SESSION TITLE : Utilizing volunteers beyond trail work

CONVENER(S): John Bauer

PARTICIPANTS: N/A

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS and/or RECOMMENDATIONS:
WHY

- Absolutely essential to the trails program; not just the trail work
- Next era beyond trail construction
    - mega transect
    - tourism
    - community partnerships
    - stream and water quality monitoring
    - advocacy/citizen lobbying
- Breaking down barriers to engage citizens
    - voluntourism
    - service provision
- Power behind actions and programs
- Volunteers: way beyond trail service, need to recruit
- Linking interests with the jobs/needs

IDEAS

- Volunteers are not just our members! Large potential volunteer force that can be tapped. Need ways to reach them effectively and engage them

MODEL from FTA

Project Team Leader (staff)	Crew Leader Technical Advisor Project Support Coordinator	Crew Leaders Volunteers

- Start with entry level, concrete tasks (volunteers do GPS work/collect data/basic trail work/data entry etc.) and build to greater responsibility
- Hire a volunteer coordinator/staff position
- Provide incentives, motivation to supervise
- Training as part of a project (overcome volunteer reluctance to attend trainings)
- Goal: Have trail projects run completely run by volunteers

Volunteer recognition

- patch
- certification
- names/pictures in the newsletter
- hats, bandanas, gear
- awards (trail “hero”, seasonal volunteer of the year…)

- service awards for time (caution is it needs to be recognized volunteer time and not random activities)
- Board of Directors Thank you note to leaders
- **Letters of recommendation without asking**
- **Signage on the trail "Trail maintained by volunteers"**
- Land managers host recognition events

Finding volunteers

- Need an inventory of what the volunteers can offer; skill set inventory (languages, business, communication, physical labor etc.)
    - AND MATCH WITH
    - List of needs; create job descriptions for the volunteer activities and list responsibilities; break projects up into bite sized junks and have increasing levels of responsibility
- Put list of potential volunteer areas on your membership form that link to your list of needs and descriptions; use the emotional moment of "joining" and need someone willing to follow up
- Get buy in through out the organization to use volunteers and find discreet tasks; think beyond traditional volunteer roles for your organization
- Open appropriate projects up to the public; use local outlets to market the project
- What does the local Chapter need (if you direct new members to Chapter)?
- Capture volunteers the emotional moment when they donate/write the check
- Look beyond the normal groups: communication, business, accounting, foodies, languages, arts, etc…..
- Use the personal ask/personal attention
- Partners Show UP! Funders/Leaders from Partner groups need to show up in uniform which puts a stamp of importance on the activity; the presence of the people at the top (EX: Park superintendent); create a positive environment, work is appreciated at the highest level
- For specific projects, recruit a team from the ground up using a job application process
- Use AmeriCorps: is accessible to other agencies http://www.americorps.gov/
- National Corporation for Community Service – Senior Corps http://www.nationalservice.gov/
- Volunteer.gov http://www.volunteer.gov/GOV/
- Energize Inc.com http://www.energizeinc.com/
- Betty Stallings http://www.bettystallings.com/
- College sports teams, sororities; high schools all have volunteer commitment requirements
- Need to evolve thinking and recruitment strategies; change our thinking of how its done

Accountability

- Volunteer Agreements (like Board agreements)
    - define the volunteer role

    - define the organization role
    - formal relationship gets recognized and the value to the organization
- Create volunteer work plans with check ins
    - make sure people have the tools to do the job
    - break project into finite chunks
- Review at the end of the project
- Educate volunteers on the “red tape” like reporting hours because it relates to funding

CHALLENGES

- Time it takes to train volunteers
- Difficult to find volunteer leaders (like volunteer coordinator)
- Time it takes to supervise volunteers
- Keep in mind: different interpretations of volunteer
    - large potential workforce not part of the association
    - need to reach them
- We are stuck in the old way of volunteer recruitment
- We recruit into leadership level
- Volunteer accounting: more funding sources are requiring the hours put in on their projects
- Volunteers are episodic
- Different demographics need different types of opportunities
- Getting volunteers to make a commitment and to be accountable

RECOMMENDATION for PNTS ACTION: none noted