

MOUNT ST. HELENS NATIONAL VOLCANIC MONUMENT

July 2009 Citizen Advisory Committee Recommendations

&

Forest Service, Community, and Partner Accomplishments

November 19, 2012

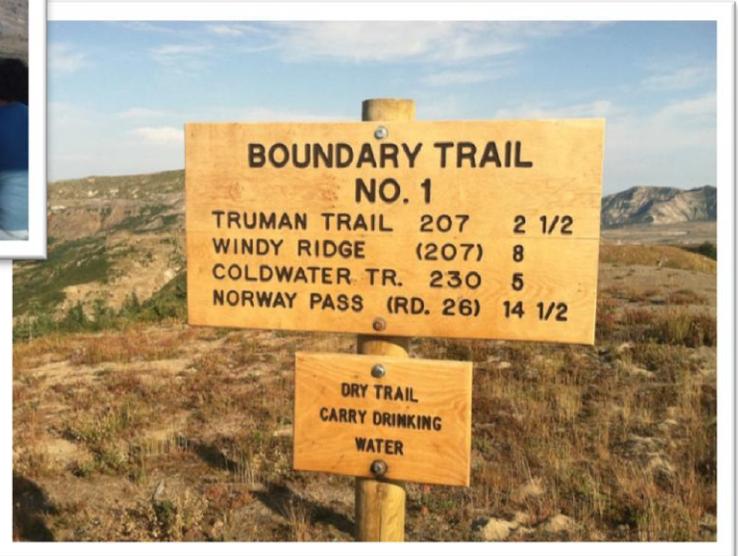
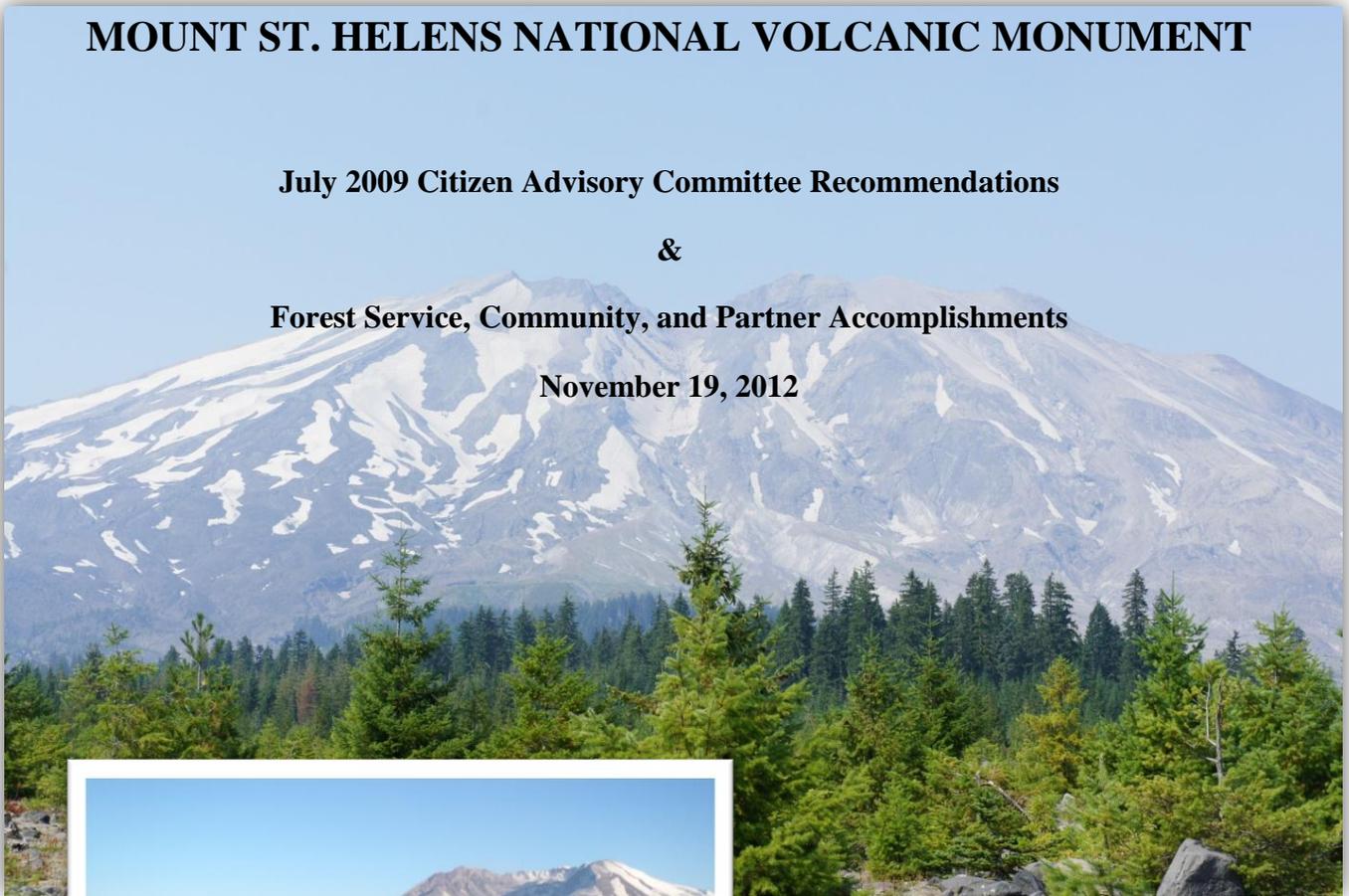


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Mount St. Helens crater eruption - 2004



Volunteer housing kit cabin and cooking shelter at Pine Creek Information Station

INTRODUCTION

In July of 2009, the Mount St. Helens Citizen Advisory Committee published recommendations “regarding the best course of action for ensuring that Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument remains a key tourist destination and economic engine for the area, while preserving its natural resources and allowing it to remain a world leader for scientific research.” Thirty-four recommendations were developed and categorized under eight topic areas selected by the committee.

The Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, along with several key partners, have been implementing a Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) to meet the intent of these recommendations, and fulfill the legislated mission of the Monument and its Comprehensive Management Plan. The Strategic Investment Plan charts the vision for the Monument for the next five to ten years. It is the visionary tool of what can be achieved at the Monument with the combined efforts of the Forest Service, community leaders, partners, and community volunteers. Continued capital investments, development of partnerships and community relationships, and the Regional Forester’s focused attention are indicative of the Forest Service’s commitment to care for and manage the Monument for this and future generations.

In the three years since the publishing of the recommendations, the Forest Service, the Regional Office, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument have made considerable progress building the foundational structure of the Strategic Investment Plan. The result has been an increase of the scientific, recreational, and educational facilities, activities, and opportunities available for the local communities and the visiting public.

The Monument is poised with the combined efforts of its many partners, the community, and businesses to continue to improve the vital, regional tourism asset which is Mount St. Helens. It is providing quality educational programs to student groups from across the regional area. The facility at Coldwater has opened as the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater. The Learning Center will have a science camp, offer educational programs and classes, have food and visitor services, and serve as a place for community groups. The Forest Service has enhanced opportunities for exceptional visitor experiences along State Hwy 504, the 99 Road, and on the southern side of the Monument along the 83 and 81 Roads. It will be through the continued involvement and efforts of the local community leaders, community volunteers, and current and new partners that the Monument will continue to grow as a premier recreation, education, and scientific local and regional tourism asset.



Mount St. Helens

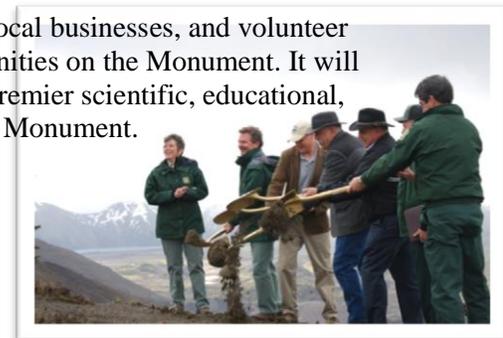
MANAGEMENT MODEL

Overall Recommendation: Retain U.S. Forest Service Management

- The U.S. Forest Service has demonstrated its ability to meet the unique and diverse needs of the Monument's Mission. It has made capital investments, which have improved and enhanced the Monuments recreational and educational facilities, opportunities, and activities while protecting and maintaining its significant features and preserving its natural recovery and processes.
- It has fostered outstanding educational and research programs and opportunities for scientists, universities, and graduate students. The Forest Service and the Mount St. Helens Institute continue to deliver quality educational programs to support student field trips and are committed to making the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater a premier educational experience.
- The Monument has developed successful partnerships with two non-profit organizations (the Mount St. Helens Institute, and Discover Your Northwest) and many community and County organizations. It continues to foster and expand its volunteer and community relations.
- The Monument continues to maintain an accessible and quality trail hiking experience. Fifty scientific interpretive panels have been updated throughout the Monument. Interpretive hikes have been introduced. It is exploring opportunities for camping on the north side, developing new connector trails, and looking for more opportunities to increase the family visitor experience with more interpretive talks, easy trails with an educational component and improvements to learning opportunities at Johnston Ridge Observatory.
- With the help of its many partners, expanding community involvement, local businesses, and volunteer organizations, the Forest Service has continued to expand visitor opportunities on the Monument. It will continue to make the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument a premier scientific, educational, and recreational tourist site, while meeting the Legislative Mission of the Monument.

Recommendation: Create an administrative unit consisting of existing Federal lands west of and including the FS 25 Road with no expansion of the Monument boundary itself. The manager of the Administrative Unit shall report directly to the office of the Regional Forester.

- In June of 2011, a Five Year "Valuing Places" Pilot Charter was signed initiating an agreement between the Monument, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and the Regional Office. The Charter embarks on a joint venture to manage and promote opportunity at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument as a unique and distinctive asset as part of the Regional Foresters "Valuing Places" initiative.
- A Strategic Investment Plan was developed as part of the Charter which implements a separate, focused subunit to be more responsive to the Congressional Advisory Committee interests and accelerate the implementation of the Strategic Investment Plan.
- The new Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument Manager reports directly to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest Supervisor. Many of the Monuments recreational opportunities, visitor centers and access corridors lie outside the legislated boundaries; this reporting structure allows the Monument to benefit directly and indirectly from resources invested across the National Forest.



Recommendation: The Administrative Unit itself must be a line item funded from the mandatory portion of the U.S. Forest Service budget.

- To support Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument as part of the Regional Forester's "Valuing Places" initiative, the Regional Forester has provided more focused funding for the Monument, separate from the forest wide programmatic funding.
- The separate "Valuing Places" and venture funding have supported the efforts of the Monument to increase its interpretive and educational programs, develop new programs, build stronger more effective partnerships and relationships with local communities, and explore new opportunities to improve recreation, education, and visitor services.
- The National and Regional Forest Offices have continued to invest capital funding to support many infrastructure and facilities improvements on the Monument. The funding has led to improvements to its facilities, trail systems, information and interpretive signage, roads, and vistas. The funding has also allowed the Monument to increase visitor experiences with the construction of an amphitheater at Johnston Ridge Observatory, add housing for its growing volunteer corps, and improve and upgrade science exhibits at Johnston Ridge Observatory.

Recommendation: This model should be used as a template for "Special Places" within the National Forest Service system, as the current model has failed.

- In June of 2011, a Five Year "Valuing Places" Pilot Charter was signed initiating an agreement between the Monument, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Regional Office to embark on a joint venture to manage and promote opportunity at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument as a unique and distinctive asset as part of the Regional Forester's "Valuing Places" initiative.
- The "Valuing Places" initiative is a commitment by the Forest Service to foster new and innovative management solutions and approaches by working with partners and developing interactive community relationships. These partners and community relationships will assist in exploring and refining alternative methods of managing public lands with a notable "sense of place".
- The Forest Service is seeking to develop and demonstrate the value of focusing resources on a special place and sustaining the value over time, while continuing to support the legislative mission of the Monument.

Recommendation: Require an annual meeting with stakeholder groups to review comprehensive management plan and recreation plan.

- The Forest Service continues to inform and update stakeholders. A stakeholder meeting was held on October 17, 2011 and a meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2012, in which Congresswoman Herrera Beutler will be in attendance.

Recommendation: Recommend Congressional oversight hearings as an impetus for follow-up action, implementation, and funding.

- The Forest Service places a high priority on making the Monument a successful and vibrant "Special Place" as part of its "Valuing Places" initiative. The Forest Service leadership continues to work with legislators and staff on addressing critical issues affecting the Monument.

ACCESS

Recommendation: Properly fund the maintenance of all trails, roads, and facilities.

- The Forest Service (FS) 90, 83, and 25 roads had the roadways centerline repainted in 2012.
- The FS 81, 83, and 99 roads were repaired to restore access to Lava Canyon and Windy Ridge. ARRA and the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads funding were critical to complete these projects.
- Secured FY13 funding and initiated the engineering and design required for improving the FS90 road to prepare its transfer to the Washington State and Skamania County DOTs.
- Submitted a design package for \$990,000 to the Federal Highways for MAP21 funding to improve Federal High Use Rec Sites to make improvements and pave 2.2 miles of the Climbers Bivouac Road.
- Completed energy efficiency initiatives at Pine Creek Information Station with the installation of solar panels at the visitor center, and new heating units and tankless hot water heaters in the employee housing.
- Provided the design, engineering, and material for a new bridge on Fossil Creek Trail. It will be installed by the Mount St. Helens Backcountry Horsemen. Partner volunteer hours for the bridge totaled 1,224 hours.
- Partnered with the Cowlitz Economic Development Council to designate 5 miles of the Lakes Trail as mountain bike trail. Three partner groups (Northwest Trail Alliance, Evergreen Bike Club, and the Mountain Bike Mutts) collaborated to provide 70 volunteers totaling 560 hours of trail maintenance and improvements. This group, the Friends of Coldwater, will assume maintenance ownership of the trail.
- Completed backlog maintenance of 105 miles of Monument trails and replaced 100 trail signs at 18 trails utilizing Forest Service staff, partners, and volunteers.
- Partnered with the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) to have youth teams supervised by WCC personnel provide trail maintenance in 2010, 2011, and again in 2013. The youths learn valuable work skills and the Monument gains improvements to its trails.
- Initiated the planning, engineering, and design of 24 facility infrastructure projects funded with \$2.5M National Priority Capital funding to will enhance the visitor experience at the Pine Creek Information Station, Johnston Ridge Observatory, the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater and at Cascade Peaks Visitor Center.
- Partnered with several recreation groups throughout the Monument to maintain trails the groups use as recreation sites. Some of these partners include the Northwest Trail Alliance, Evergreen Bike Club, the Mountain Bike Mutts, the Washington Trails Association, and the Backcountry Horseman.

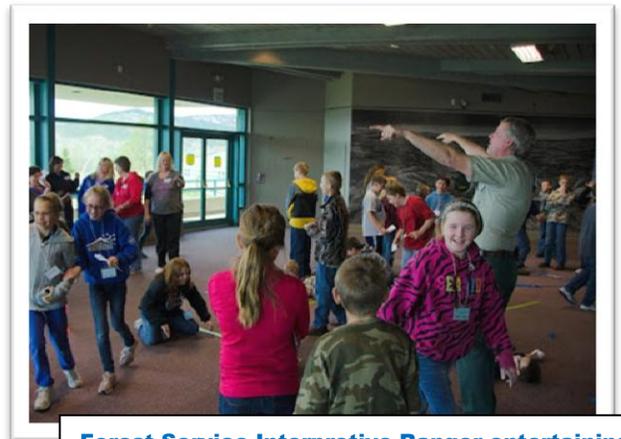
Recommendation: Improve and expand access: Fund and build 504 all-weather road extension from Coldwater to US12, facilitate and fund upgrade and construct highway 503 spur from Cougar to Carson, and FS Road 25 to all-weather surface (not necessary year round).

- While the Forest Service can conceptually support the funding of an all weather extension from State Hwy 504 to US Hwy 12, the State and the U.S. Department of Transportation would need to be the lead agency in carrying out this recommendation.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommendation: Reinvest in Coldwater Ridge as an overnight destination to include science, interpretation, education, visitor services, food, and university partnerships.

- Reopened the Coldwater Facility as the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater as a science and education center and visitor portal for the community.
- Developed a coalition of NW colleges, universities, and K-12 teachers to support the development of educational programs and overnight group camping facilities for the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater.
- Developed a business plan for the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater to evaluate opportunities for public camping, educational programs, food service, visitor services, and a science research camp.
- Its partner the Mount St. Helens Institute continues to provide its successful Volcano Volunteer program at Johnston Ridge Observatory. It has expanded its service to include the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater. Seventeen volunteers provided roving, interpretive/educational talks, with 68,463 visitor contacts in 2012. Nineteen volunteers made over 80,000 visitor contacts in 2011.
- In partnership with the Mount St. Helens Institute, hired a Staff Liaison to manage visitor services and educational programs and a Program Development Coordinator at the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater.
- Funded an Outfitter Guide and Needs Assessment to be conducted for the Monument and the Forest by the Forest Service Enterprise Team.
- Engaged with the Forest Service Enterprise Team to develop a professional feasibility study on the opportunities available for a viable food service at the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater.



Forest Service Interpretive Ranger entertaining & educating school children at the MSH Science and Learning Center at Coldwater

Recommendation: Develop and fund Emergency Recovery Plans which include inter-local agreements with Fire Districts, EMS, Sheriffs, Counties, and USFS: to include visitor and emergency communication capability around the Monument.

- A Mount St. Helens Volcanic Activity Response Plan was developed in 2006 in response to lessons learned from the 2004 volcanic eruption. The plan details the responsibilities and actions required of the USFS and other key disaster response Federal Agencies. The plan outlines the coordination efforts required of the USFS and local emergency response agencies.
- The Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument has developed a Monument level Initial Emergency Response Plan in 2008 detailing the responsibilities and required actions at key visitor locations throughout the Monument. The response Plan was updated in 2012.

Recommendation: Shift responsibility for the Spirit Lake tunnel to the Corps of Engineers.

- A request has made through Congressional Staff to transfer the authority of the Spirit Lake Tunnel from the U.S. Forest Service to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the reauthorization of the Water Resources and Development Act.

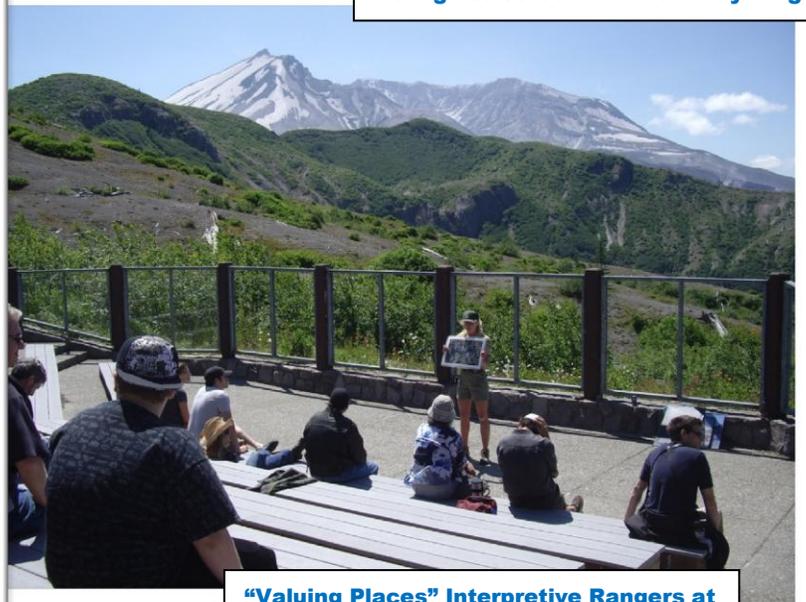
Recommendation: Provide adequate, non-federal utility service where needed in the Monument.

- Partnered with the Cowlitz PUD and Cowlitz County to initiate a study accessing the condition of 26KV electrical service and the work required to bring the service to acceptable standards for the Utility to take control of the power line.
- Negotiated an agreement with Cowlitz PUD to take ownership of the 26KV power line along State Hwy 504 upon the completion of any identified maintenance required.

Energy efficient solar power at the Pine Creek Information Station



New glass screen wall at Windy Ridge



“Valuing Places” Interpretive Rangers at Windy Ridge and Ape Cave



RECREATION

Recommendation: Adequately fund and maintain recreational facilities.

- In 2010, the Monument received \$4M in ARRA for repairs and new construction to its facilities and \$1.7M for trails and recreation facilities maintenance. The Monument received \$1.2M in NPL funding and \$500K in CIP funding, both of which were used to complete facilities backlog maintenance.
- In 2012, the Monument received \$2.5M in additional NPL funding which will be utilized to complete additional backlog maintenance items and make facilities improvements throughout the Monument.
- New amphitheater seating, repairs to a visitor containment rock structure, and repairs to the parking lot have been completed at the Windy Ridge viewpoint.
- Toilet facility repairs and maintenance to eight restrooms throughout the southern and eastern part of the Monument have been completed.
- At Johnston Ridge Observatory (JRO) a new 150 seat outdoor amphitheater and new educational exhibits and displays were installed. Other improvements at JRO included a new roof, new carpeting, new windows at the theater vision wall, repair of the eruption trail tread work, completion of backlog maintenance items, and replacement of the HVAC water-cooled chiller tubes.
- At the Pine Creek Information Center, four new volunteer housing units with an adjacent restroom shower facility and an outdoor eating area were constructed, water system upgrades were made, solar panels at the visitor center were installed, and new heating units and tankless hot water heaters were installed in the employee housing.
- At the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater the glass has been replaced at the scenic vision wall, the cupola glass roof has been replaced, a UPS was installed to protect the building computer and sensitive electrical equipment, backlog maintenance repairs were completed, and a new boardwalk was installed at Coldwater Lake.
- Provided the design, engineering, and material for a new bridge on Fossil Creek Trail to be installed by the Mount St. Helens Backcountry Horsemen. Partner volunteer hours for the bridge totaled 1,224 hours.
- Partnered with the Cowlitz Economic Development Council to designate 5 miles of the Lakes Trail as mountain bike trail. Three partner groups (Northwest Trail Alliance, Evergreen Bike Club, and the Mountain Bike Mutts) collaborated to provide 70 volunteers totaling 560 hours of trail maintenance and improvements. This group, the Friends of Coldwater, will assume maintenance ownership of the trail.
- Completed backlog maintenance on 105 miles of Monument trails and replaced 100 trail signs at 18 trails utilizing Forest Service staff, partners, and volunteers.
- Partnered with the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) to have youth teams supervised by WCC personnel provide trail maintenance in 2010, 2011, and again in 2013. The youth learn valuable work skills and the Monument gains improvements to its trails.
- Partner with several recreation groups throughout the Monument to maintain trails the groups use for their special recreation uses. Some of these partners include the Northwest Trail Alliance, Evergreen Bike Club, the Mountain Bike Mutts, the Washington Trails Association, and the Backcountry Horseman.

Recommendation: Recreational opportunities should be broadened to embrace a diverse and responsible use of the newly created Administrative Unit.

- Developed educational trail guide pamphlets for three (3) family friendly trail systems – Meta Lake, Harmony Trail, and Hummocks Trail. The pamphlets will allow for self-guided hike opportunities to introduce visitors to key “Return to Life” messages along each trail.
- Awarded two (2) temporary special use permits for outfitter guide kayaking trips on Coldwater Lake.
- Funded an Outfitter Guide and Needs Assessment to be conducted for the Monument and the Forest by the Forest Service Enterprise Team.
- Castle Rock Exhibit Hall with support from the Forest Service organized an Arts and Vines Art Exhibition at the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater. The two-day community art show featured 13 local artists. Over 200 people attended the show held over two days.
- Developed relationships with Northwest Excursions, Cascadia Outdoor Adventure School, OMSI, and MountainShop to expand recreation and education opportunities on the Monument.
- Received a \$25K grant to develop a pilot app for the Hummocks Trail. The app, being developed by the Forest Service partner Get to Know, will feature interactive nature-based challenges for kids as they hike the trail.
- Inaugurated the Johnston Ridge Observatory amphitheater with the “Music on the Mountain” series. In partnership with the Cowlitz Economic Development Council and the Mount St. Helens Institute held three (3) sold out music concerts.
- Through its Conservation Corps program it held two (2) volunteer vacations in the Mount Margaret Back Country area, with 16 vacation volunteers completing 20 trail maintenance projects.
- This year featured the first ever Volcano 50. A 50 kilometer ultra-marathon was run on the Loowit Trail, which circumnavigates the volcano.
- Completed a feasibility study for six (6) connector trail projects. Completed NEPA for one project and surveyed two others. Negotiated an agreement for the Washington Trails Association to complete the construction on the Ape Cave connector trail in FY13. Surveyed the north side of the volcano for a North Side climbing route.
- Began the development of a vista management plan to improve visitor experiences at scenic vistas around the Monument. Evaluated opportunities for a low elevation sno-park and snow play areas on the south side of the Monument.

“Music on the Mountain” music venue at the new amphitheater at Johnston Ridge Observatory



Recommendation: Create a Scientific and Recreational Advisory Committee to vet recreational opportunities and suggestions in the Restricted Area for the managing agency in order to recommend more recreational activities including camping and fishing in the Restricted Area that are compatible with the ACT.

- The legislation that established the Monument in 1982, included the establishment of a nine member Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of senior federal, state, and local industry scientists to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on issues related to the management of scientific values and recreational opportunities in the Monument. The legislation authorized the SAB for a 10-year period.
- Recognizing the need for technical assistance and oversight, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Washington Office attempted to extend the SAB charter. Efforts to extend the charter were unsuccessful due to a moratorium on the establishment of federal boards and commissions, part of a comprehensive effort to "reinvent" and streamline government.
- In 1999, the Monument convened a Technical Advisory Panel of senior-level scientists to review the status of the Monument Science Program and make recommendations about future program needs and direction. The program review indicated the importance of prioritizing the efforts of the one-person science program and making efficient use of the Monument Scientist position.
- Given the multi-faceted nature of the scientific-technical, education-outreach, and public affairs duties required, it would be important that the activities of a proposed advisory committee be closely coordinated with other ongoing efforts and that the 1999 panel recommendations be revisited as part of the planning process.

Recommendation: Create camping facilities using Lower Falls as a template.

- Completed a feasibility study to construct and operate a campsite near the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater. The study evaluates four (4) alternative sites. The Monument plans to conduct a NEPA assessment of one potential camping site at Coldwater in 2013.
- The campsite is to be an extension of the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater, which will offer increased educational and recreational opportunities to enhance to the value of camping at the facility and the value of the Monument.
- Success of this endeavor, as occurred with the Pine Creek Information Station, will increase with active involvement and engagement of County, business, and community partners and volunteers for funding, construction, and management.

Recommendation: Designate seasonal recreational activity for motorized and non-motorized participants.

- The Monument currently offers and promotes non-motorized and motorized winter and summer recreational activities in the southern and eastern portions of the Monument. These activities include the non-motorized activities of hiking, camping, mountain biking, canoeing, fishing, and cross country skiing and the motorized activities of snowmobiling out of Marble Mountain Sno-Park.
- The Monument partnered with the Cougar Area Trail Seekers (CATS) to allow the group access to ride their ATV's on the east side of the Monument outside the legislated area. The CATS in return provided maintenance at several campsites, cleaned up garbage along several Forest Service roads and participated in work parties at the Pine Creek Information Station.

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- All designated recreational areas are marked and maintained. Trail and mileage markers have been recently been updated and backlog trail maintenance has been completed for many of the trails within the Monument.
- The north side of the Monument currently has the non-motorized activity of hiking and camping in the Mount Margaret Backcountry. A well pump was installed at Norway Pass to provide running water to hikers embarking into this area. In 2012, 225 permits were authorized for camping.
- Awarded two (2) temporary special use permits for outfitter guide kayaking trips on Coldwater Lake.
- Funded an Outfitter Guide and Needs Assessment to be conducted for the Monument and the Forest by the Forest Service Enterprise Team.
- There are a 250 miles of maintained hiking trails to travel on throughout the legislated area of the Monument.
- The Monument and the National Forest are currently looking at adding camping, canoeing, fishing, and cross-country skiing on the north of the Monument. The sensitivity of restricted zone limits these opportunities and prevents the consideration of adding additional motorized activities.
- Completed a feasibility study to construct and operate a campsite near the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater. The study evaluates four (4) alternative sites.
- Developed relationships with Northwest Excursions, Cascadia Outdoor Adventure School, OMSI, and MountainShop to expand recreation and education opportunities on the Monument.
- Worked with the Mount St. Helens High Lakes Coalition and County Commissioners to write and submit a Land and Water Conservation Proposal to purchase the High Lakes land area.



Kayaking Outfitter Guide experience at Coldwater Lake

CONSERVATION

Recommendation: The Restricted Area should be left to unimpeded recovery maintaining the geological and ecological processes as well as the integrity of the features.

- Protection of natural processes and opportunities for scientific research within the Class I Research Area (administratively restricted area) are a high priority for the Monument and are important founding principles of the Monument's enabling legislation and Comprehensive Management Plan.

Recommendation: Maintain habitat protection and support coordinated partnerships with all stakeholders to control invasive species.

- The Monument continues to preserve and protect the Restricted Area within its boundaries. The Forest Service works with local communities to remove noxious weeds throughout the Monument and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. This program has been funded with Title II funding which is being eliminated.
- The Citizens Advisory Committee along with the Forest Service recognizes that partnering with volunteer organizations will become increasingly important.
- The Mount St. Helens Institute contributed to the effort of eliminating invasive species. They held 14 Conservation Corps work parties, including one (1) volunteer vacation in the Mount Margaret Back Country area resulting in 3,007 volunteer hours, maintenance on 19 miles of trail, and clearing of 11 acres of trash and invasive species.
- The National Forest is increasing efforts to educate its employees and the public on the prevention of white-nose syndrome in cave dwelling bats.
- At Ape Cave and on the Monument's website, information and signage has been posted to educate the visiting public.
- Through its "Valuing Places" Rangers, the Monument gave educational talks about White Nose Syndrome to over 10,000 visitors at Ape Cave in 2012.

Recommendation: Visitor impacts and carrying capacity of the Restricted Area will be consistent with the goals of the Act.

- Recent efforts to address backlog trail maintenance and enhance backcountry management, ranger, and volunteer staffing have helped to address some of the challenges related to this issue. Given the importance of the protection of natural processes and research opportunities it will be important to make adequate resources available to patrol and maintain trails in these sensitive areas.

Recommendation: We recommend through a land trade on GPNE, that the USFS acquire the High Lakes Area from willing sellers.

- Worked with the Mount St. Helens High Lakes Coalition and County Commissioners to write and submit a Land and Water Conservation Proposal to purchase the High Lakes land area.

Recommendation: Encourage partnerships with voluntary organizations.

- Its partner the Mount St. Helens Institute organized and put to work in the past two (2) years over 30,700 volunteer hours to provide valuable maintenance and recreational and educational programs and activities. These include an exceptional climbing program, Public Lands Day programs, educational opportunities at Johnston Ridge Observatory, and staffing at the newly reopened Pine Creek Information Station and Cascade Peaks Visitor Center. The reopening and operation of the Pine Creek Visitor Center is an exceptional example of the collaborative partnering effort.
- The Monument and its two non-profit partners (Mount St. Helens Institute and Discover Your Northwest) and many diverse community partners (Skamania County, Skamania County Sheriff, Skamania County Chamber of Commerce, Skamania County Fire District 6, North Country EMS, Swift Community Action Team, and the Cougar Area Trail Seekers) worked together to reopen the Pine Creek Information Station - a facility vital to their community interests.
- The Monument has partnered directly with several volunteer organizations who have acted as campground hosts and performed trail maintenance and facility maintenance. The Monument filled a position for a full time Partnership and Community Engagement Specialist to liaison and increase community relations and volunteer involvement. The Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Monument continues to support partnerships and community relation development.
- Negotiated an agreement for the Washington Trails Association to complete the construction on the Ape Cave connector trail in FY13.
- Partnered with the Cowlitz Economic Development Council to designate 5 miles of the Lakes Trail as mountain bike trail. Three partner groups (Northwest Trail Alliance, Evergreen Bike Club, and the Mountain Bike Mutts) collaborated to provide 70 volunteers totaling 560 hours of trail maintenance and improvements. This group, the Friends of Coldwater, will assume maintenance ownership of the trail.
- Partnered with the Cowlitz Economic Development Council and the National Forest Foundation to host a two night/two day volunteer event at the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater engaging 60 volunteers for 960 hours of work projects in and around the facility.
- Provided the design, engineering, and material for a new bridge on Fossil Creek Trail to be installed by the Mount St. Helens Backcountry Horsemen. Partner volunteer hours for the bridge totaled 1,224 hours.
- Developed a coalition of NW colleges, universities, and K-12 teachers to support the development of educational programs and overnight group camping facilities for the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater.
- Developed relationships with Northwest Excursions, Cascadia Outdoor Adventure School, OMSI, and MountainShop to expand recreation and education opportunities on the Monument.

Recommendation: No new road building in the restricted area.

- There are no plans to construct new roads within the Class I Research Area (administratively restricted area). This is consistent with the protection of natural processes and research opportunities consistent with the founding principles of the monument's enabling legislation and Comprehensive Management Plan.

SCIENCE

Recommendation: Dedicate the Monument Scientist to Science in the National Forest system and direct the PNW Research station to maintain a Monument science team.

- In 2010, associated with the 30th anniversary of the eruption, the Monument Scientist collaborated with the PNW Research Station to develop a proposal for a joint Monument (National Forest system) / PNW Research Station initiative. The initiative describes a vision for an expanded research team of PNW scientists, resources for archiving important long-term data and a joint education and outreach effort by the Monument and the PNW Station (a copy of the initiative statement is available on request).
- The 30th anniversary research initiative is designed to capitalize upon ongoing studies, develop new studies, and expand capabilities for outreach and education. The initiative is in review with the U.S. Forest Service's Washington Office and is currently unfunded. The 2010 initiative addresses many of the recommendations made by a Technical Advisory Panel of senior-scientists who reviewed the Monument science program in 1999. We are hopeful funding will be secured so the PNW Research Station and the Monument can work together to capitalize on the amazing research and education outreach opportunities available at Mount St. Helens.

Recommendation: Expand science funding with specific emphasis on more direct public education and broader interpretive and participatory science programs by providing an expanded science experience for visitors and promoting the Monument as a scientific laboratory.

- Since 2009, the Monument scientist has continued to focus on education/outreach, interpretation and public affairs.
- In partnership with the Mount St. Helens Institute, the Monument has continued efforts to develop grant and philanthropic funding to update exhibits at the Johnston Ridge Observatory (JRO). Working with the Institute and the additional investment of capital funding, the Monument put in place an impressive array of new and updated exhibits across the Monument, including: seismic, crater, and dome exhibits at JRO; monitoring, crater, and dome exhibit videos; new video equipment and films in the JRO theater queuing hallway; new projection and surround sound theater equipment; new 'Eruption of Life' feature film; new 'Return to Life' touch screen exhibit; and 50 updated scientific interpretive panels across the Monument.
- Engaged in a collaborative effort with the SW Washington Workforce Development Council and local industry, government, and community colleges to develop a STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) Institute. Two (2) events were held in 2012, which introduced students from five area high schools to potential science and technology careers.
- The Mount St. Helens Institute provided educational programming about Mount St. Helens to over 6,000 participants with the support of volunteers, Forest Service and USGS staff, and other partners. They provided web-based presentations to over 1200 students as part of the "Volcano Explorers" distance learning club.
- In 2012, the Mount St. Helens Institute conducted five (5) "Geology on High" climbs featuring volunteer geologists who provided in-depth geological content along the climbing route.
- Reopened the Coldwater Facility as the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater as a science and education center and a visitor portal for the community.

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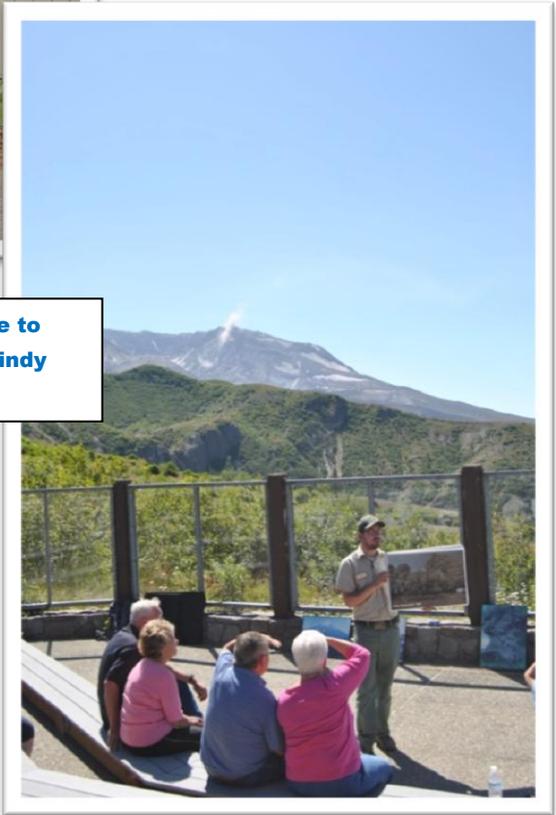
- Developed educational trail guide pamphlets for three (3) family friendly trail systems – Meta Lake, Harmony Trail, and Hummocks Trail. The pamphlets will allow for self-guided hike opportunities to introduce visitors to key “Return to Life” messages along each trail.
- “Mount St. Helens: A Living Laboratory” is the recipient of a 2012 Silver Telly Award (the Telly Award’s highest honor) and Second Place in the Short Film category for the 2012 National Association for Interpretation Media Awards.
- “Mount St. Helens: Eruption of Life” is the recipient of a 2012 Silver Telly Award (the Telly Award’s highest honor) and Third Place in the Long Film category for the 2012 National Association for Interpretation Media Awards.
- Return to Life Touchscreen Exhibit is the recipient of First Place in the Interactive Multi-Media category for the 2012 National Association for Interpretation Media Awards.
- Received a \$25K grant to develop a pilot app for the Hummocks Trail. The app, being developed by the Forest Service partner Get to Know, will feature interactive nature-based challenges for kids as they hike the trail.
- Developed a coalition of NW colleges, universities, and K-12 teachers to support the development of educational programs and overnight group camping facilities for the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater.

Recommendation: Reinstate the Scientific Advisory Board as stated in section 7 in the Monument Act.

- The legislation that established the Monument in 1982 included the establishment of a nine member Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of senior federal, state, and local industry scientists to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on issues related to the management of scientific values and recreational opportunities in the Monument. The legislation authorized the SAB for a 10-year period.
- Recognizing the need for technical assistance and oversight, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Washington Office attempted to extend the SAB charter. Efforts to extend the charter were unsuccessful due to a moratorium on the establishment of federal boards and commissions, part of a comprehensive effort to "reinvent" and streamline government.
- In 1999, the Monument convened a Technical Advisory Panel of senior-level scientists to review the status of the Monument Science Program and make recommendations about future program needs and direction. The program review indicated the importance of prioritizing the efforts of the one-person science program and making efficient use of the Monument Scientist position.
- Given the multi-faceted nature of the scientific-technical, education-outreach, and public affairs duties required, it would be important that the activities of a proposed advisory committee be closely coordinated with other ongoing efforts and that the 1999 panel recommendations be revisited as part of the planning process.
- To reinstate the SAB will require further coordination with our Congressional delegate.



The Forest Service and Community Partners celebrating the opening of the Pine Creek Information Station



“Valuing Places” Interpretive Rangers bring science to life for the public at the Trail of Two Forests and Windy Ridge.



Research scientists at work on the Monument

INDUSTRY

Recommendation: Continue to address recreation and tourism as industrial components.

- The Monument and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest have made outstanding improvements to the scientific, educational, and recreational opportunities and attractions throughout the entire Monument.
- The Monument continues to increase its destination value within the greater Cowlitz, Skamania, Clark, and Lewis County area.
- Developed a business plan for the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater to evaluate opportunities for public camping, educational programs, food service, visitor services, and a science research camp.
- Reopened the Coldwater Facility as the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater as a science and education center and a visitor portal for the community.
- The Monument will continue to engage with local communities to educate them on the Monument's benefits to increase to the attractiveness of the area as a travel destination. Increased tourism products and services are best provided jointly with private enterprise and non-profit partners.
- Partnered with the Cowlitz County Economic Development Council to jointly fund a staff position to actively engage businesses to invest in opportunities along the State Hwy 504 Corridor and the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater.
- Worked with the Mount St. Helens High Lakes Coalition and County Commissioners to write and submit a Land and Water Conservation Proposal to purchase the High Lakes land area.
- Negotiated an agreement with Cowlitz PUD to take ownership of the 26KV power line along the State Hwy 504 upon the completion of identified maintenance. Ownership of the power line by the Utility will allow for potential new customers to get power along the highway.

Recommendation: Continue to develop relationships with industrial landowners bordering the Monument.

- Worked with the Mount St. Helens High Lakes Coalition and County Commissioners to write and submit a Land and Water Conservation Proposal to purchase the High Lakes land area.
- The National Forest continues to maintain a relationship with Weyerhaeuser.
- The Monument has partnered with PacifiCorp to fund two Interpretive Ranger positions. The Rangers provide interpretive talks at several PacifiCorp campground facilities as well as on the Monument.

Recommendation: Create an R&D laboratory for the cost effective development applications in harsh environments to encourage relationships with emerging technologies and industry in remote sensing, robotics, nanotechnology, and renewable energy for monitoring environmental trends.

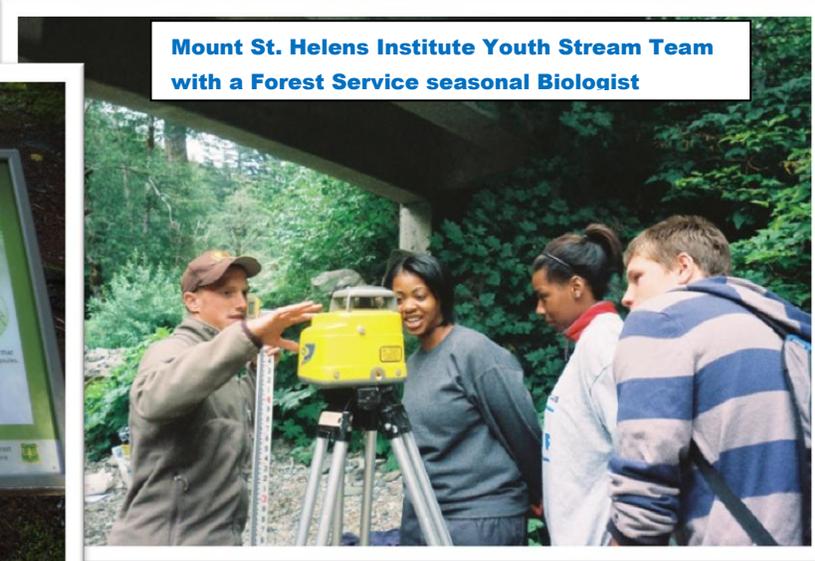
- The Forest Service supports research and development compatible with the preservation and conservation of natural ecosystems and how they evolve, adapt and sustain themselves in response to natural disturbances and new disturbances such as climate change.

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- The Agency will work with any outside organization or company to explore mutually beneficial R&D opportunities. The Monument has jointly created a position with the Cowlitz Economic Development Council to establish how the Monument's resources and opportunities can be utilized in creating new economic development.



Fifty scientific interpretive panels have been updated throughout the Monument.



Mount St. Helens Institute Youth Stream Team with a Forest Service seasonal Biologist

Volunteers making a difference on the Blue Horse Trail and at the Pine Creek Information Station



TOURISM

Recommendation: Develop a user-friendly, unified (state and federal) fee system.

- A programmed study on the best use, type, and placement of fee collection opportunities has been initiated with the addition of a newly hired Program Analyst.
- A project to install (8) electronic vehicle counters has been approved in an effort to provide data for this evaluation. The study will identify, evaluate, and develop proposals to establish a fair, cost effective, profitable, user and community friendly fee system to enhance revenue to allow for continued sustainable education and recreation activities.
- As part of this study, alternative methods will be evaluated for selling passes (on-line, fee booths, and sales through partner outlets).
- The Monument with its partner the Mount St. Helens Institute, and potential other partners, has been analyzing opportunities for fee based educational programs, events, seminars and classes at the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater and its adjacent science camp.

Recommendation: Develop a regional tourism network (Destination Marketing Organization) with a year-round regionally coordinated marketing plan.

- The Monument continues to improve its presence as a regional tourism asset, which communities and businesses can capitalize on as a marketing draw for increased tourism.
- Professionally developed marketing plans and programs are best provided with private enterprise and non-profit partners with support from the Monument and Gifford Pinchot National Forest.
- The Monument and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest are actively engaged with area tourism and economic development boards.
- Partnered with the Cowlitz County Economic Development Council to jointly fund a staff position to actively engage businesses to invest in opportunities along the State Hwy 504 Corridor and the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater.
- Established relationships with 15 new regional businesses along the Interstate 5 corridor to sell NW Forest passes.
- Worked with the State of Washington to have interpretive maps and information posted at five (5) visitor rest stops along Interstate 5.

Recommendation: Fully fund the managing agency's interpretive program.

- The Regional Forester has continued to fund the “Valuing Places” Ranger program on the Monument. This supplemental funding is separate from the Forest Service’s programmatic funding.
- Our partner the Mount St. Helens Institute, utilizing trained volunteers, has provided exceptional interpretive programs to supplement the many outstanding programs conducted by the Monument.

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- ❑ Conducted 2,684 Ranger interpretive talks serving 93,114 visitors, including Boundary Trail hikes, plaza talks, Elk Rock walks, and school group talks at the Johnston Ridge Observatory.
- ❑ Conducted roving educational talks serving 14,132 visitors at Johnston Ridge Observatory.
- ❑ Completed 350 Junior Ranger programs which resulted in 5,830 new Junior Rangers.
- ❑ Conducted roving educational talks throughout all areas serving 31,557 visitors at Ape.
- ❑ Conducted 292 eruption talks serving 6,481 visitors at Windy Ridge.
- ❑ Conducted roving educational talks along the 99 Corridor reaching 17,449 visitors.
- ❑ In the two years since its inception, “Valuing Places” Rangers have conducted the Environmental Education program at Ape Cave and Trail of Two Forests resulting in 89 programs serving 6,000 students, teachers, and chaperones.

Recommendation: Develop destination resorts in and around the Monument.

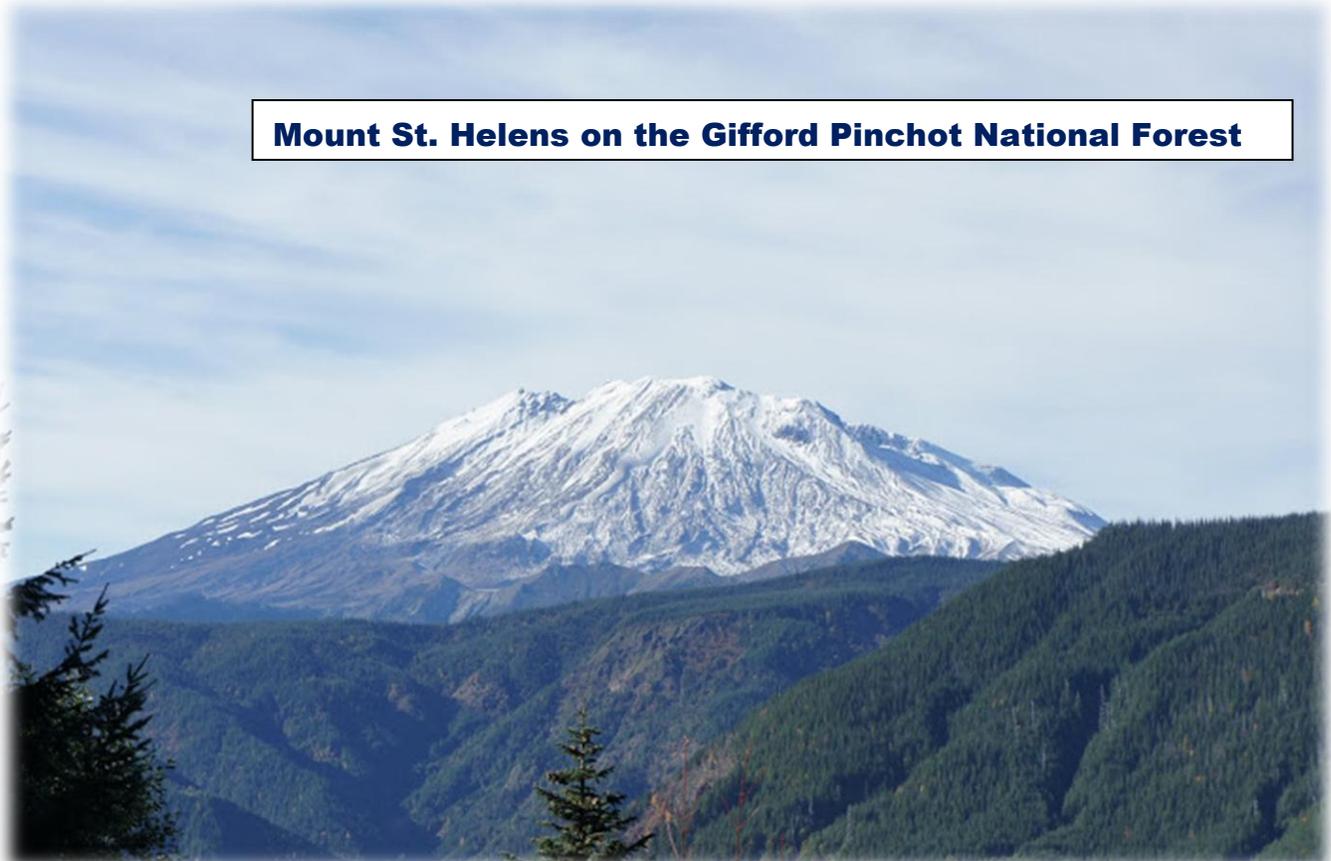
- ❑ The National Forest and the Monument together, support thoughtful, responsible development on private land near the Monument that does not impact the resources the Monument protects.
- ❑ Increased tourism products and services are best provided jointly with private enterprise and non-profit partners.
- ❑ The Monument continues to fund and improve its science, educational, and recreational opportunities to support its legislative mission.
- ❑ The Monument will continue to engage with local communities to educate them on the Monuments benefits to increase to the attractiveness of the area as a travel destination.
 - Established relationships with 15 new regional businesses along the Interstate 5 corridor to sell NW Forest passes. Worked with the State of Washington to have interpretive maps and information posted at five (5) visitor rest stops along Interstate 5.
- ❑ Partnered with the Cowlitz County Economic Development Council to jointly fund a staff position to actively engage businesses to invest in opportunities along the State Hwy 504 Corridor and the Coldwater Facility.
- ❑ Negotiated an agreement with Cowlitz PUD to take ownership of the 26KV power line along the State Hwy 504 upon the completion of identified maintenance. Ownership of the power line by the Utility will allow for potential new customers to get power along the highway.

New trail signage throughout the Monument



Recommendation: Establish and fund a Special Use Permit process for the Monument and develop products and services that will enhance visitors' experience.

- Where appropriate the National Forest will continue to issue special use permits, with careful consideration of visitor interests, safety, resource protection, and carrying capacity.
- The Monument's priority for new permits will be in the Coldwater Facility and Coldwater Lake area, as we work with community partners to establish new programs and broader Use.
 - Developed relationships with Northwest Excursions, Cascadia Outdoor Adventure School, OMSI, and MountainShop to expand recreation and education opportunities on the Monument.
 - Funded an Outfitter Guide and Needs Assessment to be conducted for the Monument and the Forest by the Forest Service Enterprise Team.
 - Awarded two (2) temporary special use permits for outfitter guide paddling trips on Coldwater Lake.



Mount St. Helens on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest