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LOOKING FORWARD

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

Creating a Vision Together...



Gifford Pinchot National Forest
Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument

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CREATING A VISION
TOGETHER...

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For over 100 years, the United States Forest Service (USFS) has provided visitors with premier outdoor recreation experiences at Mount St. Helens, one of the most beautiful natural sites in the United States. The Forest Service has been honored to be the caretakers of this incredible landscape. In the years following the 1980 eruption of the volcano and the ensuing decades of ecological and biological recovery, Forest Service management has continued to allow visitors' unparalleled access to this national treasure, contributed to the economic viability of local communities, and provided a platform for groundbreaking scientific research. They have successfully balanced public access and enjoyment, while protecting the natural processes which have fostered the recovery and renewal in this dramatically altered landscape.

The Mount St. Helens Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) highlights how the Forest Service will continue to serve as the best federal agency to manage the Monument for this and future generation of Americans. The SIP focuses on the Forest Service's strategic goals and the key actions (decisions, strategies, and investments) designed to meet the public and legislative mandates of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument (MSHNVN), as established by Congress in 1982 and entrusted to the Forest Service.

Forest Service Strategic Goals:

- Infrastructure—Targeting investment in trails, roads, recreation, and facilities.
- Community Engagement—Strengthening partnerships and expanding volunteer resources.
- Public Safety—Increasing law enforcement presence and transferring Spirit Lake Tunnel to the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Science and Research—Increasing focus on scientific research activities.
- Natural Resource Protection—Enhancing cave management and intensifying invasive weed removal.
- Education and Interpretation—Increasing programming at Johnston Ridge Observatory and other interpretive sites.
- New Administrative Unit —Establishing a separate Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument and the Mount Saint Helens District.

The Strategy Reflected in this Strategic Investment Plan is influenced by the following:

- A congressionally legislated mission
- Community and stakeholder expectations
- Mount St. Helens Citizen Advisory Committee (MSHCAC) Recommendations
- Implementation of the MSHNVN Comprehensive Management Plan and \$100 million in capital investment
- Emerging Partnerships



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INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL CONTEXT



The Purpose of this document is to provide context for charting Mount St Helens National Volcanic Monument's path over the next five to ten years. The Strategic Investment Plan's Key Actions identify the areas where partner and community involvement can help to meet these goals. The central part of the Strategic Investment Plan will help us formulate decisions and actions to seize recent investment opportunities and continue the momentum the Forest Service has generated in managing the Monument. This document serves as the visionary planning tool of what can be achieved at the Monument with the combined efforts of the Forest Service, Community leaders, Partners and Community Volunteers.

1980-2000:

Eruption, Congressional Action, Comprehensive Management Plan, & Infrastructure Investments

Mount St. Helens erupted on a Sunday morning at 8:32 A.M., May 18, 1980. Within moments, nearly 230 square miles of forest were pulverized, flattened, or left dead and standing. It soon became the most violent volcanic eruption in North American recorded history. The eruption lasted nine hours and took fifty-seven human lives, leaving behind a dramatically altered landscape.

Two years later, President Ronald Reagan and the United States Congress, created the 110,000-acre Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument and entrusted management of the newly protected area to the USFS. The legislation detailed strict mandates on the Forest Service - requiring protection for local communities from volcanic and other natural hazards, visitor access to recreation and education, stewardship of the natural recovery processes, and support for scientific research. The subsequent creation of the MSHNVM Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) subdivided the monument into land classifications based on resource value, disturbance sensitivities, and the potential for recreational, educational and interpretive use.

From 1985 to 1997, two visitor centers and an observatory were built, State Route 504 was relocated and extended, scenic viewpoints were created, and hundreds of miles of trails were built. Additionally, an internationally renowned climbing program was established along with programs for recreation, education, interpretation, and science.

2000-2008:

Fee-Based Operations, Visitor Services Reductions, & Partnerships

After a successful partnership to co-manage the Visitor Center at Silver Lake with Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (WSPRC), the decision was made in 2000 to transfer ownership of the facility to the WSPRC. That same year the Monument retired both the Coldwater Ridge and the Pine Creek Visitor Centers and reduced operations at some its other dispersed interpretive sites. These setbacks highlighted the increasing difficulties the Forest Service encountered in reconciling public expectations

for Monument services and facilities with significant decreases in federal funding. In order to meet these expectations and satisfy the legislated mission of the Monument, the Forest Service focused its efforts on alternative funding and external financing and an increased use of a volunteer workforce.

These challenges framed an important era of transition for the Monument. There was an increased emphasis on working with partners in delivering and providing services, and a decreased emphasis on investing in infrastructure.

Beyond 2008:

Mount St. Helens Citizens Advisory Committee, Forest Service Investments, Community Partnerships, & Recovery Projects

In response to the reduction of visitor services at the Monument, the MSHCAC was formed. Made up of locally elected officials and representatives from concerned citizens groups, the MSHCAC was tasked by the state of Washington's congressional delegation to provide a local vision for the future of MSHNVM. Specifically, they were asked to present "an informed recommendation regarding the best course of action for ensuring that Mount St. Helens 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."

Highlighted by significant financial investments in infrastructure and programs and the strengthening of partnerships and opportunities, the Forest Service has charted a new path for MSHNVM.

Significant Investments, Partnerships, and Opportunities Include:

- \$5.87 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act infrastructure investments
- \$3.8 million in Forest Service funded infrastructure investments in 2010-2013
- Increased operational funding for the Monument's pilot program as a "Valued Places" model
- Reopening Pine Creek Information Station with community partners — serving tens of thousands of visitors a year on the south and east side of the monument
- Permitting 13,000 climbers each year
- Placing new seismic exhibits at Johnston Ridge Observatory
- Reopening Forest Roads 99 and 83—providing access to Windy Ridge and Lava Canyon
- Reopening Lava Canyon footbridge
- Deploying "Valued Places" interpretive rangers throughout the Monument



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The Forest Service vision for Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument is to fulfill its legislated mission and provide the public with exceptional outdoor visitor experiences.

"The U.S. Forest Service management model is accepted as the best management model for the Mount St. Helens National Monument. Long-term adequate funding must be prioritized to allow for the maximum accessibility and improved infrastructure that is the desire of the Committee, and reflective of a preponderance of the public testimony received."

-Mount St. Helens Citizen Advisory Committee

Legislated Mission of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument:

- To protect the significant features of the Monument
- To protect public health and safety
- To provide for natural recovery and processes
- To emphasize recreation and interpretation
- To preserve and encourage opportunities for scientific study and research

The following pages detail the Key Actions necessary to carry out the strategic goals and progress towards meeting the legislated mission and the intent of the Mount St. Helens Citizen Advisory Committee. The key actions are prioritized in the order listed on the following pages. Priorities are based on the importance to meet the legislated mission and the intent of the MSHCAC.

In the following pages, each key action topic is broken down into the five sub categories listed below. At the end of each key action topic, specific information is provided for partners and volunteers who wish to participate.

Why Make It Happen? – describes the benefits of Key Action implementation, and the positive impacts imparted upon visitors, nearby communities, the Monument landscape, and scientific research endeavors

Current Investments – highlights the many recent Monument facility, infrastructure, and program improvement accomplished by the Forest Service and its many valued partners

What's Next? – takes a look at the future investments the Forest Service and its partners are focusing to continue the success of meeting the legislated mission of the Monument

How We Can Work Together – summarizes the essential community partnerships and volunteerism helping accelerate progress toward the shared objectives of all MSHNVM stakeholders

Examples of Valued Partners – lists some of the organizations playing important roles in helping to meet the vision set forth for the Monument

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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS



Enhanced Trails at Mount St. Helens

Why Make It Happen?

Providing access to the Monument's stunning landscapes on safe, well maintained trails is the top infrastructure investment priority for MSHNVM. A well-maintained trail system is the most cost-effective investment for increasing public access and promoting visitation to the Monument. The Forest Service is proud of its growing legacy of public and partner participation in trail management.

The Monument's trail network is critical to providing hikers, recreationists, educators, and scientists access to Mount St. Helens' unique landscape features, while limiting the impacts of off-trail activities. Well maintained trails welcome visitors and reassure hikers they are on a known route. Trails benefit local communities by increasing recreation, public health, tourism, and public education opportunities. Increasing public demand for Monument trail access has resulted in a trail maintenance workload which exceeds Forest Service capacities. Continued partnership and community involvement represent the best means for maintaining, improving, and expanding the trail system and public access to the Monument.

Current Investments:

Additional funding in 2010 and 2011 nearly tripled the Monument's budget for trail maintenance. Even so, the tremendous volunteer energy of partner organizations has been the backbone of priority trail maintenance—such as in the case of the around-the-mountain Loowit Trail, the Hummocks Trail, and the Boundary Trail.

What's Next:

The MSHNVM goals for the trail system include:

1. **Essential Maintenance:** Enhancing existing trails, recurring maintenance, emphasizing visitor safety, and providing up-to-date trail information.
2. **New Trails:** Improving public access to Monument features by constructing hiking loops, trail connections, and connections to local community trail systems. Strong partnerships are a critical element in providing new trail systems. Potential new trails under evaluation are: A north climb trail; a connection between South Coldwater trailhead, Hummocks, and Coldwater Lake trailheads; a vista trail from Ape Cave; a connector trail between Coldwater and Castle Lakes.
3. **Public Awareness:** A campaign directed at increasing public knowledge of new and existing hiking and biking trails, and the opportunities these trails provide for recreational adventures, community health, education, science outings, and tourism.



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KEY ACTIONS

How can we work together?

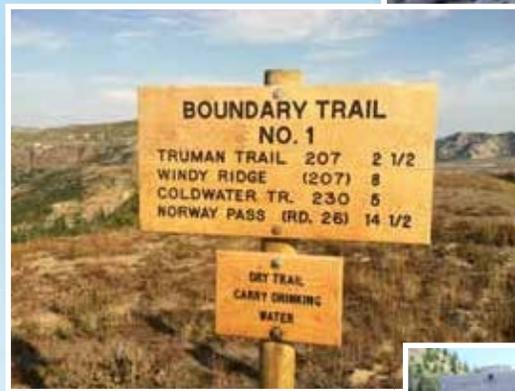
- Volunteer: Join the Forest Service as a volunteer and partner on trails projects to sustain and expand the Monument trail network.
- Participate: Take part in the Monument’s trail scoping committee.
- Offer Services: Champion trail investments by helping to craft grant requests, foster greater community involvement.
- Publicize: Join the campaign to highlight Monument trails and trail-related opportunities to visitors, tourists, communities.

Examples of Valued Partners:

Washington Trails Association
 Backcountry Horsemen
 Mount St. Helens Institute
 Northwest Trail Alliance
 Northwest Service Academy
 Washington Conservation Corp
 Lone Fir Resort, Cougar WA
 Toutle Valley Schools

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in trails and hiking? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: (360) 449-7831, or lmromano@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

US Geological Survey
Discover Your Northwest
Mount St. Helens
Institute and Volcano
Volunteers
Cowlitz Economic
Development Council
Mountain Visitor Services
– Food Services
Second Story Interactive
Studios
Northwest Film Center
School of Film
Cowlitz County Tourism
Washington State
Department of
Transportation



Johnston Ridge Observatory (JRO)

Why Make It Happen?

Internationally recognized, the Johnston Ridge Observatory (JRO) is the Monument's premier visitor destination. This unique site provides an iconic experience for visitors and is the Monument's most frequently visited site. Its importance as a destination experience for local, national, and international audiences makes it the centerpiece of the Forest Service's investment strategy for the Monument.

The Forest Service is working with partners and donors to continually update JRO with cutting edge exhibits, science discoveries, and memorable experiences. Sustained maintenance of this high profile facility and continued investment in its interpretive and educational exhibits is vital to its continued operation as a world class destination. In response to MSHCAC and community interests to maintain this level of excellence, the Forest Service is working with community partners and volunteers, and the Mount St. Helens Institute to expand interpretive and education programs, and provide hands on science and eco-tourism experiences at JRO and the newly completed amphitheater.

Current Investments:

Beginning in 2010, significant improvements to this facility included new interactive seismic displays, state of the art theater sound and projection equipment, new and reformatted films, new doors and windows, a roof replacement, resurfacing on the Eruption Trail, and the addition of an outdoor amphitheater. These enhancements garnered much public interest and media attention, affirming the Monument's status as the flagship facility. Successful implementation of the Monument investment strategy will keep the JRO facilities and programs current, well maintained, and inviting to visitors.

What's Next?

- An entrance booth with an improved information kiosk will be constructed on the pedestrian walkway from the parking lot to the Observatory—simplifying visitor orientation, providing assistance to visitors and educational groups in need, and improving our ability to host events at the Observatory and amphitheater.
- With its dramatic setting, the JRO outdoor amphitheater significantly expands Monument capacity for educational programs and community events. Community partners are invited to participate in development of new programs and events in this memorable venue.
- Exhibit upgrades with interactive website connections are in their next phase, as part of the ongoing interpretation plan to provide updated exhibits complimenting and expanding on existing programs.



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KEY ACTIONS

- Mobile food concessions will be enhanced for better visitor services. Future site will be located adjacent to JRO entry walkway; another will be added to serve visitors at the new outdoor amphitheater.
- Expanding and enriching Volcano Volunteer opportunities is an important part of the JRO investment plan. Volunteers provide interpretive presentations, science programs, exhibit updates, and ranger walks in the JRO vicinity. Enthusiastic volunteers, supported by partners such as the Mount St Helens Institute, come to the Monument from throughout the region, across the nation, and even internationally. Expansion of volunteer housing continues at Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater.
- A Monument community group, "Friends of Johnston Ridge Observatory," is being established, focusing on expanding eco-tourism and hosting community events in the newly improved JRO facilities.

How We Can Work Together:

- Community and Educational Events: Design community events using the JRO outdoor amphitheater as a venue for science, research, education, and recreation programs compatible with the Monument's mission.
- Volunteer and Partner: Volcano Volunteers offer memorable interpretive presentations and many other visitor services at and around JRO, and help the Forest Service bring the volcano's intriguing science to visitors, schools, and the local community.
- Eco-tourism: Join or support the "Friends of JRO" tourism group, or participate in one of their educational eco-tourism programs.
- Exhibits: Partners, donors, and volunteers provide critical aid to MSHNVM by keeping exhibits updated and presenting fresh interpretive services at JRO.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in Johnston Ridge Observatory? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: (360) 449-7831, or lmromano@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Skamania County
Cowlitz Economic
Development Council
Federal Highways
Administration
Washington Department
of Transportation
Swift Community Action
Team
Mount St. Helens
Institute and
Conservation Corp
volunteers
Skamania County Sheriff
and Corrections crews



Roads, Bridges, and Transportation Investments

Why Make It Happen?

Visitors to Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument form their first impressions along the forest and community roads serving as the Monument's portals. The Forest Service ensures visitor safety and provides enjoyable travel experiences with well maintained, safe, and scenic roadways. Visitors, stakeholders, and elected officials view road conditions as being synonymous with Monument accessibility, and the public expects to find roads open and in good repair. Safe and well maintained travel corridors with quality road signs and markers are integral for enhancing visitor experience and local community pride.

Current Investments:

The Forest Service and the Federal Highways Administration have made major repairs and improvements on Forest Roads 99 (Windy Ridge Road) and 83 (Lava Canyon Road), and have re-opened Forest Road 81 following extensive flood and slide damage in 2006. In addition, the Forest Service has improved the cost outlook for Monument roads by decommissioning many miles of damaged, higher-risk roads, storm-proofing their roadbeds, and converting many to trails used by hikers, bikers, horses, skiers, and snowmobilers.

SR 504 is owned and operated by the Washington Department of Transportation. The state invests significantly each year to maintain this highway and keep it relatively snow free to Coldwater Lake.

What's Next?

- Forest Road 90 (Lewis River Road) will receive over \$10M in repairs and enhancements over the next few years, ultimately transitioning it to a state highway. As part of a close partnership with Skamania County, this project will improve safety and convenience for travelers, and enhance tourism and commercial opportunities on the south side of the Monument.
- The Forest Service continues in its efforts to install high quality, visitor-friendly interpretive and informational signs along all Monument travel corridors.
- Planned "Fire and Ice" Scenic Loops are being designed for placement within and nearby the Monument, utilizing many of the same community partnerships resulting in the reinvigorated Pine Creek Visitor Center.
- Vista and Scenic Overlook enhancements on Forest Roads 25 and 83 are being performed as part of a forest-wide Vista maintenance effort. Timber sale thinning and restoration projects are designed in cooperation with Vista maintenance efforts.

KEY ACTIONS

- The Forest Service emphasizes maintenance on those roadways most vulnerable to slides and washouts.
- The SR 504 corridor's Scenic Designation exemplifies the Forest Service's efforts to capitalize on all such designation opportunities. The Forest Service promotes a community-based strategic vision for enhancing scenic values.
- The Forest Service is working to determine the most practical investments for the slide-damaged Forest Road 26. Currently, mountain bikers have been making great use of the damaged roadway.
- The Cowlitz Economic Development Council and the Forest Service will partner and pursue options for shuttles, public transit, and other alternative travel methods on the scenic SR504 corridor from I-5 to the Johnston Ridge Observatory.
- The Forest Service continues to pursue Scenic Designation status and other road investments to improve visitor safety on the Forest Road 25 between Pine Creek and Randle.

How We Can Work Together:

- Community Events: Develop community activities to clean and enhance roadsides and overlooks, or sponsor favorite segments of roads. (Kudos to Swift Community Action Team for annual 90 Road clean-up.)
- Adopt a Road: Participate in the increasingly popular and always appreciated Road Adoption program to clean up roadside litter and debris. Follow the example of the climbers on Climbers Bivouac Road and the snowmobilers and mountain bikers around Marble Mountain who are setting the pace. Join or host a National Public Lands Day event.
- "Fire and Ice" Scenic Loop: The Forest Service encourages support of joint tourism efforts.
- Adopt a Vista: Volunteer to assist with Vista management efforts. Help prune tree branches or spruce up after roadside thinning projects.
- Signs and Interpretive Materials: Sponsor placement or upkeep of invaluable interpretive signs along roadways.

Who Should I Contact?

Anyone interested should contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: (360) 449-7831, or lmromano@fs.fed.us.





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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Cowlitz Economic
Development Council
Mount St. Helens
Institute
Discover Your Northwest
Pacific Northwest
Research Station
US Geological Survey



Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater

Why Make It Happen?

The Coldwater Facility was retired as a visitor center in 2008. The Facility presently provides limited training and education venues, and serves as the administrative office, the warehouse space, and the environmental control center for Johnston Ridge Observatory. The Coldwater Facility will be a focal point for future investment as the Monument continues to expand and improve its mission of providing science and education

The MSHCAC recommended reinvestment in the Coldwater Facility as an overnight destination to include science, interpretation, education, visitor services, food, and university partnerships. The committee recommendations highlighted the benefits of reinvestment in this facility: economic development, increased educational opportunities, and utilization of existing infrastructure. The committee also acknowledged the significant expense required for maintaining and operating the facility and the need for investments and partnerships to fund the development of overnight destination facilities.

In the development of concepts and alternatives for the future of the Coldwater facility, the Forest Service and several key Coldwater partners have identified recurrent themes for the success of the Facility. The Facility needs to provide a safe environment for the public, be energy efficient, and requires the effort of many community partners to invest in and contribute to its management and operation. It was through the strength and combined efforts of many community partners that led to the reopening and continued success of the Pine Creek Information Center.

Community and regional interests align with the Forest Service's renewed investments in the Coldwater Facilities' potential value to the local economy, to local education, and to the local regions "Quality of Place" experiences. Through community partnerships and joint investments a vibrant Coldwater Facility offers promise as a new focus and a vibrant, productive community asset. Increased public awareness, the continued involvement of local communities, the efforts of many partners and stakeholders, and the Forest Service designation as a "Valued Place", can create a remarkable success story for the community, the local economy, and the public.

Current Investments:

Recent investments at Coldwater include the installation of energy efficient replacement windows in the entire window wall, modernization of the environmental controls, and a partial roof replacement. Other investments include restoration of the walkway and parking surfaces, and treatment to building exteriors. New yurts and restroom facilities have been constructed to attract and house the many enthusiastic volunteers who participate in programs at JRO and elsewhere in the Coldwater vicinity. Further expansion of housing for the growing volunteer program is underway.

What's Next?

- The Forest Service is working on a Coldwater replica of the Monument's successful Pine Creek joint-investment model, which led to the reopening of the Pine Creek Information Center and continuing upgrades there. This model involves joining forces with community partners, community leaders, local businesses, and other committed stakeholders to foster greater community ownership and participation in programs, and provide better services for visitors.
- Refinement of a draft business plan for Coldwater includes an examination of benefits incurred by adding the following services: A Science and Learning Center—expanding partnerships with schools and colleges; Outfitter Guide Services; Visitor Services—including food and retail gift sales; and a venue for community events. Coldwater can also provide visitor services for "shoulder seasons," when JRO is inaccessible due to snow and avalanche hazards.
- The Forest Service will issue a public prospectus (a request for proposals) on Coldwater's competitive potential for commercial operations of food services, retail operations, outdoor gear rental, and outfitter guide services.

KEY ACTIONS

- The addition of a stand-alone restroom, in the upper Coldwater parking area will allow greater public use of the landscape and trails surrounding the Coldwater facility, regardless of the building's availability.
- The Forest Service continues essential facility upgrades with investments to the heating, cooling, and water systems.
- The Forest Service is seeking a local food service provider to offer public food service at the Coldwater facility as a key ingredient to expanded public use of the Science and Learning Center facility.
- Exhibits reflecting outdated messaging and technology have been removed, and the majority of the area's interpretive messaging has been transferred to Johnson Ridge Observatory. Flexible, state-of-the-art interpretive technology is now more mobile and reduces space requirements, allowing multipurpose use of the Coldwater space.
- The Forest Service, in collaboration with Cowlitz County and the State of Washington, is exploring the possibility of integrating Coldwater winter educational and recreational programs with a nearby winter snow park.
- The proposed Ecological Discovery Camp at Coldwater was nominated for a significant fund-raising campaign by the National Forest Foundation. The initiative would gain national visibility and bring additional funding and sponsorships to the Coldwater facility, fueling Monument and partner aspirations for Coldwater as listed above. Re-nomination for this promising recognition is anticipated.
- Re-acquisition of public access to the High Lakes area would be a key component of the Coldwater partnerships and investment strategy.

How We Can Work Together:

- Volunteer at Coldwater or with a Partner Organization: Applying the "Pine Creek Model" at Coldwater—specifically, the expansion of community participation in facility rehabilitation—benefits Monument visitors, partners, and neighboring communities. Three essential partners—the Cowlitz Economic Development Council, the Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI), and Discover Your Northwest interpretive association (DYNW)—are already deeply involved with Coldwater renewal. Continued expansion of both partner and community involvement is essential to the re-birth of the Coldwater facility.
- Your community group can participate too, and opportunities to be involved are always expanding. Your participation is desired! Plan music, art, science or educational events at Coldwater.
- The Monument seeks to work and celebrate with area community groups in the production and presentation of a variety of community events in this unique setting. Bring your group's ideas to us!

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center and the Coldwater facilities? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: (360) 449-7831, or lmromano@fs.fed.us.

or Peter Frenzen, Monument Scientist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7835 or pfrenzen@fs.fed.us.





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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Backcountry Horsemen
– Mount St. Helens
Chapter
Mount St. Helens
Institute and Volunteer
Campground Hosts
Cougar Area Trail Seekers
PacifiCorp
Cowlitz County
Recreation
Skamania County Sheriff

Public Overnight Facilities

Why Make It Happen?

The Monument's stunning landscape and amazing recreational offerings attract hundreds of thousands of people to the Monument annually. The MSHCAC emphasized the growing public demand for overnight and camping accommodations at the Monument. The MSHCAC recommended the area near Coldwater Facility as an opportune location for overnight accommodations. The development of effective public camping opportunities near the Coldwater Facility compliments the Forest Service interest in accommodating and expanding the length of the recreational and educational experiences of visitors and students requiring overnight options.

Demand on campsites at the south side of the Monument reflects the growing influence of the Vancouver/Portland urban interface. Adjacent corporate landowners have been limiting public access to their land. Where camping is allowed, they are operating at capacity. The limited availability for camping has resulted in increasing public pressure for camping on the Monument. More people than ever before are utilizing the Monument's undeveloped dispersed campsites, resulting in heavy environmental impact upon these sites and creating sanitation and safety concerns. Many are camping at the developed Kalama Horse Camp resulting in recurring user conflicts. These conflicts create a management dilemma which could be mitigated by adding more developed campground capacity. Additionally the unmanaged sites pose a demand on Monument staffing and resources and provide no camping revenue.

Despite national data indicating declining public interest in camping, the demand for campsite facilities is already high and still rising in the vicinity of the Monument. The shortage of adequate developed camping at MSHNVM limits the offering of educational and recreational programs the Monument and its partners can establish and market. The addition of developed campsites would also alleviate the pressure of the undeveloped dispersed camping on the south side of the Monument.

Current Investments:

In 2010, Monument staff began an informal inventory of existing campgrounds on the Highway 504 corridor. The study evaluated occupancies, fees, and amenity levels at both public and privately owned camping facilities. In 2011, Monument staff commenced an evaluation of potential camp site areas around the Coldwater facility, along with a feasibility assessment which considers likely costs, revenue, user demand, and differing operational needs at a variety of amenity levels.

What's Next?

- The Forest Service is developing a detailed, campground Conceptual Design for the Coldwater area. The design will include a financial feasibility review, an evaluation of commercial concession options, and identification of preferred development sites. Following completion of the Conceptual Design, the Forest Service will initiate a funding proposal, allowing public review and project environmental assessment (EA).
- The Forest Service will determine whether to include campground operations in a prospectus (assessment of competitive interest) for other potential commercial service operations at Coldwater.

KEY ACTIONS

- Working with partners, the Forest Service will determine the feasibility of acquiring public recreational access to the High Lakes area, which could offer some of the most desirable potential campground locations in the Coldwater area.
- The Forest Service will evaluate the Mt. Margaret backcountry campsites and determine whether improvement and expansion is possible and would enhance visitor use in the backcountry.
- The Forest Service will evaluate both dispersed and developed camping sites at the Marble Mountain and Kalama Horse Camp areas to assess whether impacts from unmanaged camper use can be addressed in a cost effective manner.
- The Forest Service and its Coldwater Ridge facility partners continue to pursue the specific MSHCAC recommendation designating Coldwater as an overnight destination able to accommodate a multiplicity of programs requiring overnight visitor stays.

How We Can Work Together:

- Participate in Integrated Development Plans: Feasibility studies for Monument campgrounds will be integrated with area County visions and investments in camping, lodging, recreation, and scenic byways.
- Be a Volunteer Campground Host: Campgrounds on public lands are commonly operated at a net financial loss. To tip the scales back, the Forest Service partners with volunteer campground hosts. Quality volunteer campground hosts can streamline operations, reduce losses from vandalism, provide interpretation experience, and increase visitor return rates at national forest campgrounds.
- Group-Adopt a Campground: Through this program, partner and community groups have greatly enhanced visitor experience at some MSHNVM campgrounds. Many visitors have participated in popular interpretive programs provided by Volcano Volunteers, interns, and community partners sharing their knowledge of Mount St. Helens incredible history, geology, and ecology.
- Privately Invest in Campground Operations: The Forest Service has explored commercial enterprises such as franchise KOA operated campgrounds. There are some challenges which come along with privately owned facilities on public lands; but it may be an avenue for our community partners to accelerate campground construction and marketing.
- Participate in Community Support and Law Enforcement: With increased visitor overnight stays comes an increasing challenge of user conflicts, vandalism, and the infringement of campground regulations. However, a strong sense of community pride, shared ownership, concerned participation, and enforcement support can mitigate these issues and are essential for maintaining quality overnight experiences for visitors. Continued strong support and coordination with County Sheriff Deputies is vital to our safe operations in remote facilities.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in helping with camping and overnight stays? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: (360) 449-7831, or lmromano@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Pacific Northwest
Research Station and
affiliated researchers
Mount St. Helens Insti-
tute
Discover Your Northwest

Coldwater Lake – Education and Recreation

Why Make It Happen?

Coldwater Lake was newly created by an epic landslide which dammed the steep-sided valley of Coldwater Creek during the 1980 volcanic eruption. The lake drains by an engineered stream outlet managed and monitored for the safety of downstream communities. Recreation at Coldwater Lake features boating, fishing, and rich interpretive programs and signage. The scenic lakeshore includes a boardwalk, picnicking, modern restrooms, and emergency phone access. The lake area has popular hiking trails with access to the backcountry and the hummock-strewn landslide zone. However, slide hazards dominate the lakeshore's steep ridges, and active rock slides in the steep chutes bordering the lake continually shift the shape and appearance of the shoreline and lake bed.

Coldwater Lake provides unique opportunities to integrate the safety, educational, and recreational objectives of the Monument without impacting the scientific research occurring there. Enhancement of education-related visitor services, such as gear rental, aquatic interpretive programs, and unique boat camping will increase visitor use, appreciation, and enjoyment of the pristine lake.

The Forest Service's intent is to identify the best approaches to expanding camping and recreation facilities at Coldwater Lake, in ways enhancing rather than detracting from the lake's important research, and its interpretive, scenic, and educational values.

Current Investments:

The lakeshore boardwalk planking and railings were rebuilt in 2010. This enhancement restored a beautiful recreational feature and refreshed public access to the lake and shoreline, while limiting impact on the still-evolving ecology of this newly formed lake.



KEY ACTIONS

What's Next?

- Manageable, low impact campsites with canoe/kayak access. Concept development, feasibility assessment, initiation of the public review process and development of a NEPA proposal are next.
- Feasibility Assessment: An outfitter-guide feasibility assessment will evaluate potential visitor demand, identify interested service providers, and assess implications on overall management objectives of the Monument. The lake will continue to be valued and managed as a geological and ecological study area, but science education programs might be enhanced by potential boat rentals and other services, potentially upgrading access and understanding of the lake ecology.

How We Can Work Together:

- Participate with Community Education and Recreation Partnerships: At Coldwater Lake, and throughout the Monument, community partnerships facilitate and accelerate opportunities for expanding or adding new, more robust outdoor activities. Partners provide essential insights, skills, creativity, and resources.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in partnership or volunteer opportunities at Coldwater Lake? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: (360) 449-7831, or lmromano@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Outfitter Guide – Enhancing Visitor Services

Why Make It Happen?

Outfitter guides hold permits allowing them to provide their clients access to the Monument's phenomenal hiking, backpacking, and climbing opportunities. In addition, each year the Forest Service issues bus permits for organizations providing tourism programs at the Monument's educational facilities.

Access to the Monument's unique landscape can be greatly enhanced for many visitors when they have the supporting services of a capable outfitter guide to ensure they are appropriately equipped and prepared. When business enterprises in local communities support and invest in effective working relationships with holders of outfitter permits granted by the Forest Service, local economies may leverage the exposure into additional tourism business. If coordinated properly, programs with professional outfitters can increase public access to sensitive or challenging areas, while protecting fragile resources and enhancing public safety.

Current Investments:

Forest Service investments in recent years have been focused primarily on administration of the extensive number of existing and recurring permits. Recently, permits have been initiated for two new outfitters to provide unique, educational paddling programs on Coldwater Lake. These Monument permits are the inaugural use of a new Forest Service permitting system on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. As such, these outfitter outings will be highly visible and the lessons learned from coordination of these permits will likely shape the management and availability of permits for other new outfitter guide opportunities.

What's Next?

In order to promote additional recreational and educational options via outfitter guides, the Monument will thoughtfully adhere to the following investment strategy:

- Outfitter Guide Needs Assessment: Federal policy requires an assessment be conducted which will determine the following:
 - Public interest in specific potential outfitting activities,
 - potential competitive outfitters capable of safe and economical operations, and
 - possible impacts of outfitter activities on other visitors, Monument resources, and research programs.

Partner and public input is an essential ingredient of this assessment.



KEY ACTIONS

- After completion of the Needs Assessment, the Forest Service will identify programs or combinations of programs which best fit identified public needs for outfitter guide services on the Monument. Depending on the complexity and anticipated impact of proposed activities, an Environmental Assessment (NEPA) may be required.
- Guided by the Needs Assessment and NEPA, the Forest Service can initiate a competitive commercial bidding process for prospective outfitter guides. The Forest Service may then issue permits to financially and environmentally sustainable outfitter services meeting the identified needs.

How We Can Work Together:

- **Participate:** Providing input to the Outfitter Guide Needs Assessment ensures community interests are voiced and promising opportunities are identified.
- **Collaborate:** The Monument encourages a close working relationship between the local hospitality industry, local business enterprises, and permitted outfitter guides. Working together in this way the Forest Service, portal communities, local businesses, and outfitters can mutually anticipate and accommodate the interests of the recreating clientele to the benefit of all.

Examples of Valued Partners:

A diverse array of existing outfitter guides and tourism organizations work with the Forest Service, hosting clientele and visitors at Mount St. Helens via Forest Service permits.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in outfitter guide opportunities? Please contact Rod Ludvigsen, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Special Use Permit Coordinator, (360) 449-7844, rludvigsen@fs.fed.us or Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831, lmromano@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Cowlitz County Public
Utility District
Cowlitz County
Washington Department
of Transportation
Adjacent landowners

SR 504 Utilities Corridor – Transfer Power Line Ownership

Why Make It Happen?

Power and fiber-optic communication lines owned and operated by the Forest Service along the SR 504 corridor are serving other organizations as well as the Monument. The lines are not available for expanded service and pose rising maintenance challenges. Significant breakdowns, such as those occurring in 2007 and 2011, would halt operations at Johnston Ridge Observatory until repairs could be made. At a national level, the Forest Service agency directs local managers to cease providing de facto utility services. Forest Service ownership and maintenance of the utility corridor's limited capacity deters development plans by Cowlitz County and private land owners. Electrical power and communications are essential for operation of Monument visitor facilities, and for the efficient operations of extensive volcano hazard monitoring provided by USGS at Johnston Ridge Observatory.

Transferring ownership of the SR504 power line to Cowlitz Public Utility District (PUD) would allow users to be served directly by the PUD. In the future, landowners adjacent to SR504 would be able to access power from the PUD, rather than be constrained by Forest Service ownership. Stable financing of repairs and maintenance under PUD management would be more compatible and practical for all current and prospective users.

Current Investments:

In the short term, the Forest Service invested in replacing and updating some of the power line equipment to improve reliability. The Cowlitz Public Utility District, in partner-





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KEY ACTIONS

ship with the Forest Service, Cowlitz County, and Washington Department of Transportation contracted a study to evaluate the power line and assess the feasibility of PUD assuming ownership and operations.

What's Next?

- Pending the results of the PUD contracted study, the intent of all partners is to identify the resources, staffing, and investments needed to facilitate PUD management of the power line.

How We Can Work Together:

- Continued involvement and cooperation of all existing and potential power line stakeholders provides a united voice. The stakeholders can then communicate their needs most clearly to elected officials, whose endorsement and assistance will be necessary to invest in the power line and affect a transfer of ownership to the PUD.

Who Should I Contact?

Anyone interested should contact, Tom Mulder, Monument Manager, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7800.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS



Eastside Visitor Facilities and Pine Creek Information Station

Why Make It Happen?

In 2011, Pine Creek Information Station marked its third year as a successful community coalition, annually serving up to 18,000 visitors with interpretive programs, Monument and local information, and map and gift sales. This re-opened visitor facility is a key achievement exemplifying direct response to energized leadership by community partners, the MSHCAC, elected officials, and local community leaders.

On Forest Road 99 near Windy Ridge, the Cascade Peaks Information Station provides visitor information, passes, and retail sales to Monument visitors. This site is the primary contact point for visitors requiring emergency assistance along the remote, but still popular, east entrance road. Positioned directly in the blast zone, thirty miles from Randle, WA and more than fifty miles from Cougar and Carson, Cascade Peaks is operated jointly with essential staffing and investments by community partners and volunteers.

The extremely popular snow park at Marble Mountain suffered a setback during the winter of 2010/2011 when the log shelter was destroyed by fire. The large shelter was a joint investment with a great deal of sweat equity from the local user groups, and was a beloved landmark on the south side of the Monument. A fundraising effort is underway, with partners such as St. Helens Trackriders offering support, equipment, time, and skills to replace the shelter.

The east and south portals to the Monument continue to experience a growing demand for visitor services and amenities to allow the public to safely and confidently enjoy this wilder, less developed side of the National Monument. Face to face contact with Monument staff and enthusiastic partners at these facilities allows visitors to learn about the volcanic landscape and nearby features. From these portals, visitors explore deep within the blast area, the cave area, and the lahar zone.

The southern portal of the Monument is prized as a recreational playground for local citizens who hunt, hike, bike, camp, ski, snowmobile, and climb. Joint investments in popular facilities have contributed to greater visitor satisfaction, better energy efficiency, and improved cost efficiency for Monument and partner operations.

Current Investments:

Site clean-up and investments by Pine Creek partners and volunteers have helped transform the Pine Creek facility. The South Gifford Pinchot National Forest Resource Advisory Committee has provided funds to enhance and operate the Information Center. Unneeded and damaged buildings were removed, and the visitor portal received significant upgrades. Volunteers, partners, and Monument staff are again residing in the Pine Creek housing, significantly reducing costs of travel and management for eastside visitor programs.

Newly constructed rustic cabins with lakefront views provide substantial expansion and enhancement of sorely needed housing for the growing volunteer program who serve visitors on and around the volcano. Satellite communications and internet connections are generously provided by the Swift Community Action Team, a vibrant group of local residents, and by Discover Your Northwest, a regional non-profit partner. The site is a local hub for visitor emergency services, and Skamania County developed an effective partnership to deliver cell phone coverage to Pine Creek and the Lewis River area, benefiting visitor safety.

Forest Service and Skamania County interpretive rangers have not only restored, but have expanded traditional interpretive programs for visitors. The additional interpretive rangers are providing educational programs for schools at heavily visited sites including Ape Cave and Windy Ridge. Title II investments (under the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act) at spectacular Lava Canyon have funded the replacement of the flood damaged bridge, restoring full access to this popular visitor destination.

KEY ACTIONS

Examples of Valued Partners:

These important visitor centers operate through successful partnerships with:

Mount St. Helens Institute and their Volcano Volunteers, Conservation Corp, and Mountain Stewards Discover Your Northwest interpretive association Skamania County Chamber of Commerce Skamania County Sheriff's Department Skamania County Fire Protection District 6 Cougar Area Trail Seekers Swift Community Action Team North Country Emergency Medical Services

Other valuable partners include:

Volcano Rescue Team PacificCorp Destination Packwood Washington State University Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments School for the Blind

What's Next?

- Investments in Pine Creek energy efficiency and alternative energy (solar and propane) systems are underway to further improve the long-term cost efficiency of operating the Pine Creek site, benefiting visitors, partners and volunteers.
- The Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI) "Volcano Volunteer" interpretive program and the volunteer Climbing Stewards are both important participants providing Monument visitors with services and popular programs. Supporting community involvement with these and other volunteer groups is a Forest Service priority. Additional investments in housing, training, and resources for these valued volunteers will be joint endeavors with partners such as the Mount St. Helens Institute. The Institute helps the Forest Service deliver memorable experiences and exceptional opportunities for the dedicated volunteer participants.
- Cascade Peaks Information Station is listed as a priority for the next round of Forest Service facility investments at Mount St. Helens. A smaller, more durable and cost effective structure is currently being designed to replace the aging modular structure, and the old generator will be replaced with efficient, sustainable electric power. A partnership with Washington State University (WSU) will contribute to the new site design concept, which is intended to better serve visitors and take advantage of the unforgettable vistas of the blast zone. Two WSU classes worked on a conceptual plan during the autumn of 2011. Their design emphasizes services for day visitors and support for visiting researchers, school groups, and citizen-science programs, and is built around Cascade Peak's unique access to features of the volcanic blast zone. Partnerships with universities such as WSU, as well as with other science researcher organizations and groups like MSHI, are vital to the MSHNVM mission.
- Partners such as the Mount St. Helens Institute and the St. Helens Trackriders are gathering resources to rebuild the popular Marble Mountain Shelter. The Forest Service is working on the shelter design to ensure a replacement structure to ensure compliance with current codes and provide a safe gathering place.

How We Can Work Together:

- Partner: Community partnerships and volunteers act as priceless catalysts for enhancing the visitor experiences central to the Monument's mission. Through shared effort, partners ensure visitors now enjoy the restored facilities, expanded services, and inviting interpretive programs. Joint efforts and adventures foster memorable experiences for visitors, volunteers, partners, and local community members who enjoy the incredible outdoor experience available at Mount St. Helens.
- "Fire and Ice" Scenic Loop Campaign: Regional support and community investment in enhancements to this Scenic Loop will make the Monument's portal programs even more popular, and more valuable as contributors to a vibrant local economy. Monument and Forest staffs look forward to participating in and promoting this campaign.
- Marble Mountain Re-Build: Replacing the popular shelter will take continued community involvement and support. The events of a "barn-raising" and eventual re-opening ceremony will be a moment of pride for all.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in welcoming visitors to the wilder side of Mount St. Helens? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: (360) 449-7831, or lmromano@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Mount St. Helens Institute
Cowlitz Economic
Development Council
Washington Trails
Association
Backcountry Horsemen
Skamania County Chamber
of Commerce
Skamania County Board of
Commissioners
Swift Community Action
Team
Cougar Area Trail Seekers
Northwest Trail Alliance
Evergreen and Toutle Valley
Schools
US Geological Survey
Southwest Washington
Workforce Development
Council
Lower Columbia
Community College



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Partnerships, Volunteers, and Community Participation

Why Make It Happen?

Volunteers and partners are an essential component of virtually all MSHNVM programs. Recognition of its importance became formalized in 2004, when partner development and volunteer enrichment became strategic priorities. Volunteers and partners directly provide a great many Mount St. Helens visitors with rewarding experiences. In doing so, they are serving the interests of area communities by supporting tourism and contributing to local quality of life. The high rate of leveraging of its federally appropriated budget with partner investments is a compelling success story, which Regional Forester Mary Wagner proudly described to the MSHCAC.

Volunteer participation is increasing at the Monument as a direct result of the Mount St. Helens Institute and other partner and volunteer organizations. An excellent example of partner, volunteer, and community efforts in action is the opening and operation of the Pine Creek Information Center. Volunteer participation has become one of the most rewarding experiences the Monument has to offer.

Monument visitors don't have to travel far before they encounter volunteer staff. They can be found providing interpretation services and educational programs to visitors, and working on physically demanding conservation projects like trail maintenance or elk enclosure construction. Some of the finest memories of visitors attending the Monument climbing programs have been of their interactions with the volunteer Mountain Stewards, who enthusiastically support and enrich the climbers' experience. The same can be said of visitors to Coldwater Lake and SR504 overlooks, where roving MSHI "Volcano Volunteers" provide an appreciated resource to visitors.

There are challenges in maintaining an active volunteer program. Sustained involvement of the Monument's most dedicated volunteers can be limited by the long distances they must travel in order to staff popular, but remote, sites such as Johnston Ridge Observatory, Coldwater, Ape Cave, and Windy Ridge. Many of these dedicated volunteers come from metropolitan areas, and some come from across the continent or overseas. The time and expense of travel to these remote sites is greatly appreciated. The development of rustic overnight facilities will continue to become an important draw for many volunteers.

A growing component of outdoor recreation and ecotourism services at all of the nation's most treasured landscapes, like those found around Mount St. Helens, is provided by volunteers. With the growing interest in fulfilling volunteerism, the investment and focus in this growing arena will complement and enhance the Forest Service's long term ability to provide quality educational programs and visitor experiences.

Current Investments:

Monument volunteers are occupying newly constructed yurts and restrooms at Coldwater Ridge, adding overnight capacity to the volunteer and partner bunkhouse, enhancing the experience of these key participants. Work on the rustic cabins at Pine Creek, including a group cooking shelter, new restrooms, and showers is being completed this season. These will provide lake-front accommodations for volunteers and partners who support visitor programs at the Information Center and elsewhere around the Monument's southern and eastern features.

One of the most rewarding benefits for volunteer interpreters at Mount St. Helens is expansion of the world-class training provided to them in tandem with the Ranger staff each year. Skilled Monument interpretive training specialists, who are in national and international demand, provide top-notch skills training at Mount St. Helens. Volunteers and partners receive invaluable access to renowned geological and ecological researchers, expert volcano specialists, and other teachers who offer their time and insights to the training program.

A key focus of one of the Monument's new staff positions has an emphasis on community relations and participation, reflecting Forest Service commitment to join efforts with partners in local communities to share programs and expand opportunities.

KEY ACTIONS

What's Next?

- Increasing access to interpretive training for volunteers, partners, and visitors by establishing a Ranger Academy. Providing a consistently high level of interpretive skills training for volunteers and enrolled visitors, the Academy program will offer university credit and extended internships involving direct practical experience. The overall intent is to elevate the Ranger Academy into a regionally and nationally renowned institution for honing interpretive skills, and to use the Coldwater facility as a key Academy asset.
- Grand opening and dedication of the new volunteer overnight housing cabins at Pine Creek.
- Modern shower and restroom facilities for volunteers staying at the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center, located at Coldwater Ridge.
- A group cooking shelter and fireplace for group gatherings in the volunteer facilities near the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater Ridge.
- Upgrades to volunteer and partner Site Host facilities at Cascade Peaks, Ape Cave, and Climbers Bivouac.
- Increasing opportunities for students at all levels to become involved at the Monument. With partners such as the Cowlitz Economic Development Council, the Forest Service seeks to help more students develop skills and explore career opportunities through science education and volunteer experiences at the Monument.

How We Can Work Together:

- Partner Volunteer Programs: Dedicated partners and skilled, welcoming, training staff are essential ingredients to the effectiveness and benefits of MSHNVM volunteer programs. Integrating volunteer programs with community partners will make local volunteer-driven outcomes even richer, as well as more valued by Monument visitors. Opportunities to participate in stimulating, rewarding volunteer hosted activities can contribute to enhanced quality of life in neighboring communities.
- Community Involvement: When area communities take an interest in Monument volunteers, whether local, from across the country, or international, and when they offer support to Monument volunteer programs, the positive energy generated returns to the local communities exponentially. Local economies benefit from extra spending, not only of the volunteers themselves but of the many Monument visitors they enthusiastically serve. When volunteers experience enthusiastic local support first-hand, they can become part of the community and are more likely to refer Monument visitors back to those local businesses and activities.
- Community Teamwork: A particularly satisfying ingredient of the tremendously successful Pine Creek Information Center is the harmony found among the many partner organizations involved with it. As the project continues, diverse members discover a great deal of goodwill and rapport with each other, traditional differences get set aside, and the finding of shared solutions to arising challenges becomes the norm.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in building connections between your community and Mount St. Helens? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: (360) 449-7831, or lmromano@fs.fed.us.



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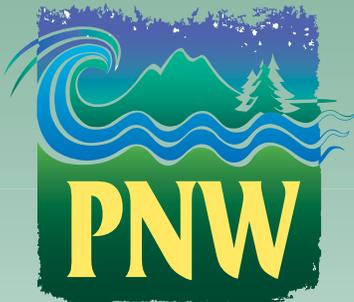


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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Pacific Northwest Research Station – Forest Service Research
US Geological Survey
Mount St. Helens Institute
Universities and College researchers, instructors, grad students, and affiliates nationally
Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council
Cowlitz Economic Development Council



Research Support and Integration

Why Make It Happen?

Scientific discovery at Mount St. Helens plays an important role in the Monument's ongoing appeal to citizens and science enthusiasts, and fulfills an important mission objective prescribed by Congress when the Monument was established. Insights from diverse, long term field research investments are one of the most valuable public benefits of the Monument. Science discoveries around the volcano significantly influence understanding of geologic and ecological events internationally, fueling the prized ecotourism combination of education and recreation.

In the decades since the last major eruption of Mount St. Helens, the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station has maintained a vibrant program aimed at understanding the ecological processes involved in the transformation of a landscape after a massive disturbance. The results of ongoing studies at the Monument have provided valuable insight into the significant role of refugia of biodiversity in recolonization. The results are guiding recovery actions following other major disturbance, including volcanic eruptions elsewhere in the world. Research in forest ecology following the Mount St. Helens eruption provides new approaches to the management of young forest stands for increased complexity and structure - characteristics critical to the effective reestablishment of habitat for a variety of animals.

The fundamental and applied science underway at the Monument provides information vital to the understanding of how ecosystems will adapt to common disturbances, such as fire, insect infestation, and to new disturbances such as climate change. An impressive track record of generating new scientific understanding has allowed for leveraging of a small base of dedicated research support with significant competitive research funding and academic collaborator support. These collaborative partnerships between federal and state agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations will be even more productive as the intensity of research at the Monument increases.

As a result of the science, the Monument has become an outstanding educational resource and will play a vital role in training the new generation of ecologists who will deal with disturbances associated with climate change. The translation of insights from ecological research into practical forestry application is essential so the Forest Service and society can meet these challenges in the coming decades. In response, the Pacific Northwest Research Station proposes to establish a Mount St. Helens Volcano Disturbance Ecology Research Team.

Expanded research capacity at the Monument will provide opportunities for visiting scientists graduate students, and a vibrant science/research internship program. This will extend outreach and educational capability, ensuring a continued flow of integrated high quality research information from basic and applied research, and from expanded participation of collaborating agency and university scientists.

Focused research provides an outstanding opportunity to implement a robust Citizen-Science Program, allowing people from all walks of life to experience the vibrant landscape transformation of Mount St. Helens while learning about ecological recovery processes through direct participation. Finally, the team would expand ongoing collaborations with scientists, writers, artists, and others in the humanities who provide new avenues to convey insights and discoveries to the public.



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KEY ACTIONS

Current Investments:

The Forest Service has restored basic funding to support the Monument Scientist's role as the research liaison and chief Public Affairs spokesperson regarding science at Mount St. Helens.

What's Next?

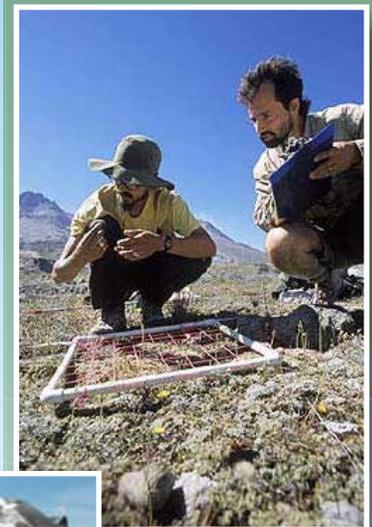
- A stronger focus on enhancing local education with community partners, allowing and encouraging local schools and colleges to gain greater benefit from the Monument's educational and research activities, expertise, and resources. Every nearby school can and should have the support and opportunity to provide stellar science programs, particularly in geology and ecology and attract educators, families, and business interests who value the educational richness of the area.
- A proposal to establish a Mount St. Helens Volcano Disturbance Ecology Research Team by the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station.
- Refinements to the concept and business plan of the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater, which will outline investments which foster citizen science and eco-tourism.

How We Can Work Together:

- Local schools and educational organizations can participate actively in science and learning at Mount St. Helens. The science resources of the Monument should complement educational excellence in science for all our neighboring communities, making their school science and learning achievements the envy of the region.
- Become involved as a "STEM" Partner—Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math programs for fostering ongoing national excellence in these vital areas. Sparking a student's interest in potential careers inspires and unleashes a student's educational success. These programs are a growing partnership between schools, community organizations, and potential future employers in need of a well-educated, inspired workforce. The Forest Service is pleased to be part of the growing partnership supporting and expanding the program locally.
- Participate in the development of science workshops and integrate our community in programs at the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater and at Coldwater Lake.
- If you are an educator, science enthusiast, or just like learning in the outdoors at a natural wonder like Mount St. Helens, then participate or assist with the growing array of programs the Forest Service and its partners like the Mount St. Helens Institute are offering at the Monument.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in enhancing science and education? Please contact Peter Frenzen, Monument Scientist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7835 or pfrenzen@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Skamania County Sheriff
Department
Cowlitz County Sheriff
Department
Lewis County Sheriff
Department
Washington State Police
Washington Department
of Transportation
US Geological Survey
Washington Department
of Emergency Services
Federal Aviation
Administration
Army Corp of Engineers
North Country Emergency
Medical Services and
Volcano Rescue Team
volunteers



Public and Volcanic Hazard Safety— Management of the Spirit Lake Tunnel

Why Make It Happen?

Public and employee health and safety are a priority mission, emphasized in the Monument legislation, and in our daily operations. The US Geological Survey (USGS), using knowledge and equipment refined at Mount St. Helens, assist communities and governments worldwide when volcano hazards arise. Forest Service and USGS cooperation and partnerships are essential and highly valued at Mount St. Helens, and key to successful USGS operations, research, and technology development there.

Safety of downstream communities from volcano related hazards is one of the interests Congress had in mind when creating the Monument. The Spirit Lake tunnel was developed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help protect downstream communities from flood hazards associated with eruptive activity and Spirit Lake. If the water level of Spirit Lake were to rise high enough to breach the unstable landslide which dams the lake, there would be severe impacts to communities, including loss of life and property.

The National Forest and neighboring communities want to ensure appropriate funding and expertise to maintain the Spirit Lake tunnel. Corp of Engineer personnel and mission are best suited to monitor and fund operations and maintenance of the tunnel to protect downstream communities affected by flows in the Toutle River. Skamania and Cowlitz Counties are coordinating with the Forest Service and pursuing the recommended legislative authorization for the Corps of Engineers to ultimately administer and fund tunnel operations and maintenance.

Current Investments:

The Forest Service continues to coordinate and fund management and maintenance of the tunnel. It is drained annually and carefully inspected by the Corp of Engineers, repairs prescribed by Corp of Engineers, and repairs are contracted by the Corp of Engineers with funds drawn from the Forest Service at the Monument.

What's Next?

- Because the recurring costs of tunnel operations compete for the Monument's maintenance funding for visitor centers and other public facilities, the Forest Service continues to look for practical and cost effective means to maintain and fund the tunnel as an essential investment in public-safety infrastructure. The Forest will continue to support and endorse the Counties' proposed legislative transfer of authority to the Corp of Engineers.

Emergency Services—Volcano Readiness and Public Safety

Why Make It Happen?

Visitors and neighboring communities rely on the Forest Service and its Emergency Management partners to remain prepared for an orderly and effective response when volcanic activity occurs. When emergencies or accidents occur, timely assistance is a shared goal among all involved and concerned parties. The Forest Service, a nationally respected leader in integrated responses to natural events, fulfills an integral role in preparing for and managing volcanic events at Mount St. Helens.

On Mount St. Helens—the continental United States' most active volcanic landscape—it is a necessity that the coordinated affiliation of federal, state, county, and non-profit emergency responders retain readiness to serve all sides of the Monument. It is imperative the Forest Service be prepared to ensure public and employee safety on the National Forest lands around this volcano, which can re-awaken at any time.

KEY ACTIONS

The 2004 Mount St. Helens eruption activity caused significant concern for the regional community and drew tremendous national media attention. The Forest Service took this concern seriously and expended great resources to manage the impacts. While some volcano readiness preparations can be accomplished through wildfire training, planning, and resources, there is no dedicated federal funding mechanism for managing the impacts of geologic events. For this reason, by default, all readiness costs draw on the Monument's recreation funding. Since eruptive activity slowed in 2008, the Monument and Forest have been gradually losing first-hand experience and skill to retirements and other employee turn-over, heightening our need to refresh training and coordination with emergency service partners.

Current Investments:

USFS is currently updating its Emergency Readiness plans for both the Monument and National Forest operations.

What's Next?

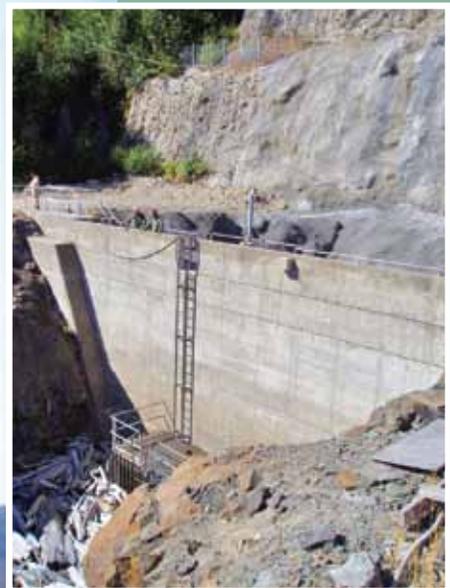
- Coordination with federal, state, and county officials to refresh integrated contingency plans ensures strong cooperative relationships continue. Desktop and emergency simulation exercises will help enhance readiness for volcanic events. Preparedness exercises will be scheduled jointly with key partners.
- Long-term funding for partner-run search and rescue operations on the Monument will become critical if the funding from Secure Rural Schools and Communities - Title III legislation is not replaced. In order to ensure a safe and inviting climate for Monument visitors entering from State Route 504, a volunteer search and rescue organization—achieved jointly with Cowlitz County and covering the north end of the monument (similar to North Country EMS, or the volunteer Volcano Rescue Team (VRT) on the south)—is a desired outcome.
- Safety and law enforcement patrols will increase in importance as a result of adding campgrounds and overnight facilities for visitors and guests, particularly on the SR504 corridor. Strong partnerships with the Skamania, Cowlitz, and Lewis County Sheriffs' departments will continue to be essential for ensuring public safety.

How We Can Work Together:

- MSHNVM volcanic event readiness requires an important emphasis on compatible communications equipment and staff time to foster and maintain adequate and efficient lines of communication.
- A cost-effective method of significantly improving safe communications within the Monument will be to partner with local interests and a telecommunications company to deliver cellular phone service in the Coldwater Ridge area, serving Johnston Ridge and the upper Toutle River valley.
- Support the training and development of partner organizations and volunteers to coordinate and assist with the County Sheriffs and Forest Service with incidents that occur on the northwest side of the Monument.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in enhancing emergency readiness? Please contact Ross Williams, Deputy Fire Staff Officer, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, (360) 891-5146 or Tom Mulder, Monument Manager, (360) 449-7800.





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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Skamania, Cowlitz, and
Lewis County Weed
Control Programs

Resource Protection Investments – Invasive Weeds

Why Make It Happen?

Invasive weeds interfere with natural processes, altering the return of native life to the volcano's disturbance zones. The protection of natural resources, features, and processes is part of the core legislated mission of the Monument, and managing invasive species is a key stewardship role the Forest Service provides in support of volcanic research efforts. Invasive species such as Scotch broom and other aggressive non-native plant species are more difficult to control as they move into the disturbance zones of the 1980 blast. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for treating invasive species on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest was completed in 2008. This EIS identified the Monument as the most at-risk landscape in the study.

Current Investments:

Removal and control of invasive weeds growing in the Monument's disturbance zones have been managed jointly with county weed control staff. RAC Title II investments by county partners have provided most of the resources to tackle this challenge.

What's Next?

- The ongoing partnerships with counties and concerned partners to control invasive species will shift focus to a strategic search for new funding to continue joint efforts.

How We Can Work Together:

- Funding: Coordinated efforts to leverage the limited funding will be more important than ever.
- Community Participation: Events such as National Public Lands Day and the annual Weed Rodeo will be increasingly important to retain the Monument's standing as a natural wonder not severely impacted by invasive weeds.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in invasive weed control? Please contact Peter Frenzen, Monument Scientist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7835 or pfrenzen@fs.fed.us.



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Resource Protection Investments – Cave Management

Why Make It Happen?

Bat populations living in the Monument's extensive system of lava tube caves are increasingly threatened by the fatal White-Nose Syndrome. Mandatory preventative decontamination protocols are an ever-increasing possibility.

Ape Cave, one of the longest lava tubes in the Northwest, is a showcase destination with 100,000 visits annually from customers from all over the world. Ape Cave generates essential revenue for funding visitor and recreation services on the south side of the Monument. It is the second most visited site on the Monument for school groups, and it is routinely a part of the ecology curriculum for local school districts. The bat-population decimating disease, White-Nose Syndrome, has been found to arrive in new regions first at the most heavily visited "show caves," like Ape Cave.

As pressure to prevent the spread of White-Nose Syndrome increases, the likelihood of a proposed closure of Ape Cave increases as well. To protect the bats and prevent a closure, the Monument must implement a proactive public education and prevention program. If effective, the program will demonstrate the Forest Services' ability to creatively and effectively manage White-Nose Syndrome, while still providing the public with rewarding and educational cave experiences.

Educational and public visits to Ape Cave are extremely high, and the revenue generated supports many interpretive programs on the Monument. The Forest Service preference in preventing risks of infection to the local bat populations is to manage a proactive cave access program and not completely close the cave to educational outings.

Current Investments:

Our initial cave management strategy has emphasized public education about the devastating significance of White-Nose Syndrome. The education effort has laid the groundwork for partner support and cooperation with MSHNVM management's changing approach to the protection of bat populations and visitor access to caves.

What's Next?

- As White-Nose Syndrome spreads to bat populations closer to the West Coast, the Forest Service must anticipate the possible threat of having to close most of their managed caves, or all of them, to human entry in order to protect bat populations from infection. Specific actions the Forest Service and its partners will take include expanding public education, monitoring local bat populations, and exploring ideas about how to maintain Ape Cave as a popular educational resource. Implementing decontamination procedures for visitors before and after entering the cave will become a necessity in the near future.

How We Can Work Together:

- Get The Word Out: Early public support for White-Nose Syndrome education, including regarding the necessary indicated decontamination protocols, will be essential to avoiding outright closure of the cave to visitors.
- Partner: Community partnerships and volunteers help minimize the costs of managing bat protection and visitor decontamination.
- Education Funding: Community partnerships and volunteers can also help seek creative ways to jointly generate support and funding to allow the continued emphasis of Ape Cave as an educational outing for local schools.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in cave management and preserving critical bat populations? Please contact Peter Frenzen, Monument Scientist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7835 or pfrenzen@fs.fed.us.

KEY ACTIONS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Oregon Grotto and local cave protection volunteers
Discover Your Northwest interpretive association





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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Mount St. Helens
Institute (MSHI)
US Geological Survey
Pacific Northwest
Research Station and
affiliated scientists
Toutle Valley High
School Eco Club
Lower Columbia
Community College
Cowlitz Economic
Development Council



Interpretation and Education

Why Make It Happen?

Many of the Monument's 750,000 annual visitors come to experience its high-quality and distinguished education and interpretation programs presented by our staff and partners. The Forest Service vision is to capitalize on the area where the Monument is already renowned and leverage their reputation and skill into additional programs and partnerships. This will benefit not only visitors, but local schools and neighboring communities who make up an important part of the MSHNVM visitor experience.

Current Investments:

With additional funding from the Regional "Valued Places" Field Ranger Program, the Monument has restored and expanded interpretive programs at all the traditional Monument portals, and it has added educational curriculum programs to assist schools visiting Ape Cave and JRO.

Economic stimulus funds (ARRA) provided the resources to begin a Monument-wide replacement of outdated interpretive signs, with high quality and state-of-the-art educational signage. In partnership with the education staff of the Mount St. Helens Institute, the Forest Service is reaching more schools with more science programs than ever. Additionally, the Forest Service is exploring new approaches for delivering science via videoconferencing, the internet, and remote learning.

What's Next?

- Mount St. Helens continues as a premier location to learn and practice the art of nature interpretation, as well as related skills in science, outdoor teaching, and communications. The expanding community for learning, practicing, and teaching the interpretive craft will integrate Forest Service employees, interns, volunteers, education professionals, and partners. To continue this emphasis, it is important MSHNVM continue to partner with other agencies and educational programs. A goal is to provide college and continuing education credit for teachers, through an academy dedicated to training interpreters and outdoor educators.
- Monument educational programs will increasingly focus on in-depth visitor experiences, investigations, and participation—rather than the more brief engagement visitors get with interpretive rangers at other natural sites. This, in turn, will promote longer visitor stays and more lasting understanding of the Monument's geology and ecology.
- MSHNVM will continue installation of new interpretive signs to help greet and inform visitors at all Monument facilities and travel routes.

In partnership with the Mount St. Helens Institute, the Monument will coordinate more closely with community-operated visitor information centers, in order to enhance the information available to tourists and staff regarding Monument facilities, programs, and trails.



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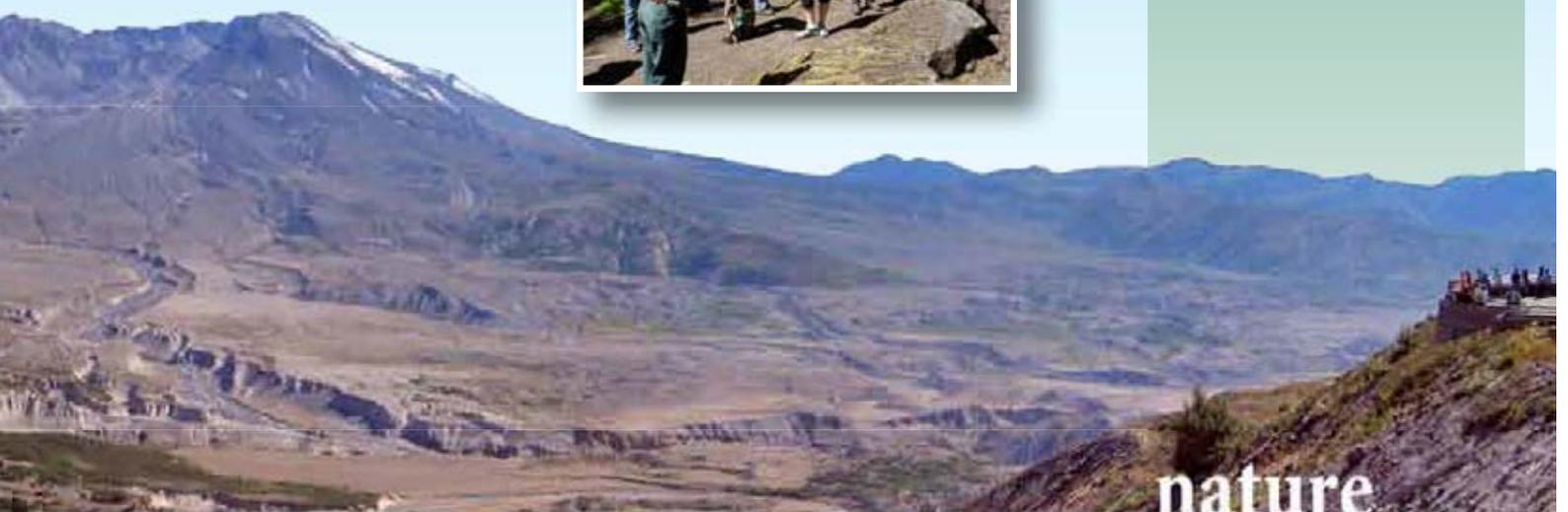
KEY ACTIONS

How We Can Work Together:

- Partner: Communities and volunteers are a vitally important part of the education and interpretation team at continuous work enhancing visitor and student experiences.
- Volunteer: Volunteers and partners can assist with physical installation of new interpretive signs. Their assistance with the conceptual development and design of new signs will help these investments be better integrated with communities and visitor information centers.
- Advocate: First and foremost, our local schools should be some of the greatest beneficiaries of education and science-learning resources at Mount St. Helens. Community partners and volunteers help to bring this science emphasis into the local schools, ensuring local communities are engaged in the internationally acclaimed learning climate at the Monument.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in education and interpreting the incredible features of Mount St. Helens? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831, lmromano@fs.fed.us, or Peter Frenzen, Monument Scientist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7835, pfrenzen@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Examples of Valued Partners:

Mount St. Helens Lands
Coalition
Columbia Land Trust
Skamania County
Cowlitz County
Lewis County
National Trust for Public
Lands
Gifford Pinchot Task
Force
Toutle community
citizen representatives

Recreation Access — High Lakes

Why Make It Happen?

The acquisition of the High Lakes area northwest of the Monument boundary would provide National Forest recreation lands outside of the legislated Monument. Acquisition of these fantastic resources would provide prized year-round recreation on the north side of the Monument.

As recommended by the MSHCAC, a recreation focus around the High Lakes would provide infrastructure improvements, safe access, quality educational opportunities, and longer visitor stays. Potential recreational opportunities include fishing, hunting, hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. The area has the potential to provide ideal campground locations that offer stunning views of the Cascade Mountains and are within close proximity of the Coldwater and Johnston Ridge Facilities.

The northwest side of MSHNVM is a Class 1 Research Area. SR 504 currently accesses only the Class 1 Research Area, and the public encounters limited recreation opportunities there. These limitations on access and use are a concern to area communities and the Forest Service. Providing public recreational use of the land outside of the Monument will help alleviate these concerns.

This acquisition of the High Lakes area will grant visitors a greater understanding and connection to the volcanic and alpine landscape. Acquiring this parcel will provide improved access to the Mt. Margaret Backcountry for recreation and for more efficient access for trail maintenance and resource protection. Emerging recreation and education trends will be considered in light of the Monument's legislated mission, and new activities will be accommodated if they remain compatible with wise use of public lands in close proximity to an active volcano.

Traditionally, the High Lakes have provided valuable recreation resources to the public, in particular to nearby communities. Acquisition of the High Lakes offers the most desirable recreational access, not only to the high elevation lakes, but to the breathtaking ridge-top vistas of Mount St. Helens, the blast zone, and the other volcanoes of the Cascades.



KEY ACTIONS

Current Investments:

- The Forest Service is a participant in the Mount St. Helens Lands Coalition to promote acquisition of the High Lakes and to resume public recreation there. The Gifford Pinchot National Forest submitted a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) proposal for acquisition of 2,000 acres of the High Lake, as a Forest priority.

What's Next?

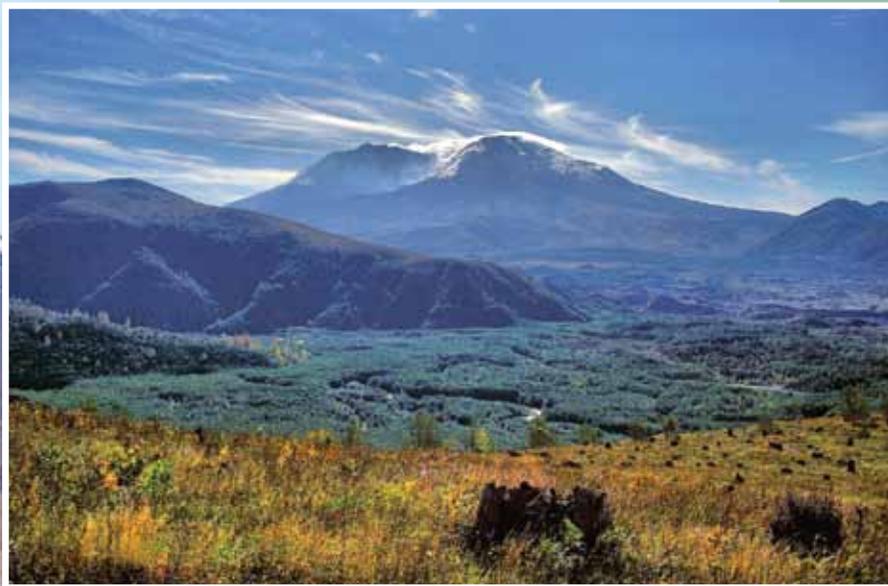
The Mount St. Helens Lands Coalition will confirm broad local and regional support for this endeavor, and will enlist the help of elected officials to find the resources necessary to complete a purchase or a trade to return the High Lakes to public ownership.

How We Can Work Together:

- **Join:** Public participation and support in the Mount St. Helens Lands Coalition will strengthen and accelerate efforts to acquire the High Lakes.
- **Participate:** Community participation will be vital for achieving sound management, and ensuring conservation projects to protect the High Lakes, while promoting recreational opportunities.
- **Enjoy:** Purchase of the High Lakes area and restoration of recreational access there should carry with it pride-of-ownership for the local community.
- **Volunteer:** This investment in the High Lakes area will increase trails and maintenance needs, which will provide opportunities for community groups to "adopt" a trail for development and ongoing maintenance.
- In addition to providing recreational opportunities, the High Lakes could become an important location for science and education programs. Research field studies and "Outdoor School" for local schools will be able to capitalizing on the close proximity to the educational and research resources of the Forest Service.

Who Should I Contact?

Interested in the campaign to access the High Lakes and working with the Mount St. Helens Land Coalition? Please contact Lisa Romano, Community Engagement Specialist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831, lmromano@fs.fed.us.



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INFRASTRUCTURE & PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

Establishing Separate Monument and Ranger District Administrative Units

Why Make It Happen?

The Gifford Pinchot National Forest has established a focused Monument administrative unit, distinctly separated from the Mount St. Helens Ranger District.

As recommended by the MSHCAC, the Monument Manager and staff directs activities within the legislated National Volcanic Monument and surrounding national forest lands west of Road 25 and north of Swift Reservoir. The remainder of the district has been designated the Mount St. Helens Ranger District, managed by a Deputy District Ranger under supervision of the Mt. Adams District Ranger. This change in alignment allows the Monument's staff to successfully focus on the National Volcanic Monument, on the communities, and partners around the Monument and on the Key Actions detailed in this Strategic Investment Plan.

The Forest Service and its partners recognize the tremendous value of this unique landscape. All involved want to work together with area communities to further enhance the Monument's important roles in geology, ecology, teaching, tourism, and recreation.

What's Next?

- The Forest Service will enhance public clarity regarding the Monument's budget, revenue, staffing, and visitation.
- A further increase in the emphasis on community partnerships is on-going.
- The Monument will continue to serve, as recommended, as a highly visible model of the Forest Service "Valued Places" approach to managing nationally treasured landscapes.

How We Can Work Together:

- Get Involved: Forest Service staff and partners at Mount St. Helens are enthusiastic about this sharpened focus, and about the ongoing opportunity to be richly engaged with local communities.

Who Should I Contact?

Anyone interested should contact Tom Mulder, Monument Manager, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7810



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KEY ACTIONS



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Mount St. Helens has been operating for numerous years with challenging gaps between the service levels feasible with available budget and the service levels envisioned in public expectations for Monument programs. Frequently, concerns about the gap are mitigated through special project funding of limited duration, and through innovative partnerships and cost efficiencies. The Forest Service staff at the Monument has already taken many steps to minimize the budget shortfall as outlined below, and will continue these efforts.

Strategic Planning

MSHNVM has invested substantial time and energy on strategic planning which has resulted in increased operational efficiencies and partner investments. For example, the non-profit partnership program was aggressively emphasized following a strategic, best-use assessment regarding available non-traditional resources and public interest. This proactive approach has allowed the Forest Service to expand educational services and public engagement and better utilize Monument staff, facilities, and resources.

Analysis of Operational Efficiencies

Operation efficiencies are analyzed on a recurring basis and changes are implemented accordingly. Recent improvements include shifting duty stations to Pine Creek to reduce travel distances for field operations, and a major emphasis on energy-saving upgrades of Monument facilities and bunkhouses.

Preventative Approach to Employee Safety

The Forest Service's Safety and Wellness Program empowers Monument employees to participate in its culture of safety, built upon a passion for identifying potential hazards, sharing observations, and acting to remedy hazards. The program promotes employee wellness and provides a hazard free, safe working environment that contributes to cost effective operations by keeping employees healthy and injury free.

Competing for Special Funding

As long as special funding initiatives continue to be an important component of Forest Service financial portfolios, MSHNVM and Gifford Pinchot National Forest will allocate skills and capacity to pre-position the Monument to successfully compete for one-time funding. Examples include ARRA, NPL (Chief's National Priority List), Region 6 Valued Places, CIP (Regional and National Capital Investment Program), and Federal Highways funding.

Effective presentation of competitive proposals under these initiatives requires an annual assessment and prioritization of essential maintenance and capital improvement needs. The highest priority needs require proactive pre-planning and initial investments or site plans, NEPA, contract preparation, and contract administration in order to have viable "shovel ready" projects.

ONGOING FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

Expand Relationships with other Agencies and Organizations

Without exception, all Monument programs and services rely on effective teamwork and essential partnerships with other federal, state, and local agencies and officials. Just as essential is cooperation and teamwork with a growing list of non-profit and community organizations.

Paying attention to those relationships and ensuring healthy, frank dialogue will allow the Forest Service to continue to jointly achieve important objectives which may otherwise be out of reach. These joint efforts diversify MSHNVM's funding and staffing options, bring unexpected resources and opportunities to the table, and foster a shared sense of community ownership. Partnerships and community teamwork contribute to Congressional support of Forest Service management efforts.

Non-Profit Partnerships

The 2005 Monument strategic plan focusing on the expansion of the non-profit partnership with the Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI) has been implemented. This strategic effort is exemplified in several related and encouraging trends, including: expanding volunteer and intern programs, a notable expansion of noteworthy educational events, re-opening and staffing of previously closed public facilities through extensive partnerships, and acquiring additional private and public funding for cutting-edge delivery of education and interpretation.

The MSHNVM staff continues this emphasis on community partners, working particularly with MSHI to further bolster resources and personnel. Community involvement and a sense of community "ownership" at Mount St. Helens is increasing as a result of the relationships fostered by the MSHI in ways the Forest Service has not been able to provide. This commitment to community partnerships has been highly effective, particularly at Pine Creek Information Center and Cascade Peaks Information Station. Both were once closed or underutilized facilities and are again a vibrant part of MSHNVM public services.

The tremendous role of other nonprofit partners, such as Discover Your Northwest Interpretive Association, continues to be an important ingredient in the array of public services supported through creative leveraging of funding and staffing. The expansion of rustic overnight accommodations for volunteers is a recent investment to allow for an increase in volunteer participation.

Research

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) Research Station supports science education at the Monument through both allocations of researcher time, and through financial support to MSHI science programs. PNW and MSHNVM jointly proposed the establishment of a Mount St. Helens long-term volcanic ecology disturbance program.

This program will fund public science awareness, public affairs, and website elaboration of Mount St. Helens volcano science, and is designed to elevate the strength of science education programs at Mount St. Helens.



USGS and multiple universities are deeply committed to engaged, long term studies at Mount St. Helens. Their scientific programs directly contribute to the vibrancy of MSHNVM interpretive programs. The rich and diverse research results have helped MSHI to compete successfully for private grants that fund state-of-the-art JRO exhibits conveying these discoveries to the public.

Integrated NFS Funding

Traditionally, educational programs at the Monument have been viewed solely as recreation program expenses. Elsewhere, educational programs are supported by other resource funds; for instance, fishing days, wildflower days, and salmon days are funded from non-recreation appropriations. This suggests educational programs at Mount St. Helens could and should also be jointly supported—along with vegetation management, timber, fish and wildlife, and research.

Strategic Position Management

As MSHNVM employees become increasingly proficient at delivering services to the public through collaborative partnerships, the skill-set required for the Monument workforce will continue to shift accordingly. Key skills include: communication and collaboration, volunteer recruitment and retention, a developed understanding of non-profits, local municipalities and their staffs, public relations, program management, contract administration, agreements expertise, website management, social media proficiency, and teaching ability. These skills will continue to grow in importance and overtake the traditional skills emphases. Being intentional about transforming staffing expertise towards these skills allows for further leverage, continuing success at delivery of public services, and fulfillment the MSCHAC recommendations.

Increase Public Awareness of the Monument

Increasing the visitation and involvement of visitors is a fundamental intention of MSHNVM's county and community partnerships. On a far broader scale than previous tradition had allowed at MSHNVM, new energy is being directed toward the Monument's hosting of high-profile science and education events and programs.

Music and art are providing creative new means of connecting people with the science and landscape of the volcano. Some of these events are providing important financial support for exhibit upgrades, which in turn draw more visitors and increased media attention. Thanks to the Forest Service Regional "Valued Places" investments, MSHNVM participated in an innovative tourism-focused media advertising campaign with County partners.

Involvement of Schools, Universities, Educational Organizations

The MSHNVM strategic vision recognizes the unique educational opportunities of the most valued features on the Monument. As an active volcanic landscape it measurably changes over the course of each year, attracting great public interest and encouraging visitor experiences. These experiences can be life-changing by promoting life-long interest in this memorable place.

ONGOING FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

The potential for NSF grants and partnerships with academic institutions motivates our pursuit of strong educational partnerships. MSHI's success with educational pilot programs—like More Kids in the Woods, Volcanoes after Dark, and Volcano Explorers, as well as their popular field seminars—is building the Institute's reputation as an organization that provide participants with unique educational experiences.

Increase Fee Revenue

Revenue from user fees will continue to be an important element in the Monument's portfolio of financial resources. The Monument has demonstrated success at the delivery of programs the public is willing to support through visitor fees. The Forest Service is poised to initiate the many new elements described in this forward looking Strategic Investment Plan, increasing visitor numbers, use of services, and sustaining the notably high level of visitor satisfaction. MSHNVM is committed to raising the public's awareness of the Monument by highlighting its trails, programs, and unique features in ways compatible with resource protection and educational objectives. Completing connector trail loops, offering guided outings, and fostering more partner-provided programs are investments which are expected to generate more fee-paying visits. Additionally, the fee strategy for the west side of the Monument will be refined to improve clarity and fee compliance.

Strategic Plan Updates

To ensure the Monument maintains a clear and effective strategic focus even as circumstances inevitably change, this plan will be amended on a recurring basis. Volcanic activity, a stronger economy, and new partnerships may all be catalysts for new possibilities.

The Strategic Investment Plan process has been a valuable tool for identifying capacity and financial capabilities, and for communicating challenges and opportunities to MSHNVM constituents. The Monument is committed to keeping this information valid and current.

Who Should I Contact?

Anyone interested should contact Tom Mulder, Monument Manager, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7810; or Kevin Naranjo, MSHNVM Business Analyst, (360) 449-7811



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