

Volunteers in the Gorge

Strategic Plan



History

During the winter of 1999, the Oregon State Police and the Oregon State Parks met to discuss several ongoing issues and foreseen needs relating to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. It was recognized by the two agencies, that a vast multitude of other local, state and federal agencies maintain a vested interest and/or are charged with the overall protection and preservation of this unique natural and valued historic area. In review of the known needs for the area, a grass roots plan was developed to create a group of citizen volunteers to begin operating within the area. It was mutually agreed, in a handshake agreement, that both agencies would begin to organize a multi-agency volunteer project.

This exceptionally formed partnership would create, formulate and guide the needed beginning foundations for a group of committed and trained emissaries that would be reflective of the agencies they would represent. It was also agreed the day to day operational guidelines would be directed under the already existing Oregon State Police Volunteer Program and would be known as "The Volunteer Watch of the Columbia River Gorge."

Shortly after forming, a close evaluation of the group's developing short and long term goals resulted in the group's name being changed to reflect and compliment the well roundness of this group's overall endeavors. Today, it is officially known as Volunteers in the Columbia River Gorge.

Since it's inception, the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Army Corp of Engineers have become equally active and committed partners with the Oregon State Police and Oregon State Parks in supporting the below listed Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives for the Volunteers in the Columbia River Gorge.

Vision

The Volunteers in the Gorge will promote a safe and informative environment in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, enriching the experience of those who visit the area.

Mission

Our mission is to protect people, property, and natural, scenic, and cultural resources within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area through public safety, preservation, and education endeavors.

Goals

1. Public Safety

Promote a safe environment by:

- Providing initial response to, and reporting of emergencies; and
- Deterring criminal activity through presence, observation, and reporting.

2. Preservation

Preserve natural, scenic, and cultural resources by:

- Assisting responsible agencies with restoration activities; and,
- Minimizing litter, pollution, and vandalism through an informative and visible presence.

3. Education

Inform the public of the importance of protecting the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area by:

- Educating visitors on the subject of applicable state and federal laws and regulations; crime prevention; outdoor safety; environmental conservation; and, history; and,
- Advising visitors regarding local services and activities, the Volunteers in the Gorge, and agencies charged the protection of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Organizational Objectives

- 1. Implement and utilize the Incident Command System structure to organize the functions and activities of group:**
 - A. Operations
 - B. Planning
 - C. Logistics
 - D. Finance
 - E. Safety
 - F. Information

- 2. Initiate strong working relationships with impacted agencies and organizations.**

- 3. Develop policy and operational manuals.**

- 4. Produce and provide core training curriculum to include:**
 - A. Incident Command System
 - B. General Field Operations
 - C. Observation & Reporting Procedure
 - D. Public Contacts (Verbal Judo)
 - E. First-Aid & CPR
 - F. Personal Safety & Survival Techniques
 - G. Traffic Safety
 - H. Communications
 - L Outdoor Safety & Survival
 - J. Applicable State and Federal Laws & Regulations
 - K. History

- 5. Develop a public safety program to include:**
 - A. Creation of an Emergency Operations Group.
 - B. Pursue opportunities to assist neighboring public safety agencies.
 - C. Develop a system to monitor high vandalism areas and increase presence.
 - D. Develop anti-vandalism program/tip-line.

- 6. Provide continuous recruitment.**

- 7. Continuously develop grants to fund operational needs.**

8. Maintain a strong public relations program.

A. Maintain a strong Internet presence.

B. Create materials and education programs on topics to include:

1. Outdoor Safety
2. Crime Prevention
3. Applicable State and Federal Laws & Regulations.
4. Environmental Conservation.
5. Volunteers in the Gorge and Supporting Agencies & Organizations.

9. Maintain group social events and recognition.

10. Develop strategy for expansion of the program.

Performance Measures

Public Safety Performance Measures

Number of emergency assists (lost hikers, EMS)
Number of arrests linked to volunteer interventions
Number of sting operations conducted

Preservation Performance Measures

Number of clean-ups conducted/number of hours
Number of restoration projects/number of hours
Number of warnings and/or contacts made regarding litter, vandalism, and pollution

Education Performance Measures

Number of warnings and/or contacts made (overall total).
Number of events attended/number of hours
Number of presentations made