

Volunteer Stories



St. Therasas Youth Group performing trail maintenance at Cold Springs Trail at Dworsahk Dam and Reservoir on National Public Lands Day

Testimonials from our Volunteers

Read what some of our past and present volunteers have to say about their experience as a volunteer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer, Walla Walla District. Check out Corps of Engineers opportunities in your area at www.volunteer.gov.

Sally and Ross Giacomo, Visitor Center Hosts, Dworshak Dam and Reservoir, Ahsahka, Idaho

In March of 2012 we began the adventure of a lifetime! After working all of our lives we retired and hit the road in our 5th wheel! Having worked since our teens we knew retirement would be an adjustment. We also wanted to give back to our beautiful country. I went online to Volunteer.org to look for a “job.” We were so blessed to receive a call from the staff at Dworshak Dam and Reservoir in Ahsahka, Idaho. Initially we planned to be maintenance staff. This appealed to us because we love the outdoors. We love to meet new people and when offered the job of Visitor Center Hosts we immediately accepted! What a great job! We met people from several countries and of course many from our own country.

When we arrived on March 31, 2012 I thought I had lost my mind to even agree to this new adventure. It was cold and rainy and nothing like home. The awesome Corp rangers and other staff at Dworshak welcomed us and made us feel right at home. We worked as maintenance staff the first 6 weeks and loved the job. What a beautiful area to work in and enjoy. In late May we began working in the Visitor Center full time. Now

the fun began in earnest. We tried to learn as much information as we could about Dworshak and its history. We gave tours and greeted visitors.

We reluctantly left Dworshak after Labor Day and headed for warmer climes. We spent the winter in the Rio Grande Valley working at a private park. We loved the warmth and sunshine but counted the days until our return to Idaho and Dworshak.

People have asked why we are returning to Dworshak. We tell them it was one of the most rewarding, fun experiences of our lifetime. And trust us when we say we have had adventures in our lifetime. My husband retired from the Army after 25 years. He is a Vietnam Vet. I worked for the State of Missouri as a child abuse and neglect investigator.

We would strongly encourage anyone thinking of volunteering for the Corp of Engineers to go for it! We are looking forward to many more wonderful years volunteering in this wonderful country of ours.

- **Sally and Ross Giacomo**



Sally and Ross receiving a Certificate of Appreciation and the coveted Walla Walla District Commanders Coin at a BBQ volunteer recognition event outside the Dworshak Visitor Center.



Sally and Ross assisting a park ranger tow a disabled recreation boat while patrolling Dworshak Reservoir.

Ken and Shari Glaspie, Dent Acres Park Hosts, Dworshak Dam and Reservoir, Ahsahka, Idaho

Ken Glaspie has spent many years fishing and camping at Dworshak Reservoir ever since the dam was built, and has always wanted to work in that environment. Dent Acres is his favorite campground. Shari is retired from the US Forest Service in western Washington, and volunteering at campgrounds has always appealed to her. Dent Acres has become a favorite, whether camping or volunteering.

We are both in our 70's and still have an ample amount of energy and a zest for living. When the opportunity to volunteer for the Corp of Engineers presented itself last spring, we felt it could prove to be a very rewarding and stimulating experience. It proved to be even more rewarding than we'd anticipated.

We met so many interesting people from many different places, and we've encouraged other retirees to try volunteering. What better way to spend a summer...being useful, enjoying the outdoors, and working with the wonderful staff from the Corp. The staff is helpful, professional, and personable, and always shows their appreciation for our efforts. We are very grateful for the opportunity to help out the Corp and are looking forward to working with them again this season.

- **Shari Mitchell**



Ken and Shari with their Certificate of Appreciation and Walla Walla District Commanders Coin award for their outstanding voluntary service.

Bridget Bergiel, Maintenance Volunteer, Mill Creek Dam and Reservoir, Walla Walla, Washington

I have met some of my BEST FRIENDS while volunteering for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District! It gives me a chance to spend time outdoors, and it's good karma, too, since most of the work is aimed at protecting the environment and improving the infrastructure for guests. I highly recommend volunteering for the US Army Corps of Engineers to anyone!

- **Bridget Bergiel**



Bridget Bergiel checking the water temperature at the Howell-Bunger valve at the Mill Creek, Bennington Lake Embankment Dam.

Jim and Debra Dury, Dent Acres Park Hosts, Dworshak Dam and Reservoir, Ahsahka, Idaho

Jim and I have been volunteers for the Forest Service, BLM and Army Corps of Engineers since summer season of 2006. We have found volunteering a fulfilling way to meet people (literally from all over the world) and share experiences and learn of other views and customs. All the while, we are privileged to enjoy the Northwest and move within our preferred states when we choose.

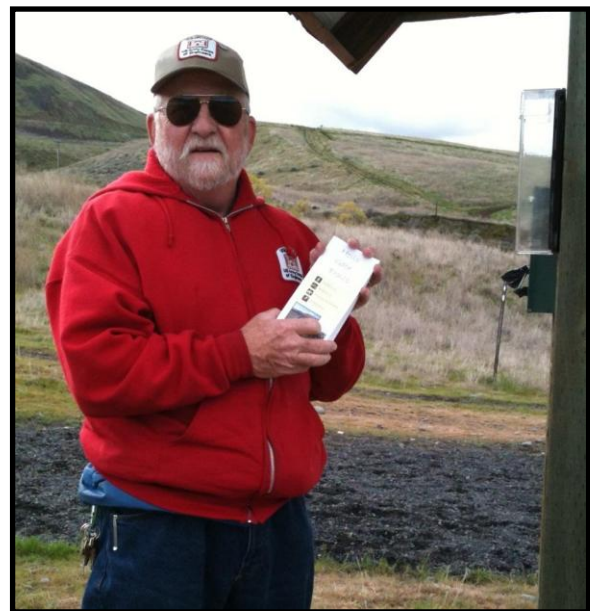
The flexibility and opportunities of volunteering makes “giving back” and knowing we are making a difference (regardless of how small or great the task) a great reward for the hours we serve. One of our most enjoyable places is Clarkston, Washington area working alongside the Army Corps of Engineers.

The recreation team there has made our volunteer status feel appreciated and valuable. In short, we have found volunteering a great way to stay active and engaged and continue to be useful in our senior years. Thank you for the opportunity!

- Debra Dury



Debra Dury stocking a Mutt Mitt dispenser at a Hells Gate Habitat Management Unit, Lower Granite Lock and Dam.



Jim Dury stocking brochures dispensers at Hells Gate Habitat Management Unit, Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

"A Dam Volunteer and Proud Of It"

story and photos by Penny Bray

Summer at last, and my husband and I are back in our favorite area, Dworshak Dam and Reservoir in Ahsahka, Idaho.

Planning for an R.V. retirement gave us a terrific lifestyle as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers volunteers. As our second season at Dworshak opens, we are once again amazed at the project, thrilled by the natural beauty, and welcomed as part of the visitor center staff.

The summer season welcomes visitors eager to hear about the history of the river and reservoir and learn the benefits of our dam. Students and curious travelers can experience the conception, construction and completion of the dam and reservoir through films, exhibits and, best of all, the dam tour. I love the expressions of wonder at the "hows" and welcome all questions.

Frequently there are questions I don't have the answer to, like "how were the creeks named?" But finding the why and how and relaying the information really creates a sense of pride because we are not only able to respond to our visitors' concerns, but we also learn something new. Often I can find the answers from the project manager if a question is dam-related, but other times I mine the brains of the natural resources team managers and rangers.

Learning while sharing our experiences is a joy, but the true pleasure is the nature of it all. River to reservoir, water to power and wildlife viewing are all a part of a marvelous cycle.

As spring faded to summer we had the awesome experience of seeing the reservoir go from the lowest level in decades to collecting the record run-off from a tremendous snow pack and seemingly endless spring rains. I told visitors about the severe historical flooding, while they told me about the money they earned as young people filling sand bags by the river at the fairgrounds. Their memories are a wonderful source of information.

Every day we have endless opportunities to learn while working with the team of rangers and resource management personnel. So we truly thank you for the wonderful USACE volunteer program. You are the best.



Penny Bray

