

12-31-2004

Cooperative Conservation - Interagency Volunteer Program Quarterly Progress Report: Period Ending December 31, 2004

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Repository Citation

Rees, M. N. (2004). Cooperative Conservation - Interagency Volunteer Program Quarterly Progress Report: Period Ending December 31, 2004. 1-5.

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QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Period Ending December 31, 2004

Cooperative Agreement Number H8R07010001

Task Agreement Number J8R07040006

Cooperative Conservation: Increasing Capacity through Community
Partnerships -- Interagency Volunteer Program &
Cooperative Conservation Program

Collaboration with Interagency Team

During the third quarter, the interagency volunteer team and university representatives have held several meetings to continue progress on the Interagency Volunteer Program (IVP). At the beginning of October, candidates for the project manager position were interviewed by the university search committee, followed by interviews with the interagency team on October 6, 2004. After two finalists were identified, reference checks were made and the university and team recommended to the federal managers that Ms. Donna Grady be hired. Ms. Grady's first day on the job was December 1, 2004.

In the interim, Nancy Flagg, Public Lands Initiative Director, met with the team on October 19 and November 17, 2004, to continue work on project deliverables already in progress. At these meetings, the team reached consensus on and finalized:

- An Interagency Volunteer Application for Individuals
- An Interagency Volunteer Application for Groups
- Volunteer Event Sign-up Sheets
- A brand name for the program for marketing purposes – Get Outdoors Nevada
- Initial website design, links, and related copy
- Selection of Volgistics software to run the volunteer program database
- Dates for three interagency volunteer events between February and June 2005:
 - Great American Clean Up – March 5
 - Red Rock Day – April 2
 - National Trails Day – June 4

Additional details on these milestones are provided in other sections of this report.

A team meeting with the new project manager was held on December 15, 2004. The team reviewed the progress to date on various year-one deliverables and agreed upon

additional tasks to be completed. During the first quarter of 2005 the project manager and team will focus on (1) development of a public relations/marketing program, (2) a common recruiting, training, and recognition program, and (3) organizing the upcoming volunteer events.

Hiring

As noted above, Ms. Donna Grady joined the interagency volunteer team in the position of Project Manager on December 1, 2004. Donna replaces Pat Williams who was hired in August as Interim Project Coordinator. She brings more than 20 years of project management experience in corporate and non-profit settings, along with experience in recruiting, training, and managing both AmeriCorps/VISTA and community volunteers.

Program Development

Volunteer Database

The IVP team reviewed and carefully evaluated two database programs for managing volunteer information: VolunteerWorks and Volgistics. Volgistics, a user friendly web-based program designed specifically for volunteer organizations, was selected after testing by team members. This web-based software requires no server and is a cost-effective, robust database that will allow us to do the following:

- Track core volunteer information, including demographics, skills, preferences, availability, emergency contacts
- Record, track and report volunteer hours, hour values, and mandatory volunteer service
- Accept online volunteer applications through our web site
- Send email to individuals or groups of volunteers
- Manage volunteer email preferences
- Track volunteer assignments, and the sites or places where volunteers serve
- Track the people who coordinate volunteers at each location, and organize volunteers by these coordinators
- Schedule assignments and volunteers, view schedule openings, and send volunteer schedule reminders automatically by email
- Match volunteers to assignments based on volunteer assignment preferences and qualifications
- Track volunteer prerequisites and when volunteers complete each requirement
- Print lists, labels, letters, and service reports
- Manage volunteer recognition
- Store records for former volunteers in an archive area, and manage multi-site volunteer programs.

Interim database coordinator Chuck Williams is working with the team to populate the database with all available volunteer data for each agency. More than 700 records have either been uploaded from existing databases or manually entered into Volgistics. Entries

for three of the four agencies are nearly complete, with an agreed upon target date for all existing records to be entered by January 31, 2005.

To protect confidentiality of volunteer demographics, a confidentiality agreement was developed by the university and signed by each Volgistics database user. All new users will be required to sign this agreement (see enclosed copy).

Volunteer Application Forms

Several work sessions focused on developing common volunteer application forms. Final revisions were made, and an individual and group interagency application have now been approved by the team. Copies are enclosed.

Volunteer Recruitment, Training, Recognition

Project Manager Donna Grady has solicited input from the agencies to identify and document current recruitment, training, and recognition programs. Simultaneously, research is underway to identify proven recruitment, training, and recognition practices that may be effective as part of the interagency program. This information will be reviewed by the team at future meetings, and those practices deemed appropriate will be adopted.

Program Marketing/PR

Branding

Although the Interagency Volunteer Program is understood internally, it was determined that to effectively promote the program to the general public we needed a name that reflects the nature of the organization, gains the interest of prospective volunteers, and directs an internet search to the IVP website. A list of prospective names was created by the university and "Get Outdoors Nevada" was ultimately chosen. The name will be typically used in conjunction with the tagline "An Interagency Volunteer Program" and a listing of the four agencies.

Public Relations

Program publicity is premature, although all of the elements that form a campaign are falling into place. A personnel release announcing the hiring of the IVT Project Manager has been written, the website is near completion, and the database will be fully populated the end of January. Completion of the website and the database will support and facilitate communications to and from volunteers.

Website

Initial website content was coordinated by Interim Project Coordinators Pat and Chuck Williams and added to a preliminary IVP website prototype, which has not yet gone

public. Refinements and additions to the web content will be ongoing in collaboration with the interagency team. The domain name for getoutdoorsnevada.org has been purchased by the university on behalf of the interagency program. In addition, preliminary research is underway regarding search engine optimization marketing strategies for the website.

Project Manager Donna Grady and web designer Megan Iudice have refined the navigational areas as follows:

- ✓ About Us
- ✓ Volunteer
- ✓ Events Calendar
- ✓ Photo Gallery
- ✓ Partners
- ✓ Links
- ✓ Contact Us

The website will allow visitors to learn about the program, contact any of the agency volunteer coordinators, and view position descriptions, training schedules and upcoming events. Visitors interested in becoming a volunteer can sign-up for an event or apply as a volunteer either on-line or by downloading an application for mailing. The team is also exploring the option of allowing current volunteers to update their contact information online. The initial website design was presented to the interagency team on December 15, 2004. The general consensus was positive for both look and content. We anticipate that final arrangements for taking the website public will be made after the team's next meeting in January 2005 and will be available as a marketing tool prior to planned Spring 2005 interagency volunteer events.

Event Calendar

Prior discussions with the interagency team included the development and printing of an annual calendar, similar to one produced by the Red Rock Interpretive Association. Following additional discussion, the IVP team agreed not to produce a print calendar at this time. Events are subject to change and it was agreed a website event calendar that could be easily updated and revised would be more cost effective.

Interagency Letterhead

Program letterhead has been revised and approved by the team and is now in the final design phase. This will be produced in print and electronic formats and used to communicate with volunteers (i.e. recognition, etc.), businesses (recognition, support) and others.

Alternative Workforce Survey

During the third quarter of 2004, the university made good progress on the initiation of the alternative workforce survey. The UNLV Center for Urban Partnerships and the UNLV Center for Workforce Development and Occupational Research are teaming up to conduct the survey and provide the deliverables related to it. Representatives from the two centers met with the federal land managers on November 5, 2004, to clarify the managers' goals for the survey and how they presently make use of alternative workforce suppliers. Subsequent to that meeting, university representatives have met several times with Bobbie Antonich, Government Technical Representative, to define the scope of the study and to determine appropriate membership for a small working group of agency personnel to help guide the construction of the survey instrument. The proposal and timeline for conducting the alternative workforce survey is attached to this report.

Summary

All aspects of the Cooperative Conservation Program are moving forward at a steady pace. The Interagency Volunteer Project Manager is hired and on board. An interagency database was chosen and will be fully populated by January 31, 2005. Common volunteer application forms and letterhead are developed and approved. Three interagency volunteer events have been identified and will be implemented in Spring 2005. The website has been developed and, with some minor modifications, will be ready to launch in conjunction with the interagency events. A public relations plan is under development, and the alternative workforce survey is underway. All told, the project is on track, and the building blocks are in place for the project to begin shifting to an external focus over the next three months.

Submitted by:

Margaret N. Rees, Principal Investigator

December 31, 2004
Date