

Volunteer Program Administration

To be used in conjunction with the FS Volunteer Program Guide

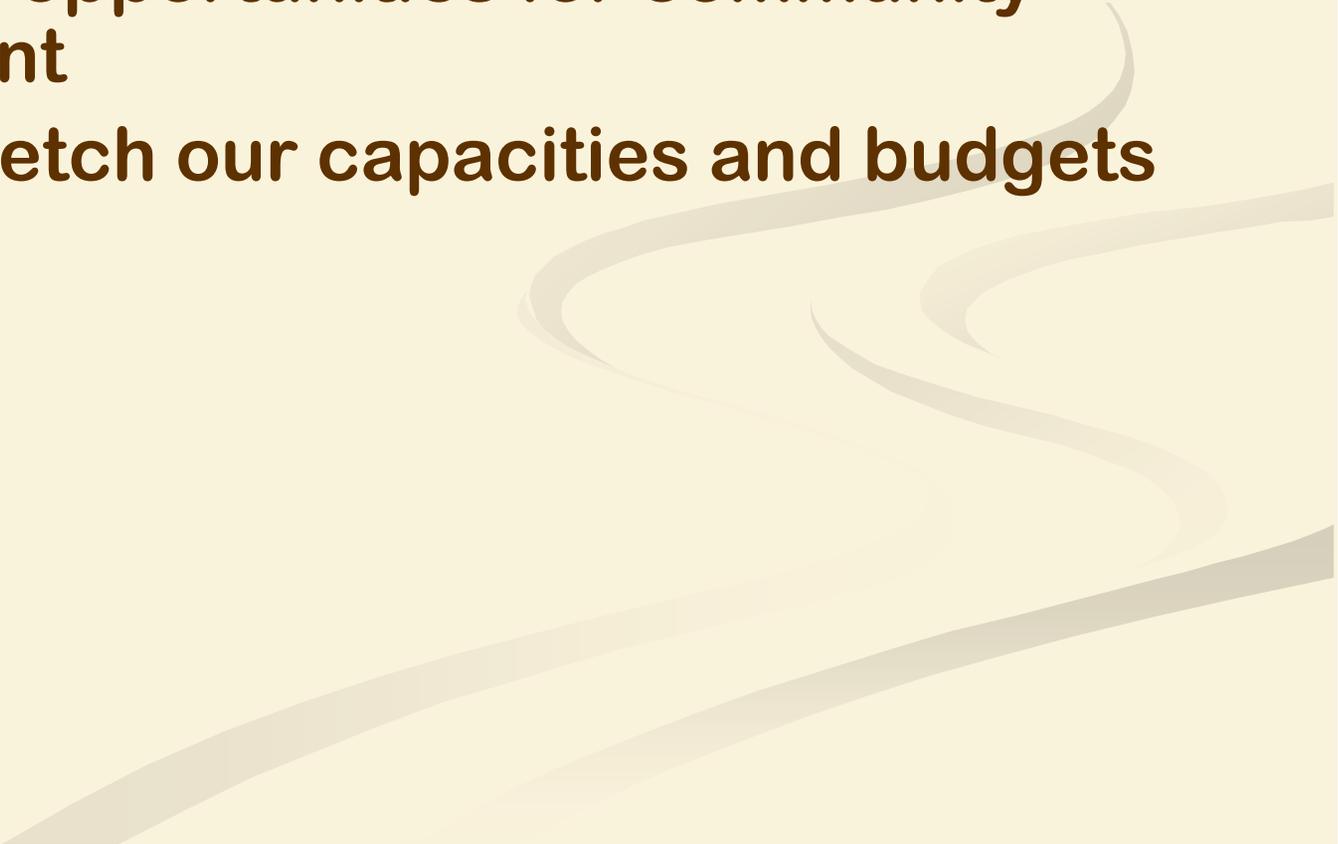
Course objectives

- Understand why people volunteer and why we want them to
- Become familiar with the legal guidance for the program and the FS Volunteer Program Guide
- Learn how to administer a successful program
- Learn how to locate useful resources

Why do People Volunteer?

- **To make a contribution**
 - **To be involved**
 - **To be with like-minded people and socialize**
 - **To achieve common goals**
 - **To gain skills and experience**
 - **To have fun!**
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- The background of the slide features several thick, light-colored wavy lines that sweep across the lower right portion of the page, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Why would we want people to volunteer?

- To assist with accomplishing mutually beneficial work
 - To provide opportunities for community engagement
 - To help stretch our capacities and budgets
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The Nuts and Bolts

- Legal authority and FS guidance
- Budgets and capacity
- Outreach, recruitment, selection of volunteers
- Volunteer Agreements – Individual and Sponsored (Group)
- Safety – Job Hazard Analyses, training, equipment, responsibility

The Nuts and Bolts

- **Supervision and Training**
- **Orientation**
- **Reimbursements**
- **Recognition and Retention**
- **Recordkeeping and Reporting**
- **Program Assessment and Improvement**

Legal Authority and Guidance

- **Volunteers in the National Forests Act of 1972**
- **Forest Service Manual/Handbook 1830**
- **Volunteer Protection Act of 1997**
- **FS Volunteer Program Guide**
- **Article 37 of the Master Agreement**

Remember Title VI

- **The Volunteer Program is a federally conducted program**
- **Falls under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended**
- **Must be non-discriminatory and accessible to all**
- **Work with your unit Civil Rights point-of-contact**

What needs to be considered?

Before recruiting volunteers, determine:

- **Which projects are appropriate for volunteers?**
- **What are the mutual benefits?**
- **What are the risks and liabilities?**
- **Does your unit have the capacity to support volunteers?**
- **What about supervision?**
- **Is there budget support, and work plan tie-in?**

Budgets and Volunteers

- **Make sure your unit has budgeted for the costs associated with a volunteer program, such as:**
 - **Staff time and travel**
 - **Brochures, outreach and recruitment materials, posters, etc.**
 - **Training and equipment**
 - **Volunteer reimbursements**
 - **Volunteer recognition**
 - **Costs associated with international volunteers**

Working with Partners – Enhancing Capacity

- **New or existing partners may be able to help administer your program**
- **Hosted programs such as Student Conservation Association, AmeriCorps programs, etc.**
- **Well-organized volunteer groups**
- **National Forest Foundation**
- **Civic organizations**

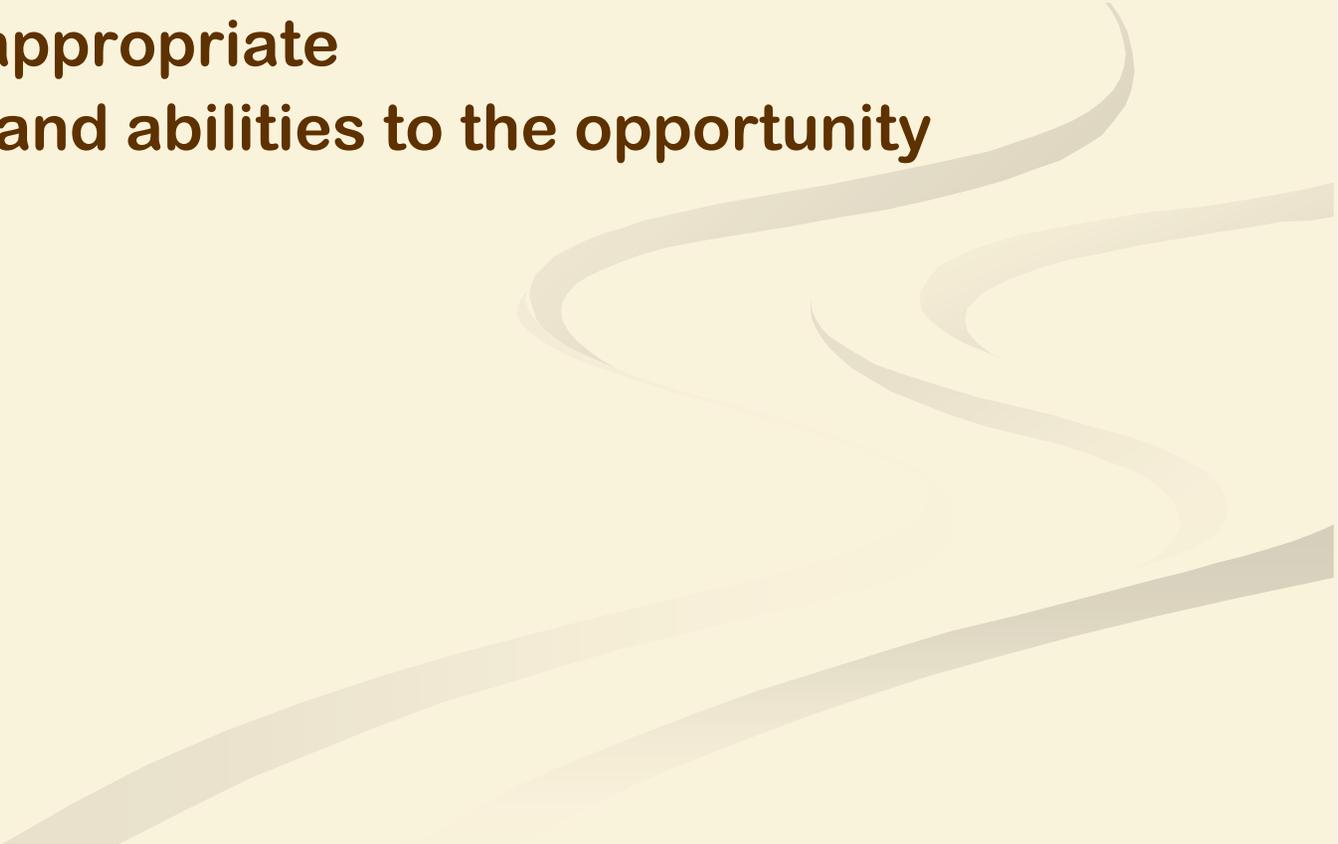
Outreach and Recruitment

- Targeted approach or scattered approach?
- What types of volunteers are you looking for?
- What skills should they have?
- Long-term, short-term, episodic?
- Use the Volunteer Application form OF-301 or similar
- Use local media, the internet, especially volunteer.gov/gov for outreach

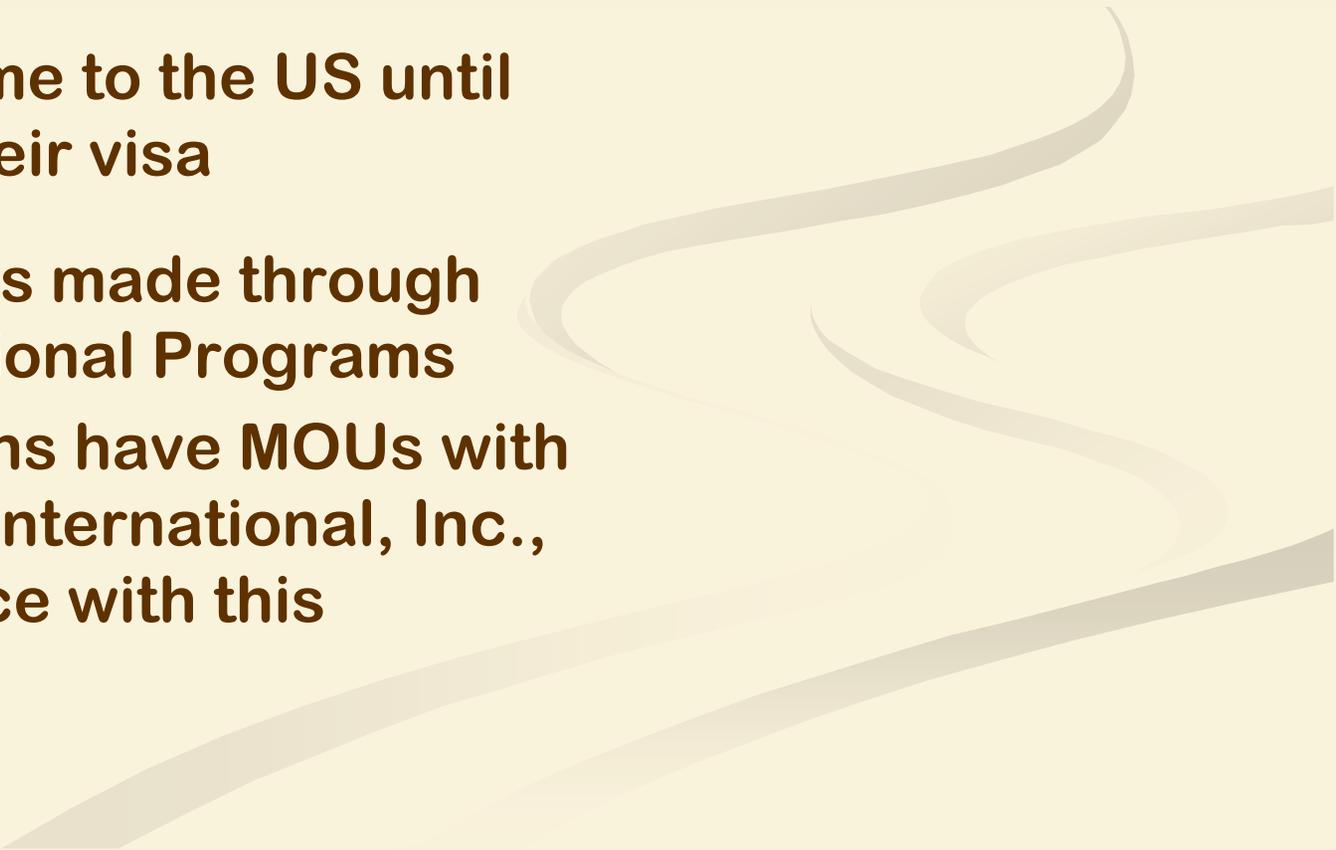
The Volunteer Application

- Use it like a job application
- Get a list of the applicant's skills, interests, abilities so you can make a good match
- Get at least 3 references and check them
- Let the applicant know that a background check may be conducted
- Include the non-discrimination statement

Selection of Volunteers

- Important to make a good match!
 - Consider common goals, mutual benefits
 - Check references when appropriate
 - Interview if appropriate
 - Match skills and abilities to the opportunity
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International Volunteers

- Usually must come under a Forest Service sponsored J-1 visa through the Exchange Visitors Program
 - Must not come to the US until they have their visa
 - Application is made through WO International Programs
 - Some Regions have MOUs with Experience International, Inc., for assistance with this program
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International Volunteers

- Allow at least 8 weeks for processing of paperwork and visa
- Participants may be subject to a Homeland Security-conducted background check
- WO charges program fees
- www.fs.fed.us/global/intranet for forms and information

What about.....

- Employees as volunteers?
- Ex-employees and temporaries?
- Family members?
- Firefighting? Law enforcement?
- Medical exams?
- Ride-alongs?
- Court-ordered community service?
- Security clearance?

Employees/ex-employees as volunteers?

- **Non-exempt employees can volunteer only if the volunteer duties are completely different from their current position description.**
- **Ex-employees can volunteer but, depending on the type of retirement they took (buyout), may not be able to receive reimbursements.**

Seasonals/Temporaries?

- **Temporary employees can volunteer for their same duties if they are truly off the rolls i.e., not on LWOP, not on a Permanent Seasonal appointment, and volunteering would not place them in an advantageous position for rehire or other consideration above other applicants.**

Family members * Prohibited Duties

- **Family members can volunteer, but their Agreement cannot be negotiated or signed by the relative who works for the FS.**
- **Volunteers cannot fight fire – cannot be in a red-carded position. Must be hired as an AD.**
- **Volunteers cannot perform Law Enforcement duties.**

Medical Exams? Ride-Alongs? Court Ordered Community Service?

- Medical exams can be required of volunteers; the cost is borne by the FS.
- “Ride-alongs” and “show-me” trips are not Volunteer situations – get approval thru ASC
- Court-ordered community service is to be hosted through a Participating Agreement with the Court, NOT on a Volunteer Agreement.

What about security clearance/ background checks?

- **Recommended that individual volunteers provide at least 3 references**
- **FS staff should contact the references**
- **If warranted or desired, background checks can be conducted**
- **Any cost is borne by the FS**
- **HSPD-12 will require clearance for some volunteers**

A Good Agreement is Key

- Individual or Sponsored (Group) Agreement
- Execute prior to any work
- Include specifics: who, what, when, where, and how
- Attach JHAs, Safety Training plan, Communication Plan, Evacuation Plan
- Determine reimbursements, if any
- Line officer signs (or official designee)

Individual Agreements

- **FS-1800-7 Agreement for Individual Voluntary Services**
- **Liability for tort and OWCP remains with the FS**
- **FS is responsible for Safety training, other training**
- **Always attach JHAs, Communication Plan, and Evacuation Plan**

Sponsored Agreements

- FS-1800-8 is used when an organized group will be volunteering
- Group's insurance is primary, FS's is secondary
- Group leaders may be responsible for Safety training, other training
- One form can have list of volunteers' names added for each project
- Always attach a JHA for each project, Communications Plan, Evacuation Plan

Safety First – Safety Always

- Forest Service safety policy states that volunteers will be treated the same as employees regarding safety requirements
- Specify on the Agreement what safety training is required and who will provide it
- Training on tool use, chainsaws, defensive driving, and/or CPR may be required – refer to the appropriate Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)
- Training must be provided before the project begins
- Thoroughly cover the unit Communication Plan and Emergency Evacuation Plan
- Make sure communications are working!

What about equipment and stock?

- Use the Agreement to specify whose equipment, tools, vehicles - FS's or the volunteer's?
- For volunteer's stock or equipment, may want to use a no-cost Purchase Order
- Specify who will provide Personal Protective Equipment

Who gets to supervise?

- Every volunteer or group should have a supervisor of record
- Supervisors should set goals and expectations, ensure volunteers' safety, proper project completion, discipline, and follow-up such as recognition and reporting
- Experienced volunteers or groups may be self-supervised, but an FS staffer should still be in contact

Orientation Please!

- Important to provide volunteers with pertinent information about the FS and the project
- Introduce them to other staff
- Carefully cover any safety issues, including safe work practices and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Answer any questions they may have
- Use the Orientation Checklist

Uniforms and Identification

- **Volunteers may wear the FS uniform in the same situations that employees do**
- **Volunteers may not wear the FS badge, but may wear the Volunteer patch**
- **Cost of uniforms is borne by the FS**
- **Volunteer ID cards may be issued for short term volunteers**
- **Longer term (6 mos. +) volunteers may need to receive a Federal ID**

Reimbursements

- Only certain out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed:
 - Transportation, such as mileage and parking
 - Meals and incidentals, certain other costs
 - Housing for non-local volunteers
 - Can be negotiable; may not exceed Federal Travel Regulations
 - Must be based on actual expenses

Local vs Non-local Volunteers

- **Local volunteers live within commuting distance**
- **Non-local volunteers come from outside commuting distance and stay someplace other than their home**
- **Different reimbursements may apply**

How to process reimbursements

- Use ASC's reimbursement process
- Reimbursement is by electronic funds transfer; waivers available for certain circumstances
- fsweb.asc.fs.fed.us/bfm/programs/financial_operations/payments/miscellaneous

Individual Volunteers and Accidents

- Individual volunteers are considered federal employees for the purpose of tort claims and compensation for work injuries (OWCP).
- Follow the same procedure and use the same forms if injury is within the scope of the Volunteer Agreement (duties, hours).

Sponsored Volunteers and Accidents

- Volunteer groups are covered for tort and OWCP by the FS after the group's insurance has been exceeded.
- Follow the same procedures as for employees when the injury is within the scope of the Agreement (duties, hours).

Recognizing Volunteers

- It's important to show appreciation for your unit's volunteers
- Recognition can be as simple as a Thank You card or Certificate of Appreciation
- Recognition ceremonies, such as Volunteer picnics, are great!
- Non-monetary awards may be given – rules are same as for employees
- The Interagency Volunteer Pass can be issued once 500 hours are contributed after 1/1/07.

Record Keeping

- **Keep a folder for each volunteer or group that contains:**
 - **The original Agreement, any subsequent amendments**
 - **Volunteer Timesheets**
 - **Claims for reimbursement**
 - **Records of orientation, training, correspondence**
 - **Retain for 3 years following termination**

Volunteer Timesheets

- Individual volunteers should submit a monthly timesheet
- Groups should submit a group timesheet at the end of each project

What if the volunteer doesn't work out?

- **If a volunteer is not performing well, the supervisor should communicate the issues to the volunteer**
- **Volunteers whose performance or behavior is not acceptable may be terminated**
- **Volunteers are not subject to the same HCM rules and procedures as employees**

Retention: What does it take to keep volunteers engaged and coming back?

- Provide a spectrum of opportunities and tasks
- Link them into a group
- Ask for their help in project planning
- Provide info on how their work contributes to caring for the land
- Formally recognize their contributions

Reporting

- **Complete the Annual Accomplishment Report FS-1800-16 online**
- **Data includes resource category, number of hours, appraised value of work, age, gender, ethnicity, and disability**
- **Can be entered into database at any time; due just after close of Fiscal Year**

Program Evaluation

- **Important to do periodic assessments of the program**
- **Annual Accomplishment Reports**
- **Conduct “sensing” interviews, surveys, exit interviews with volunteers**
- **Adjust as needed to ensure communication, capacity, cooperation, and continuity**

Resources

**Your unit Volunteer Coordinator is
your primary resource**

- **The FS Volunteer Program Guide**
- www.partnershipresourcecenter.org
- www.volunteer.gov/gov
- www.pointsoflight.org
- <http://www.takepride.gov/index.html>
- **National Forest Foundation**
<http://www.becomeafriend.org/volunteer/>
- **Conservation USA (formerly TrailBoss)**
- **Many other online and community resources**