at area hatcheries also provide tour services to the public.

The Division usually identifies projects from staff members who need assistance on projects. Staff has limited ability to train volunteers which can discourage them from using volunteers. On the other hand, trained volunteers who dedicate themselves to specific projects greatly reduce staff involvement in supervision. The ultimate goal is to have a well-trained volunteer group that allows minimal staff involvement so they can focus on their daily activities. The staff can then show volunteers what needs to be done and the volunteers can run with it. For most projects volunteers are told what to bring such as food, water and safety equipment. Division staff provides equipment and materials. The division does not pay volunteers for travel or lodging except in very rare instances.

Volunteers are asked to evaluate their volunteer experience upon completion of a project. The division has forms to assist in doing this. Supervisors are asked to provide feedback. Volunteer hours are either recorded directly by volunteers or staff does this off the volunteer time cards submitted at the end of the day. The new database will make it easier for volunteers to record their own hours. The database does not allow CDOW to track the projects volunteers have worked on in the past. The no-show rate for a volunteer event averages between ten and twenty percent.

The volunteer recognition program is very important to CDOW. Volunteers who work so many hours are recognized with gifts based on their hours worked. Recognition events involve too many volunteers to have just one. Statewide over fifteen thousand volunteers are recognized annually.

Evaluation of the volunteer program includes the number of hours volunteers contribute as well as estimates of the amount of money saved through volunteer efforts. Data on when and where volunteers worked is currently tracked on an informal basis.

Many of the volunteer projects such as wildlife surveys are very time specific. The Division has very little flexibility on when these volunteer events can be done. Participation in a cooperative volunteer program would require that other participating agencies recognized the time sensitive nature of many CDOW projects. Are other participating agencies willing to be open minded about when their volunteer events get scheduled? Each year participating agencies should come to the table with a list of projects that identify preferred dates as well as the flexibility for moving them. This process will get easier over time.

The division handles volunteer liability issues through the Volunteer Insurance Service (V.I.S.). They do not use worker's compensation.

The division is unable at this time to provide financial support for a cooperative volunteer program. The existence of the current in-house program as well as the State's budget problems makes financial support impossible. However, there are benefits to participation in such a program. For instance, the Division could use help making sure volunteer hours are accurately recorded. This would help immensely with the annual state and region reports. On the other hand this may also cause a duplication of reporting efforts. No one needs more paperwork.

If a cooperative volunteer program happens in the Grand Valley then the cooperating agencies will need to work together to develop a strategy for operations that won't pull the coordinator in too many directions at once.



**National Park Service**  
**Colorado National Monument**

Interview with:

Joan Anzelmo, Superintendent

Michelle Wheatley, Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services

The Colorado National Monument is part of the federal park system. It is about 22,000 acres and most of it is wilderness. It has over 700,000 visitors annually. Primary uses of the Monument are for auto touring, biking and hiking. There is over forty-three miles of trails used by roughly 160,000 hikers annually. Monument staff has developed a rather extensive environmental education curriculum with School District 51.

The Monument's budget and workforce are too small for its mission. The base budget is \$1.5 million annually but is supplemented by a variety of government and private grants. For instance, the Monument has secured grant monies to restore historic overlooks. The Monument operates year round, seven days a week. It has a permanent staff of thirteen members with a growing seasonal workforce that is funded through grants. This year the Monument has received over \$1 million in grant monies for different projects. They anticipate hiring 30-40 seasonal workers for these projects. Ten to fifteen workers will be doing trail work alone. On a yearly basis, the number of seasonal workers will change depending on the availability of grant money every year.

The Monument has a core of about forty volunteers that staff the Visitor Center and bookstore from May through October every year. The center is open every day and the volunteers work in four-hour shifts. The volunteers are critical to the operation of the Visitor Center. Besides operating the bookstore, they also welcome visitors and answer questions. For the last three years this effort has been run by volunteers. Prior to that, the Visitor Center was staffed in part with seasonal workers. A small group of these volunteers (10-12) also help staff with special events such as National Junior Ranger Day for 3rd and 4th grade children. These same volunteers have worked with the Monument for several years and have flexible schedules. They also provide assistance with National Public Lands Day.

The Monument uses four volunteers to help with invasive weed control. They also use archaeologists when available to help with survey work. These volunteers must have at least a Master's Degree in Archaeology. Besides these needs for volunteers with special skills, the Monument also works with Choice Hotels on its annual Spring Clean-Up Day. Choice Hotels provides volunteers who help paint picnic tables, weed and trim trees in campgrounds as well as help pick up trash. This volunteer effort is very successful. The Eagle Scouts will usually do one every year. These projects may include activities such as painting signs and are done to earn merit badges. This often times requires a good deal of staff assistance but it is good to do.

The Monument would like to do more with volunteers but it currently lacks the capacity to provide more volunteer experiences. They would like to hire a full-time volunteer coordinator. Right now that position is an additional duty for the Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services. If the Monument could get such a position approved it would be a furloughed position working ten months a year.

The Monument currently uses seasonal workers for their trail work. The work is dangerous and requires specialized skills for rock removal. In addition, the National Park standards for trails are vigorously enforced so trail workers really need to know what they are doing. The environmental conditions are also difficult. It is very hot in the summer and the work is hard. If you can find volunteers with the skills you need they often times won't work long under the extreme conditions. There will be stimulus money available this year and next for work on Monument Trail. Other grant monies will help continue the effort on trails over the next five years. This will provide a number of jobs for young people especially.

The Monument's trails are well-loved and heavily used. Erosion is a problem in many areas. Volunteers alone can't maintain them. This is CCC inspired, sweat of the brow work!

Really could use more volunteers for invasive weed control work. Help with picking up litter in campgrounds, parking areas and pull-outs would also be helpful. In both cases training is very important. Volunteers must know what are weeds and what plants are not weeds.

Trash pickup in the Monument is often dangerous. Volunteers need to be trained to properly handle hazardous materials, drug paraphernalia and condoms. This work is not for the pure of heart.

A volunteer citizen patrol consisting of law enforcement offices would also be great in helping the two law enforcement rangers in patrolling the area. This possibility could be explored with the Sheriff's Office.

Another group project where more volunteer help could be used is in sprucing up the campground areas. Volunteers could be used to help trim trees and paint picnic tables, although the prep work for this requires the ability to operate a sander. Volunteers could also help keep the metal grates in the picnic areas free of debris and to pick up litter. Volunteers would not be asked to clean restrooms.

The Monument needs to increase its staff presence on the east side. It would be great to have an individual volunteer, who is not frail, to open and close the gate to Devil's Kitchen every day. We might even consider allowing this person to live on site in an R.V. providing they are good neighbors to the homes in the nearby area. This person could also be a trail ambassador, hiking

the trails in the area, lending assistance where needed and providing educational information on the area. This might require two people. It would be ideal if the volunteer opening and closing the gate had some law enforcement training.

The Monument doesn't need volunteers for the environmental education programs it does with School District 51. Full time rangers and seasonal employees do this work.

The Monument does not have to utilize a very rigorous recruitment program. Citizens like to volunteer. We are often contacted by people who want to volunteer. We keep their contact information, what they would like to do and any special skills they may have. This goes into our data base and we call them as needed. We generally advertise for volunteers once a year in the local newspaper. Word of mouth from current or former volunteers also helps with recruitment. We generally don't recruit older groups for outside work as the terrain and the environment is harsh.

We do conduct a lot of specialized training classes for our volunteers. The training is specific to the need. Volunteers at the Visitor Center get separate training from other volunteers working outside.

Supervision is a real challenge. It takes a great deal of staff time to put on a volunteer event. You need to contact volunteers, provide equipment and materials, and make sure everyone has appropriate clothing, water, safety items and food. Then you must make sure they know what to do. This consumes an enormous amount of time. As a result we are limited in what we can do with volunteers. The Monument must first get its project workload under control then it can turn its attention to more volunteer projects. Developing a cooperative volunteer program must take into account that each federal agency has different data bases and infrastructure requirements.

Progress on funding will help the Monument get back on track. We need to triple our workforce to get our house in order then we can look to increase our volunteer effort. Our under-staffed workforce creates problems with utilizing volunteers as volunteers are generally only available to work on weekends. With only thirteen full time employees it is hard to constantly ask them to give up weekends to work on a volunteer project. We need to give our staff some time off. It is also

hard to find twenty to thirty year olds willing to volunteer on weekends or any other day of the week in our harsh climate and terrain.

Help with supervision of a volunteer project would be a must for the Monument to participate in a cooperative volunteer program. If the volunteer coordinator could do everything for a volunteer project then the Monument could probably participate in two a year. But Monument staff is not

in a position right now to help much with these projects. We must also be very careful about safety. In our environment it must be number one!

Large groups often call with ideas for projects. Government officials also love to promote volunteer efforts but neither really understand how much staff work goes into supervising volunteer projects. We hope in the future to be able to manage more volunteers.

The Monument does provide volunteers in the Welcome Center with evaluation forms. It is not clear if other divisions do this. Volunteer hours and accomplishments are also tracked and reported annually. Information on volunteers is kept on an Excel spread sheet. Each division tracks volunteer data and this information is aggregated in the year-end report.

Volunteer recognition programs are important to the Monument. Each year there is a volunteer appreciation picnic where volunteers are thanked and several are recognized for their extra efforts. Some volunteers are rewarded with gift cards. Volunteers accumulating 500 hours of service are given a free one-year pass to all federal public lands. The Monument also provides a special event for volunteers every year. This year's event will be a gate-to-gate guided tour of the monument. Some volunteers who develop special skills are rewarded with a Master Corp patch.

The Monument is happy to consider participating in a cooperative volunteer program but it is not yet fully ready to commit resources to the idea. They are concerned that the county is too far out in front of this idea. We need to develop the concept first. Identify what can be done; develop a process for identifying and executing projects. Safety must be a primary concern.

Help with supervision of a project is critical. Some service projects cost more in staff time than they are worth but they are good community-building projects.

Whoever the volunteer coordinator for this program is, they need to be experienced and have a well developed skill set. You can't just launch into executing a large project, we must develop the process first. The Cooperative Volunteer Program should be housed in an institution that does not utilize its services. The Monument is not willing at this time to commit to serving on a board to oversee the activities of a Cooperative Volunteer Program but is willing to reconsider this down the road.

Currently the Monument volunteers are covered for liability under worker's compensation. Background checks are done on volunteers who work on computers. We track mileage for R.S. V.P. volunteers so they can get reimbursement.

The Monument is not in a position to participate in a Cooperative Volunteer Program this year. However, funding changes on a yearly basis, so if a successful program can be developed the

Monument would be interested in participating and helping with the cost. If packaged right there is grant money available for these types of programs.

The Monument would like to see three on-going volunteer efforts developed. The first two have already been discussed; an invasive weeds control program and a campground clean-up program. The third program would be a graffiti task force that could be called to get rid of graffiti as soon as possible. This would require training and knowledge of archaeological sites. The Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in Paige, Arizona has a great program that could be copied.



## **Colorado State Parks**

Interview with:

Brad Taylor, Park Manager; James M. Robb-Colorado River State Park

The James M. Robb-Colorado River State Park has five sections located along the river throughout the valley. The five sections provide a variety of recreational activities ranging from fishing and camping at Island Acres and the Fruita section to day use only at Corn Lake, the Colorado Wildlife Area and Connected Lakes. Other Colorado State Park (CSP) recreational areas in the county include Vega Reservoir and Highline Lake. The State Parks was the original proponent and continues to support the river trail connecting all five sections of the Jim Robb-Colorado River State Park. The Regional Office of the State Parks oversees all parks operations on the western slope.

In areas where camping is allowed the State Parks maintains laundry and shower facilities. In all state parks minimum maintenance includes such things as litter and trash removal, trail maintenance, weed control and snow removal. Tamarisk removal is a big concern in the River Park sections.

In the 1980's the Riverfront Commission was started. Jim Robb, who served on the commission was the primary promoter of the Riverfront Trail and was responsible for getting the county to encourage state involvement in the project. In the 1980's the Colorado Lottery provided a legacy grant for funding the trail. This led to participation by a variety of state and local agencies. At this time the state was the only one who could provide money. The State Parks were one of the early leaders in promoting the project. Over time, the county has supplemented the state as the leading proponent. The county has provided funding to buy properties and easements to allow for trail development. The Riverfront Commission assists in acquiring funding as well as providing the promotion of the riverfront trail necessary to keep the project moving forward.

The State Parks is also responsible for maintaining several isolated areas that are not open to the public.

The State Parks in Mesa County have an inadequate workforce for maintaining the park sections in Mesa County. Eight full-time employees are not enough to complete all aspects of park operations and maintenance. The budget for the area is lower than it was in 1998. As a result of several budget cutbacks there are fewer permanent staff.

The CSP does have a formal volunteer program. The program identifies and trains campground hosts. This generally consists of retired couples who live at a campsite and provide routine maintenance at campsites as well as take reservations. The campground in Fruita is open from

March 1<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>. At Island Acres the campground is open from April 1<sup>st</sup> until October 1<sup>st</sup>. The CSP also has a trail host program where a core group of volunteers travel the trail between Corn Lake and Connected Lakes providing assistance to bikers and hikers. These volunteers also serve as the CSP's eyes and ears alerting CSP employees of any problems. Volunteers also man the Fruita Visitor's Center. There is a core group of four long-term volunteers who work at the Visitor's Center and ten sets of two each that are campground hosts.

This is about the largest volunteer program that CSP can manage. Campground hosts can become proprietary over time if they stay too long. The CSP tries to limit hosts to sixty days in one campground to avoid this. Many hosts return every year. The CSP does provide training for campground hosts. In Mesa County one staff member is responsible for running the volunteer program but this is only a part of their responsibilities. Other employees assist the Volunteer Coordinator in supervising volunteer activities. The current volunteer force is manageable but there is not a sufficient budget to allow it to get much bigger. Concern about liability also limits CSP's use of volunteers. This is why other organizations are used to spearhead large volunteer efforts.

The CSP is often asked to provide service learning for Eagle Boy Scout projects and church groups. They would like to help with these projects but often lack the manpower to do so. They need help with basic park maintenance but picking up trash is not a sexy enough project. Groups get upset when CSP is unable to accept their offers of help.

The CSP does not have a strong volunteer recruitment program. The Denver headquarters helps with recruiting. There are opportunities to volunteer online at CSP's website. In the Grand Valley, CSP relies mainly on word-of-mouth to identify potential volunteers for the campground host program. They will sometimes post signs at campgrounds to inform people about the program. For large volunteer events CSP will partner with organizations like V.O.C. or the Tamarisk Coalition.

Volunteer training for campground and trail hosts is done in-house. Training of counter help at the Visitor's Center is more in-depth. These volunteers provide a number of different services so they need to know a lot about many different things, such as licenses and passes. The zebra mussels problem has added another burden to park employees and volunteers.

The state parks could use help with all aspects of supervising volunteers. This is why the CSP runs all its large volunteer events through other organizations. In April, 2008 the V.O.C. and the Tamarisk Coalition supervised a large volunteer project. The CSP was able to limit staff involvement to two staff members involved in a small number of coordination meetings.



Evaluation of volunteer events occurs both formally and informally. For large events there will be an end-of-the-event wrap-up but for ongoing volunteer activities we rely on day-to-day input.

One good example of a volunteer group is the Western Colorado Conservation Corp. The crews come with a supervisor who is familiar with the work that needs to be done. This minimizes staff involvement in the volunteer event. It is a very good working model.

The CSP does have a formal volunteer recognition program. Every spring CSP hosts a volunteer recognition luncheon for campground hosts and Visitor's Center receptionists. They also have occasional potlucks throughout the year. The CSP also provides free park passes to volunteers after they provide forty-eight hours of service.

One problem for any volunteer program is a declining sense in citizens of the importance of giving back to the community. No one wants to do trivial chores like pick up trash. The CSP struggles to find volunteers to do these everyday tasks. We need a volunteer program structured like the Western Colorado Conservation Corp where supervision is included in any volunteer event. Any cooperative volunteer program needs to include supervision at the volunteer event.

Sharing volunteers between the various land agencies may be problematic. Getting volunteers during the week can also be a problem unless the work can be done by an elderly volunteer force.

Participation by CSP in a cooperative volunteer program depends on the magnitude of the coordination. We would need to see the benefits of our participation before we could commit to the program. It is one thing to have a volunteer coordinator that organizes events; it is another thing to have one that is on the ground supervising a volunteer event. Participation by CSP on a Board to oversee the coordinated volunteer program is a possibility if the concerns raised here can be addressed. It depends on the time commitment.

A cooperative volunteer program could help provide more trail hosts. The CSP used to have a program where we would top off trees and then volunteers would split the wood for use in campgrounds. Now contractors do all this work and sell the firewood to campers. The CSP did not run out of work for volunteers but budget reductions have changed our focus to meeting the needs of our core functions.

The work-enders program is another valuable source of volunteers because they come with supervision. However the CSP does not use prison labor to provide a work force for parks projects.

The CSP is anticipating about a \$3 million cut to its budget. This will affect both the full-time and seasonal work force. This will only further hamper volunteer activities. It is ironic that we need volunteer help but we can't use it because we don't have enough staff to provide sufficient supervision.

Financial support from CSP for a coordinated volunteer program is just not available right now. Perhaps down the road, but not right now.

## **Mesa County**

Interview with:

Jon Peacock, County Administrator

Sue Gormley, Director; Facilities & Parks

The Mesa County government has responsibility for a wide variety of public lands including hundreds of acres of open space, thirty to forty miles of trails, a number of small neighborhood parks and the recently built Long's Park. In addition, the county coordinates with local municipal governments on trail and park projects. The county has a number of long term goals for these public lands which include among other things completion of the riverfront trail from Fruita to Palisade and construction of connector trails to area neighborhoods and schools and federal public lands. The county also is responsible for the Whitewater boat launch and the 103 acres surrounding it. The county's highest priority for its public lands currently is completion of its trails network. The county also has responsibility for maintaining the county fairgrounds and the facilities associated with it.

The county budget for maintaining its public lands is included in the nearly \$800,000 appropriated for maintenance of public areas which also includes parking lots. The budget is adequate for meeting the immediate maintenance needs of these areas; however, a larger budget would allow more to be done.

The county does not use volunteers in any kind of established volunteer program. Some volunteer events are organized on an ad-hoc basis such as cleaning up neighborhood parks or trash pick-up. The latter is most likely done through Criminal Justice Department restitution programs.

If a greater volunteer effort were available, the county would like more assistance with developing and maintaining its existing trails network. County officials would also like to see a more developed Adopt-A-Trail program. More help maintaining their existing park system could also be used, although county staff does do a good job meeting that current need within the resources allocated for this purpose. The Fairgrounds, because of its aging infrastructure can always use help. The county would also like to see more volunteers serving as trail ambassadors.

Since the county does not have an established volunteer coordinator program it could benefit from a cooperative volunteer program that assisted with a variety of services.

Recruitment: The County could use more volunteers. Since their primary focus is trail maintenance and development, they could use help recruiting volunteers for large projects.

Right now county volunteers are recruited primarily from organizations that approach them wanting to help.

Training: The County could use assistance training volunteers to do the work on trail development and maintenance. The crew leader concept used by the BLM and VOC is of particular interest to them. Maintaining a volunteer list that identifies the volunteer's special skills and training would also be worthwhile.

Identifying Projects: The County doesn't need help identifying volunteer projects but they would want input in the development of a process to identify projects if a cooperative volunteer program was developed and funded by all the participating agencies.

Supervision: It would be great if a cooperative volunteer program could supervise an entire volunteer project from start to finish. This would include recruitment, instructions to volunteers on what to bring, meeting safety requirements, making provisions for food, water, equipment, materials and doing follow-up like recording volunteer hours and processing volunteer evaluation forms. But this is an unlikely expectation for a new program.

Program evaluation: The County does not currently have any methods for evaluating its volunteer efforts as it does not have an established volunteer program.

Recognition program: The County does not have a volunteer recognition program beyond thanking volunteers at the end of the day. However, they recognize the importance of this if a formal volunteer program were created. They could see the county participating in a volunteer appreciation picnic, providing special recognition to certain volunteers or having the Board of County Commissioners issuing a proclamation concerning volunteer efforts.

The County is very committed to the creation of a Cooperative Volunteer Program. In fact they have already fully funded the hiring of a Cooperative Volunteer Coordinator. The commissioners' primary purpose for doing this was to promote economic development by improving facilities on public lands. They anticipated federal land managers utilizing their Volunteer Coordinator to help organize projects to build or maintain trailheads, trails, parking lots or to improve access to public lands. The commissioners are not interested in having the volunteer coordinator organize litter pick up programs.

Currently the county envisions the Volunteer Coordinator developing a list of volunteer events based on criteria developed by the county. The criteria will help identify projects that help improve public lands, increasing the likelihood of more out of county visitors coming to recreate on public lands. The county is most interested in specialized maintenance projects such as maintaining and building trails. Performance measures have been developed to evaluate the

program's success. The county has initially approached federal land managers for help identifying projects. The county is also open to helping organize volunteers for state and local government projects. These projects would be evaluated on the same criteria already developed.

The County anticipates that their Volunteer Coordinator will help advertise volunteer events and recruit volunteers for various projects. The County's expectations are for the cooperating public land agency to supervise the actual event, to include making arrangements for food, water, safety needs, training and equipment and materials for the project. The County Volunteer Coordinator will keep a list of volunteers for volunteer events.

If cooperating agencies help expand funding for the Cooperative Volunteer Program then the program can be grown to include more of the tasks associated with a well develop volunteer program. This would include a mutually agreed upon process for prioritizing volunteer events.



## **Mesa County Public Lands Coordinated Volunteer Program**

Interview with:

Kris Adams, Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator

Mesa County's effort to assist federal and state agencies with their volunteer efforts is relatively new. The Public Lands Volunteer Coordinator was hired in February of 2009. The program operates through Mesa County Partners' Western Colorado Conservation Corp. The county's interest in promoting volunteer activity is to promote economic development through recreation and tourism by improving recreational opportunities in the county that will encourage tourists to visit the area. By assisting these agencies in their volunteer efforts, the county hopes to build stronger relationships between the agencies, the county and the many user groups that frequent public lands.

The program is barely six months old and has already completed several medium-sized projects and is busy planning larger projects to be completed this fall. It is currently on track to achieve or exceed the initial goals established by the Mesa Board of County Commissioners. Currently, the program assists the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Forest Service (USFS) and the Colorado State Parks in organizing volunteer events. They would like to work with the National Park Service in the near future. Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) has been very helpful in the start-up of the program providing access to its database for managing the program and providing crew leader training.

The County's Volunteer Program provides assistance to land managers in a variety of ways. Through the use of VOC's Volunteer Outdoor website, the program coordinator promotes upcoming volunteer events and registers volunteers who want to help with an event. Volunteers for events are also recruited through direct contact with user groups such as COPMOBA, Friend of McInnis Canyons or organizations such as the Tamarisk Coalition or Colorado Environmental Coalition. Providing information to bike shops about upcoming volunteer events has also been an effective recruiting device. Volunteers are asked to register for an event but some volunteers do show up unregistered on the day of the event. Likewise, a small number of pre-registered volunteers are no-shows on event day.

The current program does not provide any in-house training of volunteers. When volunteers show up on the day of the event they are typically assigned in small groups to a crew leader who provides safety instructions as well as any specific training needed to accomplish the tasks for that day. Volunteers interested in becoming crew leaders can receive official training through the Outdoor Stewardship Institute, coordinated by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado.

The county set a goal of conducting three projects in the first six months of the program. These projects are identified by the participating land agency. Some project ideas may also be suggested by user groups, then discussed and coordinated with land agencies. The county's priority for project selection is projects that promote economic development. These are medium to large scale projects that will help attract out of county visitors to the community. Projects such as trail building or maintenance of trails that are highly visible to visitors get the most attention. The program does not at this time assist agencies with small individual volunteer activities or with ongoing volunteer programs such as trail hosts, campground hosts, or adopt-a-trail programs. The county's program is designed to assist land agency's current volunteer programs not replace them.

Supervision of a volunteer event is a dual responsibility shared with land agency personnel. The volunteer program promotes an event, recruits volunteers and registers the volunteers who participate on the day of the event. In addition, the volunteer program coordinator ensures that the necessary tools, safety kits, food, water and any other materials are at the scene on the day of the event. During the event land agency personnel are responsible for providing crew leaders and other teams with technical advice regarding the project's operations. At the end-of-the-day wrap-up, volunteers are thanked for attending. At larger events a barbeque may be held as a way to thank all those who participated.

Database management is an important part of the volunteer program. Through VOC's Volunteer Outdoors website the county's volunteer program has access to over a thousand volunteers located throughout Colorado. On this website the program coordinator also maintains a separate volunteer list that includes the volunteer's name, hours, projects worked on and any special skills that a volunteer may have as well as the types of projects in which the volunteer would like to participate. After an event, the program coordinator logs the hours worked on the project by each volunteer. Sometimes project administration will allow volunteers to self report the hours they worked on a project.

The program coordinator is required to provide quarterly progress reports to the county commissioners. This report includes information on the number of volunteer events that were held, the number of volunteers who participated and the hours they worked. More importantly, the report provides estimates of the monetary value associated with an event. The county wants an understanding of how a volunteer event promotes tourism and recreation in the community. For instance, the program's participation in National Public Lands Day will lead to a volunteer event that will maintain parts of the trail system that are heavily used by the public.

Formal evaluation of the program by volunteers or participating land agencies is not currently being done but plans to do so in the future have been discussed.



Because the program is so new a formal volunteer recognition program has not been developed yet. Volunteers are thanked upon completion of a volunteer event and items like water bottles and t-shirts are given away at events. These items are donated by organizations such as REI and various bike shops in the community.



## **Town of Palisade**

Interview with:

Tim Sarmo, Town Manager

Palisade has one major park, Riverbend, consisting of 107 acres with part of the Riverfront Trail running through it. The town also maintains two smaller parks, the Peach Bowl has playing fields and a pool. Memorial Park is the town center. In addition, Palisade is responsible for over 3,000 surface acres of land in the town's watershed. The town manages this land for the primary purpose of protecting the community's water source. Most of the area is not closed to public access, only a little over 100 acres is closed but that is it. These are underdeveloped lands with limited hunting and fishing. The town is developing a fire management plan for the area and participated in the development of the Genesis Plan to govern natural gas drilling operations within the town's watershed.

The town would like to develop a bike trail on the nearby BLM lands but there are access issues. The town has no defined trails with the exception of the Riverfront Trail which runs through Riverbend Park. The far east side of the Riverfront Trail runs by the sewer lagoons and the far west end is an undeveloped area. The rest lies within the park area. The park contains one of the best disc golf courses in the state. The Town has built a boat launch which is used regularly. Developing a Park Master Plan has been years in the making. The town would also like to develop a trail system. The town has a couple of in-town fishing ponds. The town uses its parkland to host a number of festivals each year. The town is also responsible for maintaining a cemetery.

Work on the town's public lands is done by the Public Works Department. All development, maintenance and clean up of public areas is done in-house with town staff. Some volunteers help organize events and assist with clean-up. The volunteers for town sponsored events are recruited by the Town for the specific events. Other associations conduct events on Town property using informal volunteer recruitment mechanisms.

The Riverfront trail does not need much work, it is fairly new and runs from one end of the town limits to the other. It is only ten to twelve years old on the east end. Tamarisk removal along the trail is the biggest issue. The Tamarisk Coalition helps with volunteers for this. Volunteers are also used for downtown events and to help plant flowers every spring. However, there is no organized volunteer program in Palisade.

When needed, volunteers are recruited through the Chamber of Commerce. The traditional groups that put on special events like the Old Fashioned Christmas recruit their own volunteers. The Bluegrass Festival, new to Palisade this year, has brought its own list of volunteers that was

developed over the years the event was held in Hotchkiss. The biggest problem the town has with recruiting volunteers is getting residents to agree to serve on the town's Board and Commissions.

The trail system is very modest in the area. There are two trails on BLM lands but they have limited access. One trailhead crosses Bureau of Reclamation lands. The town's General Fund is already stretched thin and funds may be even more scarce down the road. Palisade's budget is based primarily on sales tax revenue which is dropping because of the economy. As a result our parks budget is maintained at the minimum necessary to provide adequate levels of service. The parks are maintained by the Public Works Department. The only volunteers used in the parks are the Disc Golf group which does its own thing to maintain the disc golf course.

Our largest unmet needs that could use volunteer help is for special events and programming use of the old school building and Town Plaza. We would like to stage more public events, especially on our new town plaza. For instance, we would like to show movies there but we would need help with these events. As for the old school, we are in the process of turning it into a community center. Our first priority is turning the gym into a mini rec center.

Implementation of the draft Parks Plan could benefit from the use of volunteers. They could help build campgrounds and playgrounds. A volunteer group already cleans Riverbend Park every year. People just step up to do this. Tamarisk removal, re-vegetation and maintenance is another area where volunteers could provide assistance. For large volunteer events we would need to be more involved in defining a prescribed event and time.

We don't have a formal volunteer program so recognition events are not planned. We thank people at the end of the day and we provide free passes to volunteers that help out on special events. Our recognition of volunteers is woefully inadequate.

We have some issues with the volunteers we have used on the school renovation site. Concerns with contractors over volunteers showing up on time and liability can make the work more expensive.

Another problem with using volunteers is supervision. We don't have the staff time available to recruit volunteers with specific skills or to maintain a list of volunteers with identified skills. We do not provide training for volunteers but may do so down the road. Volunteers at the museum/welcome center do get limited training. We provide more coordination than supervision of volunteer groups. We hold meetings to coordinate volunteer activities at special events. Too many of these types of meetings can burn people out.

We do not do any formal evaluation of volunteer events but we do conduct de-briefing to determine what worked and what didn't.

My ideal volunteer program would provide a phone number I could call to request help. The program would then provide a crew with equipment and supervise the work. The river group that provides annual clean-up of the river operates this way. Every year they coordinate a clean-up day, recruit volunteers and supervise picking up trash and cleaning grass along the river from Corn Lake west to Fruita. But these people are boaters who benefit from their own volunteer work.

For liability we use the CIRSA pool to cover volunteers but the risk is overstated. At the end of the day we have governmental immunity.

Palisade might be interested in participating in a cooperative volunteer program but we are leery of entering into partnerships with federal agencies. We have had great success with other local governments using intergovernmental agreements. Palisade does not have the resources available to contribute much right now. It is unclear if there is a compelling reason to participate right now. The town would have to see such a program operate for awhile before deciding to participate. We would feel better becoming part of a proven commodity. Once the program is successful then we would find it easier to invest staff resources.

Workenders and high school clean up are two examples of successful volunteer efforts. Palisade provides the task or event and the crews show up on time with supervision to do work like trash pickup or weed removal. Other volunteer events may not go as well. People don't show up or aren't ready to work when we need them. Paid staff is more reliable.



## **U.S. Forest Service**

Interview with:

Connie Clementson, District Ranger

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has responsibility for roughly 650,000 acres of forest on the Grand Mesa and Uncompaghre Plateau. This includes campgrounds, recreational facilities and crew quarters. In all, the Forest Service maintains 23 buildings in their area. In addition, USFS is responsible for maintenance on about 750 miles of trails and 600-800 miles of road. Increases in bureaucratic responsibilities and user demand compiled with a decreasing budget have presented management with significant challenges in meeting its mission.

To meet the challenge the USFS has focused primarily on maintaining existing facilities. Occasionally a new trail may be built here and there but this is rare. Some trails have also been closed so there has been no net gain in the trail system. One new mountain bike trail has been built. New trail construction has also been hampered by efforts to protect habitat for lynx.

To meet budgetary constraints the USFS has decommissioned several campgrounds. Much of the Grand Mesa is not a destination area. Day use of the USFS area has increased dramatically as population in the Grand Valley has increased. The increased day use creates additional maintenance issues. Increase winter use is due to cross country skiing and snowmobiles. In the summer time, the most dramatic increase has been from ATV use.

The trails budget is very small, only twenty to forty thousand a year. Grants provide an additional \$250-300 thousand annually but it is hard to depend on grants. Motorized users help acquire grants to maintain motorized trails. The greater difficulty is getting funds to pay for mountain bike and horseback riding trails. Single-track trails are labor intensive. Consequently there are many unmet needs in this area. The various use group clubs are key partners in applying for and obtaining grant money to maintain trails. Mountain bike clubs want more trails but non-motorized grant funding is difficult to get because it is so competitive. The pot of available money for non-motorized grants is also smaller which adds to the competitive nature of these grants.

Registration of off-road vehicles helps provide much of the grant money for motorized trails. Mountain bike clubs have always opposed registration for their bikes but this would be helpful in providing funding to build more trails. COPMOBA has been a great source of volunteers for working on bike trails. Motorized groups such as the Thunder Mountain Wheelers, Western Slope ATV and the Bookcliff Rattlers have also been a great source for volunteers. The district is trying to develop relationships with other user groups but it is difficult to do because volunteer activities involve staff time that is not available.

The Grand Junction district office has seventeen full-time employees. Some have limited law enforcement responsibilities. About half use volunteers to help accomplish their missions. Large volunteer events done with VOC happen infrequently – about every three years. The USFS does use the adopt-a-trail or adopt-a-lake programs. Groups are responsible for minor maintenance and trash pick-up. We provide trash bags and very little else. Since we aren't able

to provide much training, these volunteers are underutilized. If volunteers have chain-saw training they can help cut out logs. We also use care takers to provide maintenance and visitor assistance. Grazing volunteers help repair and move fences as needed. They also help locate livestock. These efforts require specific skills as well. Most of these volunteers are familiar with ranching and enjoy helping out. The Visitor Center, which is located in Delta County, also utilizes volunteers to man the information desk but this effort has been reduced recently as the person primarily responsible for recruiting these volunteers no longer works at the center. The USFS also uses interns interested in doing research such as visitor use studies or winter use studies.

Other volunteer efforts that require highly skilled personnel are archeological projects like pit excavation or rethinking historic cabins. The Geological Society is interested in inventorying fossils. These efforts are motivated by need. We also use volunteers to man remote fire towers that are located in high altitude. These volunteers must be physically fit and enjoy being isolated.

Recruiting volunteers for big projects would not be that difficult but finding staff time to manage these projects is impossible. Facility maintenance requires certain skills. We need the help but we can't afford to train people. The USFS would love to grow the adopt-a-trail program. It would be great to train these groups on what to report to the office that they find when out on the trail. There is always a need for more volunteers but the district office needs help managing the effort.

The USFS does not currently recruit volunteers because of the inability of staff to take time to manage volunteer efforts. Some recruitment of cabin hosts is done. The adopt-a-trail program recruits by word of mouth.

The participation of USFS staff in training volunteers depends on what is being done. Some user group clubs will host chainsaw safety training classes. Safety and safety training is a big issue for the USFS but reliance on user groups to track who needs training is required due to lack of resources. Training for the adopt-a-lake program involves a job hazard analysis with the group prior to allowing them to work. Crew leader training by a volunteer coordinator outside the USFS would be great. Refresher training for specialized equipment needed for trail maintenance would also be useful. The USFS relies on user groups to tell us when training is needed.

The USFS does not need help identifying projects. Organized groups do approach the agency with ideas for projects and offers of assistance but the inability for the agency to manage these projects puts management in the awkward position of saying no. The Nordic Council wants to partner on more cross country ski trails such as working on county line trail head. Their willingness to take charge of the project bumps it up on the list.

Supervision of volunteers is the greatest impediment to conducting more volunteer events. Typically the agency can't commit staff time to supervise projects.

Reporting of volunteer hours is done through self-reporting. At the end of each year volunteer groups report the number of hours they provided and the USFS office combines the figures and reports it to the national office. There appears to be little confidence that all volunteer hours are



being accurately reported. The USFS is simply not sure how many hours are going unreported. Maintaining an active list of volunteers and their special skills would also be great. Currently the district depends on user group leaders to identify volunteers with needed skills.

The district stopped doing volunteer recognition events several years ago. The district found that volunteers were not interested in attending recognition events. The Visitor Center used to give small gifts to their volunteers but this has stopped as well. Rather than mail out recognition letters, the district goes to user club meetings and presents them in person. The district used to run ads in the Daily Sentinel thanking volunteers but the paper does not offer this service any more. The Forest Service is hampered in doing events because it is legally restricted from buying food. There is no “Friends of the Forest Service” group to help provide food for events. Passes could be given for appreciation of a volunteer’s efforts but the Forest Service doesn’t charge entrance fees.

Liability is always a concern in our sue-happy society. The volunteer agreement allows volunteers to use worker’s compensation. The district shies away from volunteers because of liability concerns. To avoid these problems the district is utilizing permits for groups involved in volunteer activities. This removes the responsibility from the Forest Service for any accidents that volunteers are involved in. This puts the responsibility for making sure volunteers are adequately trained on the user group or club that organizes the volunteer event.

A cooperative volunteer program would need to coordinate volunteer efforts among participating agencies based on the ability to use the volunteers. Which agencies have the resources to put volunteers to work? To proportion the volunteer effort based on visitor numbers or land size would be difficult. Time sensitive projects would also weigh in on allocation decisions.

The ability of the district to provide resources for a collaborative volunteer program would depend on the amount of resources involved. Any amount over a couple of thousand dollars would be difficult to commit. It must be clear that such an investment would provide a reasonable value added to current in-house volunteer efforts.

The USFS volunteer needs are a little different from other agencies in that the USFS lands are perceived to be more remote. This becomes a barrier to volunteers because they must often commit to a full weekend. In reality much of the Forest Service land is only hours away but people’s perceptions are that the distance is much greater.

A coordinated effort will help stretch the availability of volunteers over all four seasons. Many of the agencies have similar needs so the same volunteers would be able to participate in activities from a variety of agencies over the entire year.



## **Tamarisk Coalition**

Interview with:

Stacy Kolegas, Executive Director

Meredith Swett, Science and Outreach Coordinator

The Tamarisk Coalition (T.C.) does have a volunteer program but the primary purpose of this effort is outreach. The Science and Outreach Coordinator devotes about 25% of her time to the volunteer program. Through e-mail the T.C. maintains a volunteer list of about 200 people. Of this group, fifty to sixty people will reliably show up for most volunteer events. The rest on the list will show up once or twice. Many of the T.C. volunteers also volunteer for other public lands projects. The T.C. advertises volunteer events through public service announcements in the media and through flyers sent to other relevant user groups. Volunteers are asked to rsvp for an event. Very few volunteers that rsvp fail to show up on the day of the event.

The T.C. provides one or two staff members to supervise an event. A large event would involve thirty or more volunteers but the typical event has 15-20 volunteers participating. This is the ideal size for a T.C. event as this number is best suited for two supervisors. Because the T.C. can easily enlist the support of 15-20 volunteers for an event there is little need to invest in large-scale recruiting efforts.

The work done by volunteers is tiresome and often done in remote terrain but it is not necessarily work that requires a great deal of training. Due to liability issues the T.C. does not allow volunteers to use power tools. Tamarisk removal is done with hand tools. Herbicides are also used but this is done only under the supervision of a certified applicator. The T.C. does not do any training. Anyone who wants to become a certified applicator can take the training class and tests provided online by the State of Colorado. Staff, on the other hand attend numerous training courses such as Wilderness First Responder Training.

The T.C. could use help training volunteers. Currently they depend on the Conservation Corp whenever they need to use power tools such as chainsaws or the timber ax. The Conservation Corp is paid for these services but are often busy working on other projects. Most of the work that volunteers do, does not require much training. Tamarisk removal is hard work but it is not complicated. This will change as volunteer efforts start to focus on re-vegetation efforts. The idea of trained crew leaders is appealing.

Creation of an invasive species task force would not affect the mission of the Tamarisk Coalition. In fact, T.C. participation in such a task force may help promote T.C.'s outreach goals. Many T.C. volunteers are older and already help on numerous volunteer events with other organizations.

Tamarisk Coalition volunteer events are hard work but T.C. tries to make these events fun. They provide food and encourage camaraderie. These events are a great way to meet people and this is one of many reasons that people participate in the events.

The T.C. uses grant money to buy equipment and supplies. They are able to maintain equipment for about thirty people. Volunteers are told to bring gloves, water and sunscreen but T.C. also makes these things available.

Another aspect of the volunteer program is to assist other organizations in planning volunteer events. This helps build partnerships and promote outreach. The T.C. would like to do more with service projects with school groups. This would help with education and outreach. The T.C. volunteer program could use more diversity. Many of the volunteers are retired adults.

Every year Chevron sponsors a volunteer event during the work week for their employees. Williams is considering a similar event. Chevron pays for all the food and supplies. These events are good public relations for the company and it helps to build teamwork and civic pride within their employees.

It is not hard to find volunteer projects. There is a need to lend technical support to other organizations. It is easy to see volunteer opportunities. There is a need to find one or two volunteers that are willing to work consistently on smaller projects.

Supervision is the biggest problem that land agencies have with volunteer projects. The T.C. avoids this problem by providing everything needed for a volunteer event including on the ground supervision. The only thing T.C. does not provide is transportation to the work site. When working in remote areas the BLM will transport water to the work site.

The T.C. does not evaluate the volunteer experience or request formal feedback from public lands agencies. This would be a good idea.

Volunteers are recognized several ways. There is an annual barbecue to thank volunteers. During events the T.C. provides meals and raffles off small prizes. People are also thanked via e-mail for their participation. All this helps build a sense of community at very little cost. Most food and raffled prized are donated by organizations in the community.

Since tamarisk crosses many political jurisdictional boundaries there is a need to work with many different governments. This can make simple tasks take longer.

The T.C. also utilizes the Workenders Program. They help with the more boring tasks that volunteers are not interested in doing. They are a great source of help. They show up on time with supervision and do their work.

The Tamarisk Coalition would be willing to work with a cooperative volunteer program to plan events. They would also be willing to share their volunteer list.



## **Public Lands Institute**

Interview with:

Peg Rees, Executive Director

Beth Barrie, Interagency Volunteer Program

Tammy Gerber, Interagency Volunteer Program

The Public Lands Institute (PLI) is part of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). It is committed to developing effective solutions for the management of public lands. The Institute engages people of all ages and backgrounds to become advocates for stewardship and assist them in gaining an appreciation of public lands. This is done through education, community engagement and research. The PLI officially began in 2004 when representatives from UNLV and the four federal agencies in the area developed a list of projects the agencies wanted to accomplish. A year later the Nevada System of Higher Education approved the creation of the Public Lands Institute at UNLV to manage completion of these projects.

Initially the Institute's start-up funding was provided by a loan from the university. These monies allowed PLI to pay for an Executive Director, and Administrative Assistant and a Website Specialist. The university's faculty provided the expertise and resources necessary for research projects. Over time, the real source of revenue for PLI operations has come from funding provided through the 1998 Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. This act authorized that the proceeds from government land sales in Clark County remain in Nevada to be used for schools, water infrastructure, conservation initiatives and other programs. To date over \$2 billion has been raised. Part of this money is used by the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the National Parks Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to pay PLI for services rendered. The PLI works with these agencies to develop and execute an annual work plan focused on education, research and community engagement.

The Institute works closely with over 25 state, local and non-profit organizations to accomplish its annual work plan. In partnership with federal agencies the PLI manages the Education-About-The-Environment Strategy for Southern Nevada. This program partners with the Clark County School District, local museums and state and local agencies to provide environmental education. Forever Earth is a floating environmental science laboratory that provides interactive learning opportunities for middle and high school students. Discover Mojave Outdoor World introduces urban and economically disadvantaged youth to outdoor recreational activities.

The PLI also manages in partnership with federal agencies the Clark County Cultural Site Stewardship program to assist land managers in protecting cultural and archaeological remains. The Southern Nevada Inter-agency Volunteer Program, also known as Get Outdoors Nevada,

consolidates database management, recruitment, training, supervision of volunteer events and recognition of volunteers for all four federal land agencies in Southern Nevada. The Take Pride in America in Southern Nevada program encourages clean-up and discourages littering and illegal dumping on public lands in southern Nevada. The Institute also has a significant number of ongoing research projects that are also managed in partnership with all four federal land agencies in the area.

The “Get Outdoors Nevada” interagency volunteer program began in 2000-2001 with the Rivers and Trails Conservation Project. The project was in need of a manager and this brought the BLM, USFS, NPS and USFWS together to discuss the volunteer needs they hold in common and the legal issues associated with participating in a cooperative volunteer program. Initially no funding was allocated. The initiative developed solely on an interest in promoting greater volunteer activity. The first cooperative volunteer event was for trail maintenance. Today supervising volunteer events for trail maintenance and construction is only a part of the volunteer program that is now a part of the Public Lands Institute.

The last four years “Get Outdoors Nevada” has been doing everything. It is no longer an events-based volunteer organization. The volunteer program also provides a trail-watch program, volunteer training to include an initial eight hour training class as well as special skills training. This PLI program also recruits volunteers, to include those with specific needed skills, and maintains a volunteer database using Volgistics, a web interfaced database. This program allows PLI to track volunteer hours and identify volunteers with specific skills needed for a volunteer event. The program also advertises for volunteers through advertisements and by operating information booths at local fairs and events. The program managers have also developed an extensive standard operating procedures manual to assist in running the organization.

The four federal agencies that partner with PLI in this joint volunteer program have always and still do maintain their own separate volunteer programs. But starting in 2001 the four federal land agencies started the Interagency Volunteer Program (IVP) to jointly recruit, train, manage, support, recognize and promote long term volunteers in southern Nevada. Eventually with funding from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) the four agencies formed a joint venture with PLI to administer the program. Together the “Get Outdoors Nevada” volunteer program has augmented and expanded existing individual agency programs but it has not replaced them. Each year, PLI staff present their annual work plan for approval to its Board of Directors consisting of representatives from each of the four federal land agencies.



The PLI Cooperative Volunteer Program provides the following services:

- Develops and administers a single point of contact for public land volunteers
- Develops a joint volunteer recruitment process and maintains a single database, website and application form
- Develops joint volunteer training programs
- Connects volunteers with specific land management projects ranging from litter clean-up to restoration, research, outdoor education, invasive weed removal, trail maintenance, site stewardship, native plant propagation, etc.
- Trains interagency volunteer project leaders
- Develops volunteer recognition programs

The joint volunteer program is just now beginning to develop performance measures to help evaluate the effectiveness of volunteer projects as well as the overall effectiveness of the cooperative volunteer program.

Maintaining the volunteer database is a significant part of the operation. Three staff members help with database management. Volunteers are not allowed to enter their volunteer hours into the database. When volunteers accumulate 500 hours they are given a free one year pass to all federal public lands. Each federal agency can access its list of volunteers but is denied access to the other participating agency's volunteer lists. Each volunteer signs a statement that allows PLI to share their name with other participating federal land agencies when they agree to participate in another agency's volunteer project.

The "Get Outdoors Nevada" program identifies volunteer projects, recruits and trains volunteers, finds volunteers with specific skill sets, solicits donations and develops corporate volunteer coordinator programs. Since only the USFWS is allowed to feed volunteers, PLI managers work with others to help provide meals for volunteers during an event.

Land agencies interested in using volunteers fill out and submit an Event Profile form. Staff from "Get Outdoors Nevada" hold planning meetings twice a year to evaluate Event Profile forms and to develop their work plan for approval by the Board of Directors. Staff also produces a monthly newsletter. Events are advertised to their volunteer lists, on their website and through public announcements when needed. Volunteers register to participate in an event. There is usually a thirty percent no-show rate so registration for an event is closed when it exceeds the requested number by thirty percent. Volunteer records are maintained for three years.

Some projects require PLI to secure supplies, food, safety equipment, etc... Sometime the agencies supply some or all of this. The program has a fully equipped trailer that it uses to assist in running events. Volunteers sign in when they show up for the event and the hours they work are recorded. Reports on volunteer hours as well as other required technical reports are produced

quarterly for each of the four participating federal land agencies. This helps the agencies with their annual reporting requirements. The PLI will supervise on-the-ground activities for a volunteer event if the federal agency requests it and provides sufficient instruction on what should be done ahead of the event.

The PLI provides leadership training for volunteers. The PLI develops a strong crew leader core to help at volunteer events. Coverage for liability is provided by each federal agency through worker's compensation programs.

Volunteer recognition is extremely important. There is an annual brunch held on a Saturday that lasts about two hours. There is a video recognition of the past year's volunteer activities as well as an awards ceremony.

The PLI's "Get Outdoor Nevada" program invests a lot of time and resources into volunteer training. This includes the following:

- Initial volunteer orientation
- Enrichment training
  - Adding special skills
  - Behind the scenes tours offered as a reward
- First aid
- Restoration skills
- GPS skills
- ATV use
- Government vehicle training
- Crew leader training
- Volunteer Management training

## **Interview with Anne Baker Easely, Executive Director VOC**

### **I. Goals**

1. As I understand it, you work with land managers and other nonprofits to organize and manage volunteers. As you see it, what are the goals of VOC?

- Goal of VOC is to engage citizens as active stewards of public lands.
  - Want to work on meaningful projects with land managers
  - Want to create competent volunteers through training
- VOC is in the process of slightly repositioning its role. For the past 25 years, VOC has primarily acted as a connector to volunteers and land managers. New focus is on creating lifelong stewards.

2. How do you define success?

- There are two things that VOC focuses on:
  - 1. Outputs: This encompasses what they did. For example, how many miles of trail reconstruction, how many bags of weeds were removed, how many projects were completed.
  - 2. Outcomes: Here the focus is on “so what?” What is the impact of their work.
    - Now that they have the organizational capacity to do so, the organization is shifting to focusing on developing long term volunteerism among members, not only with VOC, but with others as well.

### **II. History**

1. My understanding is that your organization can be traced to 1984 with your first project (under the leadership of Dos Chappell) in 1990. Can you describe the problems you encountered when getting your program up and running?

- The organization has evolved.
  - The impetus for the VOC came from wanting to apply the principles of the Appalachian Mountain Club to Colorado.
    - The VOC adopted a crew leader organizational structure, meaning that crew leaders ran projects and made decisions such as staffing needs, food needs, tasks, etc.
      - This gave strength to the organization because members were active participants rather than simply following instructions.
    - The downfall with the model was that it wasn't very flexible. As interest in VOC grew, and as the population of Colorado became more diverse, the organization wasn't able to adapt. They had their model and you either fit in it or you didn't.

1A. How did you and your organization overcome these problems?

- Today, the VOC is more staff driven than volunteer driven. Historically, volunteers drove the organization, but this posed a problem because people simply don't have time to volunteer. As such, the functioning of the organization has been shifted staff.

1B. How has your organization changed since its founding?

### **III. Management**

1. How would you describe the management structure of your organization?

2. Looking at your staff descriptions, I was wondering if there is a central volunteer coordinator position, or if it is divided among the various functions of your organization. Can you discuss the job of the volunteer coordinator(s)?

2A. Is there a current job description for the volunteer coordinator position?

- There isn't a central volunteer coordinator, instead it is intertwined with other functions.
  - For the last two years, the VOC has become more programmatic driven meaning how do we reach volunteers and keep them engaged.
    - Prior to this, the organization was more task oriented such as fixing a trail.
      - As such, there is no central recruiter.

2B. Is there anything you would add to the job description in the future?

3. Could you briefly describe the internal workings of your volunteer coordinator program?

3A. How do you market your services to volunteers and those looking for volunteers?

- Anne is not quite sure how effective their marketing tools have worked. They are currently researching this and hope to know more in the future.
  - Their current efforts include their website, pamphlets, e-mail, word of mouth, public service announcements, and advertisements in magazines and newspapers.

- They have a 50% return rate among volunteers and close to a 100% return rate among leaders.

3B. What kind of data do you collect on volunteers and volunteer activities?

- A profile is kept for all volunteers.
  - When registering on website, volunteers are asked some required and optional questions.
    - Some required questions include gender, address, e-mail.
    - Some optional questions include age and ethnicity

3C. What kind of database do you use for data collection?

- A company called Civicore develops and manages their database. VOC has access to the database and can perform any number of queries, such as skill sets, number of projects worked on, etc.

3D. Who manages your website and database?

- Civicore

4. If possible, can you discuss the financial aspect of your organization? What are some challenges that you face in your funding and expenditures?

- Funding: For 23 of the last 25 years, funding was focused around projects. VOC would ask for funding for specific projects. Moreover, they would ask corporations to fund programs, such as print media. The problem is that this type of funding is limited because it doesn't focus on a deep pipeline of funding. Instead, the focus is on selling logo soup.
  - Today, they are looking for more established funding by looking for secure ties that benefit VOC's goals and funders interests.
- Expense: Initially the organization was very flat which led to quick burnout and large turnover among project leaders. As a response, they created a director position that worked with project leaders, thereby minimizing burnout.
  - Staffing is large expense.

4A. How has your budget changed over time?

#### **IV. Additional Information**

1. Is there any other information that you think would be beneficial to know?

- VOC now has organizational capacity to be a leader in other areas, and this is part of their new focus. Want to measure impact beyond the number of projects per year to measures such as training of volunteers.
- When looking at best practices, land policy management is a different entity. Bevin Carithers is a source of wealth for best practices at VOC.
  - Very little resources for land policy management outside of institutional knowledge. Some info may be found at:
    - 1. Appalachian Trail Corporation
    - 2. Pacific Crest Trail
    - 3. National Trail Training Partnership.

2. Would you be open to a visit in the near future to see your organization in action?

- Yes. Closed between December 23<sup>rd</sup> and January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Early January is wide open.

## **II. Interview with Bevin Carithers, Director Community Stewardship at VOC (1-19-09)**

### ***Agenda***

1. Best practices for public lands
2. Challenges of public lands volunteering
3. On the ground opinion about a central volunteer coordinator
4. Tasks a volunteer coordinator, in terms of best practices, would be likely to assist
5. Potential issues of having a volunteer coordinator.
6. General

### ***Notes***

Bevin began by noting that the volunteer coordinator, as envisioned in our presentation, sounds like a very complicated position. He believes this for several reasons.

1.) First, it would be extremely difficult to standardize all of the requirements for each organization/group. Some immediate problems would be:

1a. Liability: Each organization requires different liability precautions. Whose liability procedures would supersede the others?

1b. Implementation: The central volunteer coordinator would spend an inordinate amount of time fulfilling administrative requirements and little time implementing policy decisions.

1c. The volunteer coordinator would have to develop trust amongst the various volunteer groups/agencies who are hesitant to share resources (e.g.: shovels) and volunteers.

2.) Second, who would oversee the position? Who would be responsible for hiring and firing? Who would perform an annual evaluation? Who would oversee their work?

3.) Considering this position would have many principals, how would the central volunteer coordinator manage all of the disparate needs? Whose interests and needs would take precedence? The concern is that because each agency is contributing to the position, there will be an expectation of responsiveness.

However, Bevin noted that groups would be interested in having a central volunteer coordinator. The coordinator would be particularly welcome when:

1.) Recruiting Generation X'ers who are looking for volunteer PROJECTS to volunteer for, regardless of which organization is sponsoring it. The importance of the project, rather than the group, is what differentiates the elderly from X'ers.

2.) Seamless registration and administrative coordination. However, considering that there are no central administrative procedures, a central coordinator would not be able to fulfill this without significant resources and staff.

Bevin suggested focusing on training and outreach. Hiring a central coordinator that is an expert in public lands volunteer management who trains and consults local groups would be helpful. Ideally, this would be someone who is housed in a "volunteer center" or neutral site because housing in a principal's office would place expectations that the central volunteer coordinator responds to their principal's needs first. The job would need to have goals spelled out so they can stay on track. This would include networking, training and fieldwork. One option is to look for a Vista/AmeriCorp volunteer to start the position.

Ultimately, VOC would like to help in any way possible because they would like to work with a coordinator in GJ. Bevin is going to send Justin Gollob training materials about best practices and suggested a website called Points of Light Foundation. He also suggested looking to the GJ branch of "Director of Volunteers in Agencies." Bevin also recommended looking at "volgistics" if interested in a volunteer administration software package.







1100 North Avenue  
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501  
[mesastate.edu](http://mesastate.edu)