



## Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Volunteer Program Summary

Thousands of volunteers help Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) maintain a high level of customer service, offer a growing number of interpretive programs and help park staff maintain properties and facilities. Volunteers are involved in activities that range from answering visitors questions and leading historical tours to adopting trails and removing invasive plants.

OPRD offers different types of volunteer opportunities to involve people of all ages and abilities while matching volunteer interests and park projects.

### **ADOPT-A-PARK**

This growing program engages individuals, families and community groups to sign-up to “adopt” their favorite park, trail or waysides. The “adopters” take care of their adopted location by picking up litter, clearing trails, restoring native plants, taking visitor counts and helping with special events. This program requires a one year commitment and provides benefits to the group such as customized signage, training, assistance with special event coordination and other recognitions and awards.

### **COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATIONS** (aka Friends Groups)

These volunteer associations are commonly known as ‘Friends’ groups and engage in a variety of activities to enhance the park visitor’s experience. These groups operate small interpretive or museum stores, provide programming, restore historic buildings and lighthouses and help raise funds to improve park’s educational programs. OPRD current 17 active Cooperating Association Partners

### **PARK HOSTS**

The largest and most active volunteer segment at OPRD is the park host program. With three types of park hosts, individuals have a variety of duties and assignments to choose from at the parks. Hosts greet visitors, answer their questions, and give directions and advice on the attractions in the park and surrounding area. They present campground programs and lead trail and historic site tours.

### **INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS**

There are many different opportunities to volunteer as an individual or a group. These opportunities are unique and often arise out of a need at the park or a particular interest/ability of the individual or group. Some opportunities include:

#### **Special Events**

In cooperation with SOLV and other agencies, OPRD co-sponsors two annual beach clean-up events and one “Down-by-the-Riverside” clean-up event. Other clean-up events include Lake Billy Chinook Celebration and clean up, Lake Owyhee’s clean up and Smith Rock’s Spring Thing.

**Special Projects**

From coordinating events, recording oral histories to restoring trails and clearing storm damage, volunteers continue to help support OPRD through special projects.

**Whale Watching Spoken Here**

Whale Watching Spoken Here® is currently the largest whale watching organization in the world. For 28 years, these trained volunteers have helped visitors watch whales at 28 sites in three states along the Pacific Northwest coast. As a volunteer, you can choose any of our 28 sites to spend a day, a few days or a week sharing what you have learned.

**YOUTH SERVICE AWARD**

OPRD introduced a Youth Service Award to encourage, recognize and reward voluntary youth service at OPRD. This program is designed for youth between the ages of 8 and 18. With parent or guardian permission, participating youth completing at least 25 hours of voluntary service, individually or in a group, are eligible to receive a Youth Service Award, consisting of a specially designed lapel pin, personalized letter from the OPRD director, and framed certificate. This is a good way for young people to obtain preliminary work experience in parks and to better understand the various roles of parks and recreation related work.