



In a Better State

WTA's volunteers have improved the hiking opportunities found in our state parks

By now, you have heard all about the Discover Pass. (No? Well, it's the new pass required to park at or to recreate on state lands.) This summer, WTA received many inquiries from volunteers eager to earn their Discover Pass. The good news? It's possible. The pass legislation states that a volunteer can earn a pass for 24 hours of donated labor. However, we've found a few devils in the details. As our state agencies raced into implementation, we saw a good deal of variation in how these agencies opted to track and account for volunteer labor.

Some of the work parties we led at Beacon Rock State Park qualified, as did some of our work at Mount Spokane State Park. But those participating in a Volunteer Vacation at a state park were left wanting. The state park system considered the free camping that they provide volunteers as "compensation," therefore making those hours ineligible toward earning a volunteer Discover Pass.

Looking ahead, WTA will be working on behalf of hikers to ensure that earning a pass by volunteering is a much smoother and easier process than it is now.

In the meantime, don't be discouraged from volunteering. Washington's state parks are among the few places where new trail opportunities are being actively developed, and WTA volunteers have been at forefront of this work for several years. Let's take a look.

Giving Back At Wallace Falls

Washington Trails Association crews have built miles of new trail at **Wallace Falls State Park**, most notably the 1.9-mile Greg Ball Trail that provides an enjoyable alternative to a road walk for those seeking out the shores of Wallace Lake. Since its construction, the Greg Ball Trail has become a favorite of hikers looking for a close-in getaway hike that is accessible in all but the worst of winter weather and is an absolute gem during the summer months. Many Greg Ball Trail hikers express surprise at how this trail really feels like a backcountry hike without the backcountry commitment.

Our most recent work at Wallace Falls State Park includes construction of the "Lunch Counter Loop," a route leading to a bench and, indeed, a beautiful little lunch spot. We have also made tread improvements on both the Greg Ball Trail and the Woody Trail.

We'll be returning to Wallace Falls State Park later this month, with four work parties scheduled to start on September 29.

Building New Trails at Beacon Rock

WTA has also made a great commitment to the state parks system through our ongoing work at **Beacon Rock State Park**, a gem of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Fueled by both day trips and Youth Volunteer



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Vacations, WTA volunteers have added 2 miles to the Hardy Ridge Trail system.

WTA volunteers sporting green, orange and blue hats have spent more than 135 days in this park over the course of the past five years. They've given more than 3,000 hours in 2011 alone. Construction on the Hardy Ridge Connector Trail began in 2006, and our volunteers in southwest Washington are now beginning to see the end of the tunnel with this project. The Hardy Ridge Connector has proven difficult to construct, but the project has provided a focal point for our southwest Washington volunteers' efforts. They've really bonded over the challenges in this terrain! Best of all, this park has seen a new generation of trail stewards come of age, as it has been a stellar location for our Youth Volunteer Vacation program. Many teens have spent their first night in a tent camped in the shadow of Beacon Rock, and developed some rock-solid trail skills, too.

Look for our one-day work parties at Beacon Rock to resume this fall.

Call It Cape Excitement

Hikers on the North Head Trail at **Cape Disappointment State Park** have not been disappointed by the improvements on this popular trail, that's for sure. Over the past four years, our volunteers have turned this muddy, slippery mess into a much more enjoyable hike with a series of intricate boardwalks, stairs and relocated trail sections. While there's always more work to do, we have tackled a significant portion of the work to date.

WTA usually doesn't build complex boardwalk and stairs like those you'll see at Cape D, but we've been fortunate to have volunteer chief crew leader Lee Young, a trained carpenter, spearhead much of the work here. With Lee's experience, we were able to meet the special needs of this location. Among the many highlights of working at this location, volunteers get to campout in the lighthouse keeper's quarters.

In addition to our weeklong Volunteer Vacations at Cape Disappointment later this fall, we will also be offering several weekend work parties here. Starting as early as this fall, we'll also be adding work at Leadbetter Point State Park to our roster.

Why, Look! Work at Leadbetter Point, Too

Managed by the same fine folks who manage Cape D, **Leadbetter Point State Park** recently received a grant from the Recreation and Conservation Office to build a new boardwalk, trail and overlook out to Heinz Marsh, and our volunteers are going to be lending them a hand, starting with a few days during our October weeklong on the southwest coast. That trip is already full, but look for additional weekend opportunities through fall and into next spring.

Looking ahead, we're scheduling additional

Volunteer Vacations at both Leadbetter Point State Park and Cape Disappointment in 2012. If you're interested in a different kind of trail construction, give these destinations a try.

Busy as Bees at Larrabee

With 15 miles of hiking trails and a long-standing commitment from WTA to help out on those trails, your best chance to earn a Discover Pass while volunteering for WTA may be at **Larrabee State Park**, a park we've worked in since 2008. This past winter and spring, volunteers significantly improved the South Lost Lake Trail, moving it out of the middle of an old roadbed and improving drainage along the way. We also completed several raised turnpikes, structures that help folks keep their feet dry and make the trail that much more enjoyable. Our amiable northwest chief crew leader Arlen Bogaards can be found working hard with his crews at Larrabee State Park one or two weekends a month from October through April.

If you haven't given working in the Chuckanuts a try, you should. The views are amazing; the work is fun.

Our Latest Foray: Mount Spokane

Found just a stone's throw west of the Idaho border, **Mount Spokane State Park** offers hiking and camping in the Selkirk Mountains, where deep green stands of old growth are accented by steely gray granite outcroppings. From Mount Spokane, you'll catch a spectacular view that encompasses wildlands in Washington, Idaho, Montana and even Canada.

It's not unusual for this park to receive 300 inches of snow per year, so you can imagine the potential for erosion in this steep and rocky terrain. The park's most recent management plan calls for the relocation of several trails, and WTA volunteers have stepped in to address the worst problems.

In July, our crews realigned a short segment of trail and reinforced a soft downhill slope with a log retaining wall. Two work parties are scheduled for September. In addition to relocating trails, the park's plan calls for many miles of new trail, so there may be opportunities for east-side volunteers for years to come.

You should now have a taste of the work we've been involved with in state parks. Check our trail maintenance calendar to see when our next state park work party is scheduled. We're always adding more opportunities.♦



Above: One of the many crews who have helped improve Larrabee State Park.

Opposite: Many teenagers have helped build trail at Beacon Rock State Park, including these participants in one of our all-girls trips.

Photos by WTA.

WTA volunteers have already donated more than 5,700 hours to state parks this year and our work isn't done yet.