PARK HOST PROGRAM HISTORY
Formally organized in 1980, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department’s (OPRD) volunteer Park Host Program began in a few coastal parks with volunteers greeting the public and answering questions. Initially patterned after the U.S. Forest Service volunteer program, it quickly grew and took on its own special shape and focus. Each year, Oregon park hosts contribute their time to valuable programs and services, which take place in over 90 state park sites. In calendar year 2011, approximately 1137 active hosts donated 429,910 hours of service to Oregon’s state park system.

APPLICATION PROCESS
Although we do accept host applications throughout the year, scheduling for the following year’s host assignments officially begins each September after the busy summer season ends and formal volunteer recognition has occurred. Generally speaking, field staff will begin making contacts for the following year’s host assignments in October. Although park staff members do place hosts year-round as positions come open, the heaviest placement period is during slower months in November and December, and continues throughout the winter season.

If you are new to the Oregon state parks system, please be aware that a willingness to work during the “shoulder” seasons (March - May and/or September - October) may help you obtain your first placement and assignment. If you are available only during summer, be aware that coastal parks fill quickly and you may have better luck searching elsewhere. Being flexible in your locations and duty choices will help as well.

Both new and returning hosts must fill out and return an application each year. Please supply ALL of the information requested on the application. You may either download the application from the Volunteer pages of our website or obtain a full host packet by contacting the Oregon State Parks Information Center at 800-551-6949 during regular business hours, 8a.m. - 5p.m, Monday - Friday.

If you’d like to speak directly to the statewide host coordinator, please leave a voice mail message on the OPRD Volunteer Hotline at any time by dialing 877-225-9803. Please note that this toll-free line is a message phone only and will not be answered by a live person. When you call, please speak clearly and slowly spelling any difficult names and addresses. Be sure to leave a phone number where you can be reached. Someone from our Salem headquarters office will return your phone call as soon as possible.

All new and returning host applications are now sent to the Portland Central Business Services office. Once we receive your completed host application, your contact information, skills and interests and RV equipment info are entered into the Hub, a statewide agency volunteer database. Your application will then be scanned directly into your profile, so park staff members may access the information when they are ready to interview and make host assignments.

A park staff person oversees the volunteer host program at each park management unit. In the Hub, they have the ability to search several different fields to determine who the best applicants are for their park’s needs. They may search by applicant name or Hub ID #, skills and interests, park preferences and your time of availability. Once they narrow down their search to a list of potential hosts, they will contact you directly either by phone or e-mail. Please do make sure your contact info. is current with us! This park host coordinator will explain the specific duties and responsibilities of the host positions he or she is attempting to fill and may ask you specific questions regarding your skills, abilities, interests and experience. Consider this a formal interview and understand that staff is trying to assess if you will be a good fit for the position(s) they have in mind. Feel free to ask all the questions you want
to get a better sense of what you may be getting into. It goes without saying that this arrangement needs to work just as well for you too!

After this initial conversation, you can expect that the references you have provided will be checked. If an agreement on terms, duties and location is reached, you will be penciled into the host schedule at that park. You may consider this a tentative host assignment. Information will then be sent to you regarding your duties and the physical performance level that is anticipated. You will have time to further discuss any concerns with the park host coordinator. It’s up to you to communicate what type of physical limitations you may have. Every attempt will be made to make reasonable accommodation to modify the duties as described whenever possible.

Once you are offered a position, please be sure to ask enough questions to thoroughly understand the scope and details of your new hosting duties. If your assignment duties and responsibilities are not adequately explained prior to your arrival or if they change significantly once you arrive at the park, you have the right to negotiate new terms and/or refuse the assignment without penalty. If this occurs, be sure to contact the park manager or statewide host coordinator.

If for some reason you are unable to make it to your confirmed host assignment(s), please be sure to contact the host coordinator at each park or you may call the statewide host coordinator who will then communicate your cancellation to all parks where you are assigned.

BACKGROUND CHECK PROCESS
Your final placement is contingent upon the results of a criminal history check. Checks are performed either directly by us or a licensed, approved vendor. Your approval is needed for us to conduct the check and it is the only time we will request your birth date, social security number and driver’s license number. We recognize this is protected information and therefore we follow strict guidelines required by the Oregon Identity Theft Protection Act and are extremely careful to safeguard this information while in transfer. It is discarded immediately after use and not kept on file.

If you are a continuing host, please note that we will no longer be asking for this information in hard copy form. Park staff will ensure that a request for your check is sent to our Human Resources Dept. They in turn will send you an e-mail with a link to the on-line form. Please click on the link to go to the registered, private site to submit the requested data. ONLY information regarding your criminal history background and if you are driving as part of your host duties, your driving record will be assessed.

Once the check has been approved, most parks will send a final confirmation letter to you outlining more details about your arrival. When you arrive on site for your assignment, further orientation and training will occur.

PARK HOST DEFINITIONS & DUTIES
Each hosting situation varies according to park location, the number of visitors and other hosts at any given time of year, availability of accommodations and other park resources, and if staff are on-site. The best way to fully understand all duties that are expected in any given job is to talk directly to the host coordinator in each management unit. But in general, all hosts will:

- Receive a parking space for their RV, fifth wheel, or camping trailer close to their work site. Full hook-ups are provided whenever possible, but check at each location for details.
- Work a minimum of one month in any one location. Multiple month positions (2-3 months) are available and may be arranged with park staff in advance. Longer-term assignments (4-6 months) are occasionally available, but primarily during the winter and shoulder seasons and will
be pre-arranged according to specific park needs. Assignments longer than 6 months in duration are infrequent and rare.

- Receive orientation, training, day-use park passes, a volunteer uniform and recognition.
- Receive a position description with specified duties and scheduled times to work.
- Work under signed agreements with applicable volunteer insurance coverage.
- Understand and explain rules that apply to park users. This is in an advisory role only and does not include enforcement of park rules.
- Be expected to personally follow park regulations and abide by the OPRD Volunteer Code of Conduct.

GENERAL HOSTING CATEGORIES
The hosting categories below are not exclusive; in other words, overlapping duties are common. Your patience and flexibility is requested with the inevitable changes as they occur, but you will always be asked in advance before new job tasks are assigned.

Campground Hosts:
- Work and live in the campground loops near campers.
- Have a sign identifying them as park hosts at their site
- Perform routine visitor services such as:
  1. Greet visitors and make them feel welcome.
  2. Distribute park literature, answer questions, receive comments and be readily accessible to the public.
  3. Represent OPRD, serving as a contact point for campers and travelers.
  4. Pick up litter and clean fire pits.
  5. Check and stock restrooms.
  6. Notify park staff or law enforcement when emergencies arise or activities within the park area warrant this.
  7. Maintain a tidy host site.
  8. May sell firewood and ice.
  9. May assist with registration and cleaning of yurts, cabins and other special facilities.
  10. May include other specific duties as agreed upon with park staff.

Day-use Hosts:
- Work and live in a day-use park which is associated with a larger park management unit.
- Have a sign identifying them as park hosts at their site
- May work at fairly remote locations where there may be no permanent park staff on-site.
- Work fairly independently, with park staff checking in on at regular intervals.
- Perform routine maintenance and security duties such as:
  1. Greet visitors and make them feel welcome.
  2. Represent OPRD, serving as a contact point for campers and travelers.
  3. Distribute park literature, answer questions, receive comments and be accessible to the public.
  4. Provide an on-site security presence for parks which don’t always have regular staff working at them.
  5. Open and close park gates.
  6. Pick up litter and maintain tidy grounds.
  7. Check and stock restrooms. May provide some restroom cleaning duties as requested.
  8. May perform mowing, irrigation, landscaping, other maintenance chores as requested.

Visitor Services Hosts:
- Will live in park, but may or may not live in the campground loops.
- May work in day-use or campground entrance stations, information kiosks, museums, visitor centers, stores or hospitality centers.
Usually have a sign identifying them as park hosts at their site

Perform regular visitor services tasks such as:
1. Provide information and distribute park literature.
2. Answer visitor questions about the park, geographic area surrounding the park, local recreational opportunities, restaurants and businesses in the area.
3. May collect user fees, work on cash registers, selling retail items in park stores and hospitality centers.
4. May do stocking, ordering and inventory of retail items.
5. May perform some clerical work such as computer input, answering phones, filing, assisting with special projects in park offices.

Maintenance Hosts:
- Will live in the park, but may or may not live in the campground loops.
- May or may not have a sign identifying them as park hosts at their site.
- Perform duties such as:
  1. Work on maintenance or service projects.
  2. Mow, weed, do landscaping or gardening.
  3. Operate and maintain a variety of equipment.
  4. Paint, build, or work on construction projects.
  5. May work with park recycling program.
  6. May provide small engine repair.
  7. May route and paint signs.
  8. May move irrigation equipment.
  9. May include other specific duties as agreed upon with park staff.

Interpretive Hosts:
- May work for one month, but it's preferred that they accept a position for several months in a row during the summer.
- Will live in park, but may or may not live in the campground loops.
- May work in park museums, visitor centers or interpretation/education centers.
- May or may not have a sign identifying them as park hosts at their site.
- Provide special visitor services or programs such as:
  1. Lead or assist in park interpretive or educational programs.
  2. Lead or assist with Junior Ranger Program for youth.
  3. Provide lighthouse or historic tours.
  4. May assist with the development of new interpretive or educational programs.
  5. May assist with the writing and development of interpretive brochures.
  6. May introduce interpretive rangers or guest speakers and provide assistance during before, during or after programs.
  7. May conduct/assist with research on park interpretive topics.
  8. May assist with the development of other interpretive projects or services as requested.

Extended-Stay or Special Project Hosts:
- Usually do, but may not live in the park.
- May or may not have a sign identifying them as park hosts at their site.
- May work at fairly remote locations where there may be no permanent park staff on-site.
- Work fairly independently, either having responsibility for an agreed-upon assignment or specialized tasks which fall outside the typical realm of other hosting duties as described above.
- By design, are not typically first time volunteers, but are hosts who have volunteered over a period of years at OPRD and have moved into jobs with increasingly responsible duties.
- Will not work in any one location longer than a 10-month period under a renewable contract.
Perform duties such as:
1. Greet visitors and make them feel welcome.
2. Represent OPRD, serving as a contact point for campers and travelers.
3. Work on special programs or longer-term projects that have been designated by park staff.
4. May utilize unique vocational skills, licensures or certification to contribute to special projects as defined by park staff.
5. May coordinate schedules, train or oversee work of other hosts on occasion.
6. May maintain and sometimes clean restrooms.
7. Provide other general maintenance or project work, with duties as agreed upon.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS
Due to varying individual park facilities and the 30-day minimum host assignment, it is highly recommended that volunteers who participate in the OPRD Park Host Program have a self-contained recreational vehicle (RV). This includes motor homes, fifth wheels or trailers with kitchen and bathroom facilities. Pickups with campers and camper van conversions will be considered as long as you obtain a host assignment where there are shower and restroom facilities. Tents, cars or pickups without campers are discouraged, however may be considered on a case-by-case basis only with approval of the park manager. Please note that your living accommodations are expected to be either self-propelled or able to be towed by a vehicle that you drive in. In cases of emergency and/or natural hazard, an immediate evacuation may be necessary, so we cannot allow living accommodations that are not able to be driven or towed away on demand.

GENERAL WORK EXPECTATIONS
1. All hosts are expected to be “model campers” and must maintain clean, orderly campsites.
2. Hosts may sell only OPRD approved items in the parks.
3. You must check with the manager before adding any additional structures or storage containers at your site. All plants and/or gardens must be grown in portable containers unless explicitly approved by park management.
4. Do not perform vehicle maintenance at your site. If you have questions, consult with your park manager. You may obtain permission to work on your own vehicle at the shop area.
5. State equipment shall not be used for personal benefit.
6. Only camping and recreational equipment may be in public view. All other equipment must be stored out of viewing sight.
7. It is not appropriate to consume alcohol or use tobacco while on active duty. Please confine use of either to your site area and during off duty times only.
8. Hosts are considered official ‘agents’ of OPRD, therefore:
   • Please dress appropriately.
   • Avoid offensive conduct and the use of offensive language.
   • Avoid displaying signs, decals, bumper stickers, and posters that express political or religious viewpoints. Check with your manager for guidelines.

ORIENTATION, TRAINING & SAFETY CONCERNS
An annual program orientation for new hosts is provided every April. While this is not a mandatory event, attendance is highly recommended and encouraged if it can work out with your travel plans. Should you start hosting with us during the shoulder or winter seasons, you will often begin your first assignment without this orientation. However if you plan to start hosting as summer approaches, you will receive an e-mailed invitation to this event. If you have interest in attending and have not heard from us, please contact your closest park host coordinator or the statewide host coordinator.

Prior to your first park host assignment, you will have the opportunity to take a series of on-line safety training modules. If you do not have access to an e-mail address to set up your on-line account, you may still take your safety modules through paper and pencil tests at your first park assignment for each
Orientation and safety training is required before you assume active duty at Oregon State Parks. As a host representing OPRD and just like paid staff, you are expected to follow specific safety standards and practices at all times.

*Always take care to perform your duties carefully and safely, and report any unsafe conditions you encounter. Please perform ONLY the duties/activities listed on your Volunteer Agreement. Do not attempt to perform any activities for which you have not been trained!*

If your duties change during the course of your hosting assignment, please be proactive and ask for proper training relating to your new job requirements or when using new, unfamiliar equipment and ask to have your position description updated. Ongoing training will be provided as the need arises and as you move from park to park.

**INSURANCE COVERAGE**

**Workers’ Compensation**
In Oregon, park hosts working and living in any park site are considered to be ‘subject’ workers and therefore are entitled to coverage under Workers’ Compensation while on duty. It is extremely important that any incidents, accidents or injuries that occur on the job be reported immediately to park staff. The park manager or the staff person in charge will ask you to fill out report forms in order to file a claim. This insurance is to help pay damage claims and mitigate medical expenses.

**Tort Liability**
All OPRD volunteers are covered by the State of Oregon for civil liability. This protects volunteers from being liable for negligence or injury to others, under these conditions: 1) you are working on a state agency task assigned by an authorized supervisor; 2) you limit your actions to the scope of duties explicitly prescribed within your volunteer assignment, and 3) you perform your duties in good faith and do not act in a reckless manner or with the intent to inflict harm on others.

**Personal Property Insurance**
It is strongly recommended that you have all personal property covered by your own insurance. OPRD will not and cannot replace any lost, stolen or damaged property.

**State Vehicle Insurance**
If your host duties require you to drive park vehicles, you will be covered by OPRD's vehicle liability and collision insurance while operating a state owned vehicle only. You will be asked to show proof of a valid driver's license and an acceptable, current (3-5 years) driving record.

**Private Vehicle Insurance**
You may also be asked to show proof of vehicle insurance if you use your own vehicle while performing OPRD duties.

**TIMECARDS, YOUR HOST “PROFILE” AND ON-CALL HOURS**
You will be required to turn in a “timecard” at the end of each month, tracking the time you’ve spent performing host duties at each park. While you may be hosting in a park where you are the only hosts on duty and the hours may seem like they’re “around the clock”, you are indeed entitled to a fair schedule and time off. Be sure to discuss the “on-call” hour conversion with your supervisor.

The Volunteer Hub is the way your supervisor and the statewide volunteer coordinators keep records of the hours you’ve spent hosting at OPRD. Through it, parks around the state can “link-up” to share information within this database, so it will be easier to communicate about your schedules, hours,
references and duties from park to park. Although your full host profile lists your hours, safety training, date of most recent criminal history check, and so on, we recommend that you keep track of your hours for your own personal records.

HOST HOUR BARS, RECOGNITION & REWARDS
Once you've logged 1,000 hours of service with OPRD, you will be awarded your host recognition pin with the corresponding hour bar you've earned. This small gesture is to honor the valuable time and energy you've contributed to the OPRD Park Host Program. A second bar will then be awarded upon reaching 2,000 hours of service. Follow-up hour bars for every additional 2,000 hours of service will be presented to you in person if at all possible, to recognize your significant dedication and achievement.

Just a Note About That!
We recognize that many of you don't volunteer for the recognition, and that you just desire to “give back” to your state or the parks system. But we know full well that recognition is indeed a volunteer's pay. An accurate posting of hours is not only important in terms of recognition, but to support the ongoing feasibility of the OPRD Volunteer Program. We track hours for all types of volunteer work within the Hub, including positions other than hosting and work performed during special events. This information provides us with good data in order to prepare annual reports and secure funds, and helps us to track the overall success of the OPRD Volunteer Program through the years. In addition, our insurance premiums are based upon these hours reported over the course of an entire year.

HOST GATHERINGS
Most parks do provide monthly informal appreciation events for volunteers and staff to celebrate their collective successes as a team. On occasion, we may also invite ongoing park hosts to other training, celebration or camping events. Our attempt is always to keep you updated with current information so that you feel “in the know”. These gatherings are an opportunity to build camaraderie, discuss needs and issues, provide us with valuable feedback about your volunteering experiences with us, and to contribute to longer-term planning. Gatherings whether formal or informal, are not required for you to host with us, but they can be where a lot of information is exchanged.

HOST UNIFORM AND SUPPLIES
The various state parks purchase uniform caps and visors, vests and nametags for all host volunteers. Occasionally, supplies run short so please be patient if your park is out of them. Every attempt is made to secure you with all appropriate supplies before your arrival. If your hosting assignment requires significant public contact with park visitors, you will also be provided with a personalized name sign that pairs with the on-site PARK HOST sign, helping visitors know how to easily locate your campsite.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR CAMPGROUND HOSTS
1. If you can, plan to arrive a day before the previous hosts leave. They can be knowledgeable resources for you, and can offer tips on performing your duties and answering frequently asked questions. However it’s imperative to check with the park manager or host coordinator ahead of time if you’d like to do this — especially during the busy summer months. They need to ensure there is adequate room for you to stay any extra nights.

2. Spend some time getting oriented to the general area where your park is located. Stop by the local Chamber of Commerce for flyers. Read the OPRD Parks Guide and the specific park brochure where you are hosting. Be sure to review all the host orientation materials and handbooks provided for you.

3. During your orientation session with park staff, don't hesitate to ask questions, clarify responsibilities, or bring up concerns. It is fully expected that you may be a bit anxious about your new assignment, especially if you’re new to hosting at OPRD sites. Your questions will not
come as a surprise and they’ll be glad you’re showing such interest and enthusiasm in performing
your job correctly.

4. **Remember safety is always first!** Be aware of your physical limitations and discuss any
specific medical problems, i.e., allergies, surgeries, diabetes, etc, with your park host coordinator
or supervisor. Follow all training guidelines and protocols within each park unit, making sure to
ask questions if you are unfamiliar with any piece of equipment or unaware of how to proceed.

5. While you will not be placed in the position of being the primary responder in emergency
situations, if you’re hosting in remote locations, it may be beneficial for you personally to keep
up your training and certification in general first aid and CPR. If a true emergency happens, you
may be asked to help with evacuation procedures identified by park staff.

6. Ask for constructive feedback on your performance. You are entitled to receive a review of
your work and be given an opportunity for improvement if needed.

7. **THINK CUSTOMER SERVICE!!!** When dealing with the public, and you don’t know the
answer to a question, please don’t respond with a mere "I don't know". If you don't know, it’s
okay. It takes time to learn the park system and details about each park where you’re hosting.
Tell those inquiring that you’ll find the answer as soon as you can and that you’ll get back to
them. When asked for a recommendation on a restaurant or an activity, it’s best to try finding
out more about the visitor’s particular tastes, so you may suggest what would most appeal to
them. Always attempt to give more than one recommendation and never give a blatantly bad
review. You may of course speak from your own experience, but please be sensitive to the
effect of your words on the image and reputation of businesses in the area.

**We hope you will consider joining us by becoming an Oregon State Parks park host. Feel free to contact us if you have questions!**

Oregon State Parks Info Center:  800-551-6949
OPRD Volunteer Hotline:  877-225-9803
OPRD Host Coordinator:  503-986-0752
OPRD Volunteer Website:  [http://egov.oregon.gov/OPRD/VOL/](http://egov.oregon.gov/OPRD/VOL/)