SESSION TITLE : Developing Effective Volunteer Programs

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PARTICIPANTS: 10

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS and/or RECOMMENDATIONS:

Self-Sustaining Volunteer Programs

- Good Reporting and communications
- Forest Service Supports Training and Provides Liability Protection
- Volunteers are motivated to create successful trail
- Make it fun for volunteers
- Important to nurture current volunteers or chapters
- Provide Maintainers/Adopters with credentials (i.e. business card) to add legitimacy, increase empowerment, and connect new volunteers
- Long-term volunteers feel special "ownership" based on trust, training, empowerment, good communication, and accolades.
- Issue: Does NST designation undermine "ownership" by invoking new and tighter standards for maintenance activities

Volunteer Recruitment

- Reach out to community leaders
- Involve local folks in the trail advertisements
- Word of mouth invitations/involvements
- "Familiarization Tours" and or hikes in metro areas
- National Trails Day events
    - CT markets them statewide and has largest NTD participation
    - NTD events particularly important in/to small towns
- Capture contact information
    - Contact past volunteers who are local to the project
- Tap local municipalities and governments to get the word out (esp. conservation commissions)
- Outreach to university/college outing clubs
- ATC uses A Trail To Every Classroom contact info for outreach
- PCTA tries to reach out to NAACP & tribal youth groups
    - Issue: Lots of competition for recruitment with youth sports, family vacations, and farm work.
    - People stop volunteering because of higher priorities

Volunteer retention

- Sustained vs. Episodic Volunteerism
    - Sustained=long term, often retirees
    - Episodic=in and out or cyclical volunteerism, depending upon area.
        - Great for exposure and for young people

        - Worthwhile in providing youth with transformative experiences, but not necessarily a means to establishing sustained volunteerism
- Provide opportunities for at risk youth juvenile delinquents
        - PNTA's "Sky" program
        - "Hoods in the Woods"
- Incentives/Awards
    - America the Beautiful Pass for 500 volunteer hours, pins, shirts, awards for lifetime achievement
    - People return when they feel cared for and develop comraderie-needs to be well
    - planned
    - Important to "hook" newcomers, and to call back with a thank-you or mail a picture with note

RECOMMENDATION for PNTS ACTION:

- Consistency to enhance-not hinder-volunteerism
    - VIF varies forest to forest
- Agency lists or manuals about volunteerism awards
- Sometimes need connection to federal lands
- Joint recognitions
- Funding through cooperative agreements to support volunteerism
- Youth outreach
    - Its volunteer/community service
    - Charter H.schools ("Expeditionary Learning" –over 30 locations nation-wide)
    - Job Corps, YCC, State Conservation Corps, SCA; build on their alumni contacts.