News from NARRP

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The National Association of Recreation Resource Planners

New Recreation Planning Resources Toolbox from the US Forest Service

The US Forest Service has just unveiled a new recreation planning toolbox. It is filled with links to lots of great resources.

Check it out:
http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/planning/index.shtml

Special thanks to Jan Spencer from TEAMS for her work on this and Bjorn Fredrickson our Presidential Fellow for his additional proofing.

Outdoor Recreation in Florida - 2008 Approved by the National Park Service

I am pleased to announce that the National Park Service has approved Florida’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Outdoor Recreation in Florida - 2008. The plan is required by Section 375.021(1), Florida Statutes, and is a prerequisite for establishing Florida’s eligibility to participate in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program.

The plan presents an overview of the outdoor recreational opportunities and facilities available to Florida’s residents and visitors. It describes outdoor recreation demand and the need for additional recreation resources and facilities.

An electronic copy of the plan can be accessed online at:
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/planning/default.htm.

If you would like to receive a paper copy of the plan, please contact Zack Wetzel in the Office of Park Planning at 3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 525, Tallahassee, FL 32399, or by telephone at (850) 245-3051, or by email at zack.wetzel@dep.state.fl.us.

If you have any questions or need additional information about the plan, please don’t hesitate to contact Mr. Wetzel.

I appreciate your interest in Florida’s outdoor recreation plan.

Mike Bullock, Director
Florida Division of Recreation and Parks
ROMA, Tex. — A cold wind whipped down the Texas plains on the night last month that Sharon Smith, 68, and her husband, Bill, 73, arrived here to be work-campers.

In the dark, they had trouble setting up their camper. But Ms. Smith, a former teacher’s aide from Sioux Falls, S.D., said she looked up at the starry sky, shook off a few of the burrs she had picked up lying on the ground working on their truck, and told herself it would get better.

It did.

The life of a work-camper, volunteering in places like Falcon State Park in deep South Texas in return for free rent, is not without its bumps. But as Ms. Smith also quickly discovered, the rewards can be deep as well — like making cinnamon rolls as part of her job at the camp recreation center, where she and Mr. Smith are working as hosts through the end of March.

“We’re here for three reasons,” she said, as she spread sugar on the dough. “No. 1, we like to travel. No. 2, we like people. And No. 3, we’re on a budget.”

An itinerant, footloose army of available and willing retirees in their 60s and 70s is marching through the American outback, looking to stretch retirement dollars by volunteering to work in parks, campgrounds and wildlife sanctuaries, usually in exchange for camping space.

Park and wildlife agencies say that retired volunteers have in turn become all the more crucial as budget cuts and new demands have made it harder to keep parks open.

Work-campers come together in one place — leading nature walks or staffing visitor centers, typically working 20 hours to 30 hours a week — then take off to their next assignments. As they move about, they keep in touch with one another through cell phone numbers, e-mail addresses and Facebook postings, creating virtual communities filled with the people they meet.

Camp life, especially in this bird-watching hotspot, revolves around the great outdoors: picking up trash, guiding visitors and, with luck, perhaps spotting the rare roadside hawk that has been reported in the Rio Grande Valley. Night brings a round of socializing: wine around the picnic tables out by the bird feeders, an open-mike sing-along at the recreation center, an evening walk through the South Texas scrubland.

Estimates of the number of work-campers nationally vary, but a spokesman for Kampgrounds of America Inc., a private company that franchises camps, said that 80,000 or so might be a good guess, based on KOA’s percentage of the camping market and the number of its work-campers.

“It attracts a certain kind of person,” said Wendy R. Forster, 70, a retired biologist who lives alone in her motor home and has been leading bird-watchers’ walks here since January. “There’s a lot of companionship and security.”

Recession has cut a fierce crosswind through the subculture, recreation experts and campers
say. Some parks in California that once needed volunteers have closed, for example, as the state’s budget crisis has intensified. Many campers are also trying to stay longer in one place to cut travel expenses.

But other recreation managers say they have become more dependent than ever on a national network of volunteers, partly because of spending cuts and partly because remaining staff members have to prioritize what they can do.

“Basic trail maintenance, for example — picking up trash,” said Nancy C. Brown, who coordinates volunteers for the South Texas Refuge Complex, which includes three large wildlife areas. “It’s important for wildlife purposes, but when you’re faced with a choice of dealing with oil and gas permits or maintaining a trail, the trail is the first thing to go.”

In the last decade, Ms. Brown said, the number of campsites set aside for volunteers in the complex, including those at Falcon State Park, has risen twentyfold, to 65 from 3.

In some places, the retired volunteers are about the only staff members left.

“We did a state park in Arizona this year that had laid off so many people, we basically ran it,” said Carolyn Miller, 71, a former small-business owner from Colorado who has work-camped from Alaska to Maine with her husband, Warren, 73.

For many work-campers, the appeal of a nontraditional retirement was also linked to a life-changing event — the death of a spouse, a divorce, money trouble, a midlife reassessment of priorities. For whatever reasons, they said, staying put became an unappealing or unavailable option.

And for some, there is romance to be found. Sandra Noll, 65, a retired nurse who has been leading canoe trips for bird-watchers on the Rio Grande since early January, met her partner, Erv Nichols, 66, three years ago.

Mr. Nichols, a retired photographer from Big Bear Lake, Calif., had set out to downsize his life. With Social Security as his only income, and two previous marriages that ended in divorce, he was so sure of a solo life, he said, that he ripped out the front passenger seat of the little motor home that a friend had given him as a gift.

Ms. Noll, who was reassessing her own life after a divorce and a move back West, where she grew up, found Mr. Nichols’s zeal in tossing aside his possessions appealing. “You wanted to simplify your life,” she said, glancing across the table at him in their little trailer. “That drew you to me.”

Ms. Forster, the retired biologist, became a volunteer partly out of grief. When her husband died of cancer 17 years ago, in his 50s, she immediately set off, she said, continuing the motor-home life they had imagined together, but now on her own. She has led bird-watching trips all over the country and has already made plans to come back here next year.

“We’re nomadic,” she said. “But a lot of us are coming back next year, so that will be a reunion.”
Other campers are moving down the road. Ms. Noll and Mr. Nichols, for example, are headed next to Nebraska, to work as guides along the sandhill cranes' migration route. Starting in June, the Smiths, from Sioux Falls, will work on an island in Puget Sound. Ellen Lawson, 66, of Evansville, Wyo., will head for a dulcimer festival in Mississippi. She said she was already dreading the goodbyes when she and her husband, Ron, 67, leave here in March.

“I cried when I left home to come here,” Ms. Lawson said while raking leaves at Falcon State Park’s Butterfly Garden, “and I’ll cry when I leave.”

Setting the Future Direction for the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife through Internal and External Survey Research

_Courtesy of Responsive Management_

With increasing threats to the natural environment, tightening agency budgets, a burgeoning population, and a variety of emerging public demands, it is more important than ever for fish and wildlife agencies to set a clear future direction based on a solid foundation of fact. Nowhere is this more important than in Delaware, the second smallest state in area but the sixth most densely populated state in the union.

With direct responsibility for managing approximately 60,000 acres of lands including ponds, wildlife, and water access areas and facilities, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Division of Fish and Wildlife contracted with Responsive Management to assist in setting the future direction for the Division by determining state residents' opinions on and experiences with outdoor recreation and wildlife management, as well as Division employees' and stakeholders' opinions on management efforts and the work of the Division.

One of the best ways to assist in setting strategic direction is to couple an internal assessment - an "inside-out" approach -- with an external assessment -- an "outside-in" approach. Assessment from the "inside out" means that the Division takes the time to understand the opinions, attitudes, and priorities of its employees, takes a detailed look at where it wants to go (mission and vision), sets realistic goals and measurable objectives, and identifies strategies to meet those goals and objectives. Assessment from the "outside in" means that the Division gains a better understanding of its constituents' opinions, attitudes, and priorities regarding the agency's programs, activities, and efforts. Setting future direction would necessarily take internal as well as external perspectives into consideration.

For this study, three separate scientific surveys were administered, to Division employees, stakeholders, and Delaware residents. The questionnaires for the surveys were developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the Division. Major findings of the employee and resident surveys are presented here.

_To view the full report:_

Job Announcement – Bureau of Land Management
Outdoor Recreation Planner

Salary Range: 47,448.00 - 61,678.00 USD /year
Open Period: Tuesday, February 09, 2010 to Friday, February 26, 2010
Series & Grade: GS-0023-09/09
Position Information: Work Schedule is full-time. This is a term seasonal appointment not-to-exceed 13 months, may be extended up to 4 years.
Promotion Potential: 09
Duty Locations: 1 vacancy(s) in one of the following locations: Wenatchee, WA
Who May Be Considered: All U.S. Citizens - No previous Federal Service is required. Under Executive Order 11935, only United States citizens and nationals (residents of American Samoa and Swains Island) may compete for civil service jobs. Agencies are permitted to hire non-citizens only in very limited circumstances where there are no qualified citizens available for the position.
Job Announcement Number: OR-DEU-2010-0090

Duties
This position is an Outdoor Recreation Planner in the Wenatchee Field Office, Spokane District. The purpose of the position is to provide recreation planning and visitor service expertise in the inventory, study, development, protection, and management of the area's recreational resources, which may include camping and hiking, vehicle use, whitewater and river use, wilderness values, scenic values, etc.

Conducts inventories and studies to determine recreation visitor use and site suitability, including visitor use analyses, demand analyses, hazard inventories, and recreational facilities inventories. Prepares recreation activity plans identified for action in completed land use management plans.

Applies the principles of the Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964 and Bureau Directives to inventory and evaluation of wilderness study areas, and the preparation of management plans.

Implements the resource area's Visual Resource Management (VRM) program according to Bureau guidelines.

Coordinates the planning, operation, fee collection and maintenance of developed campgrounds and trailheads. Process Special Recreation Use Permits for various recreation events; coordinates the inclusion of protection stipulations with Field Office staff and cooperating entities; supervises the events and performs compliance monitoring.

Serves as team leader on environmental assessment projects related specifically to recreation activities and RMP recreation implementation. Provides input, technical guidance, and participates on team efforts in the preparation of EAR's not specifically related to recreation activities but requiring recreation input.

Coordinates and maintains contact with outside government agencies and user groups so the recreation projects and plans are consistent with other on-going programs. Drafts responses to public inquiries and requests for comments from other governmental agencies regarding the area's recreation program and public access related concerns.
Provides input and assistance in developing the Field Offices Interpretation and Environmental Education programs.

Work involves some physical exertion such as long periods of standing, walking over rough, uneven, or rocky surfaces, carrying equipment, such as cameras or automatic counting devices, climbing short distances, etc. Work is primarily in the office, but considerable time is spent in the field; the field work normally involving weekend patrols, visitor services, and meeting with the public. Outside work may involve exposure to temperature extremes, wind, dust, etc.

For more information: