



Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

# Forest FEATURES

## Explorer, Adventurer Volunteer of the Year Forest Service Recognizes Wilderness Ranger from Woodinville

If he were living in the 1800s, Chuck Davis, a wilderness ranger, would be known as an adventurer and explorer. That is why his peers recognized him in January as the 2010 Pacific Northwest Individual Volunteer of the Year for his service patrolling the backcountry the past 10 years on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

“No matter what the weather, Chuck can be found out on a trail somewhere in the district,” said Pat Ellis, volunteer coordinator at the Snoqualmie Ranger District on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. “Chuck has volunteered over 3,000 hours for the forest,” he said.

Chuck enjoys making it to the trail-less places and meeting people there; it gives him job satisfaction. “Those people had to put in tremendous effort to reach these backcountry sites,” he said.

Chuck grew up in Stevenson, Wash., idolizing frontiersmen Kit Carson and

Jim Bridger and imagining what it would be like hiking the rugged countryside of the old west.

He decided to become a wilderness ranger when he was hiking out of Upper Wildcat Lake, a remote and isolated backcountry area. Chuck did not expect to encounter anyone when he came upon a wilderness ranger. He asked him how he got the perfect outdoor job. “I learned that he was a volunteer who loved to hike and he told me how to apply.

Now I have the opportunity to explore the wilderness,” said Chuck.

A wilderness ranger’s job is to hike miles into the backcountry trails checking their conditions, looking for any needing maintenance, while providing aid to hikers and teaching them about wilderness areas and regulations.



*Chuck Davis, 2010 Individual Volunteer of the Year, hikes over 20 miles a day to the most remote areas on the Snoqualmie Ranger District.*

*Lake Caroline with Preacher Mountain in the background is just one of the remote sites few visitors get a chance to see; photo by Chuck Davis.*



“In all my years, I have dealt with only one person who gave me grief over the regulations,” said Chuck. “It is important to keep the wilderness as natural as possible,” he said.

He hikes an average of 20 miles a day. Chuck doesn’t stop hiking when the seasons change. He just switches his hiking boots for a pair of snowshoes. “I love leading the snowshoe walks,” said Chuck. “These walks have the potential to save lives,” he said. Chuck teaches people the hazards that exist during the winter and how to avoid falling into tree wells, read the terrain and avoid avalanche conditions. In addition to guiding walks, he builds an igloo each weekend for Smokey Bear to emerge from during the Kids on Snow interpretive program conducted in the Snoqualmie Pass area.

Chuck is certified in wilderness first aid and is a class-B sawyer. “I had to use my first aid training once to tape a hiker’s ankle,” he said. The forest has benefited from all of Chuck’s skills, designing and building wilderness toilets, trailhead permit boxes and a

drying rack for snowshoes. “Chuck has an artist’s talent when working with wood,” said Ellis.

Chuck volunteers all around the district helping, guiding and leading the other volunteers at the woodshop, GPS mapping of remote routes and teaching Leave-no-Trace skills. He assists with the new volunteer orientation each year. “Chuck sets the bar high for others to follow,” said Ellis.

When he is not volunteering, Chuck works for a living as the director of capital projects at the Evergreen Hospital in Kirkland, Wash., where he oversees two large multimillion dollar budgets. “The wilderness keeps me sane, balancing out all the mental stress,” said Davis.

Chuck’s future goals are to retire, volunteer more and sell his nature and wilderness photos. His photography can be seen throughout the hospital. Chuck lives Woodinville, Wash.

*Story by Kelly Sprute  
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