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We are open for questions. All of you who are sitting by a computer and you can easily access the chat feature, it's on the right-hand panels that are called chat, and that's where you can submit your questions. So all of you sitting there, take the time – there's some very interesting presentations, and I'm gonna open it up with a couple of questions based on Lisa and Margaret's comments. Lisa, that is fabulous work and great results that you got from that survey. I have a couple general questions to start with. Were there any findings that surprised you as you did this survey and related the results?

That's a good question, and it's kind of hard to answer because by the time I've kind of gone through some of the research out there and started talking with people one on one, I had a sense of where the challenges were going to be, but what really surprised me was the fact that it was a small part of so many different people's jobs. We had people say yep, I'm responsible for the volunteer program, I'm a district ranger, I'm a biologist, I'm an archeologist. So this program is really all over the place, and the fact that so many folks haven't had the opportunity for even basic training so that they can piece together the elements of this program in a really effective way, those are a couple things that surprised me.

I noticed you said that I think 73% of the respondents said that they had no training in the management of volunteers at all. Did people give reasons why or was there an ability on the survey for them to comment on that?

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You know, I didn't ask that, and now I wish that I had. I suspect for a lot of people it's because it's just one small part of their job, but also in looking at what we offer for training to work with the volunteer program, until recently when for example this great coordinator desk guide came out, training opportunities, there weren't a lot of them. There were some regions that had great – Region 2 had some great Powerpoint presentations. They have a full-time volunteer program coordinator who put together a lot of resources, but depending on whether you knew about what was going on or were tapped into that kind of volunteer network, it wasn't necessarily something that was accessible to everyone.

You mentioned the Volunteer Coordinator Desk Guide and some other reports. Where can people find those?

Well one of the places they can find that is through the Missoula Technology and Development Center, and I have to pause before I say that because I always trip over that word but it's the MTDC, Missoula Technology and Development Center or Missoula Training and Development Center. Technology Center. And you know, a couple of times I've been out in the forest and someone has said where can I find it, and I actually Google it. I Google Volunteer Coordinator Desk Guide, Missoula Technology Development Center, and it'll pop right up and you'll be able to access a link to it. You can also get to it from our internal website.

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Yeah. And I'm quite sure that when the links for the Powerpoint are provided for all the participants that a link will be provided to the volunteer desk guide. You mentioned another report on corporate giving or philanthropic giving. How about that?

Well I think – Lisa, this is Margaret. I think he was reporting to the study that the UPS foundation funded.

Yeah.

And if I can just shuffle through my notes really quickly I can tell you where I found that.

Well actually, Lisa, that is at the back of the CHM document, so that will be part of – it turns out Lisa and us both approached it and were using same pieces of information, independently we came to the same conclusions, but that whole study is in fact an appendix to the CHM report, so you get two for the price of one.

Wonderful.

Margaret, I'm glad you joined back with us. Your initial remarks about trends and volunteering, you posed the question or noted some comments about why

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people did volunteer. Were there similar observations about why people stopped volunteering or barriers to them that they found as they were? Lisa certainly described many internal ones that are good to be addressed, but generally are there any broad-scale trends, why people stop volunteering once they start.

Well a lot of times it is because of mismanagement or non-value of their time. I mean at the end of the day, volunteering is all about people making choices to give their leisure time to some organization, and at the end of the day it's no different than any other place where you spend your time. If you don't feel you're being respected, if your value and your time isn't being respected, if your talents aren't being respected, or if the experience you were looking for is not what you were hoping for, and we're gonna talk a little bit later about, and Lisa spoke to it in a different framework. We're gonna talk a little later about the concept of experience and how that's becoming more of a trend. I think the other thing that I'd add, and I didn't talk about it at the beginning. I mean we talked about not volunteering your time. You're talking about stopping volunteering. I think outside of the general statements here it typically is this issue of either their personal life situation changes or their choices for how they're gonna spend their time, and really, in many cases we can look at this on a national trend standpoint, but even if we think about this on an individual basis, time is a valuable commodity and people want to choose it where they get returns on that feeling of the time they spent, so a lot of times if it's not there people don't stay.

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Well let's talk a little bit, both you and Lisa, about the feasibility of working with volunteers. You know, Lisa, you spoke to the extreme diversity of how work units are put together and the obligations that individual staff has in the field administratively. Is it realistic for every unit to think they can work with partners or friends groups or bring on individual volunteers?

One of the observations I was gonna make is Lisa talked a little bit about the percentage of people that don't have friends groups, and one of the things that we heard was that is, and I think this remains the challenge for the agency as it goes forward to figure out how is the best way to kind of structure things. The friends group is one model, but there's also the idea of there's a constellation of nonprofits who are actually already serving the needs of the Forest Service in different ways, and maybe a dedicated one is not the solution in all cases. Maybe it's a constellation or a confederation of existing nonprofits who are passionate and in a rotating role of the different nonprofits to be that liaison to the agency, so I don't think there's any one answer but I think the research studies are making a variety of options for consideration.

One of the things I've seen at my own volunteer experience, I'm on a volunteer group called the friends of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, one of the premier wildlife research centers right outside of Washington D.C., and there's a very active and large group of friends. I've been on the board of directors of the friends for a number of years, and I've seen that the more volunteers there are

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the more reinforcement they receive for their good volunteer service and also the more opportunities they have to slot themselves appropriately. It never ceases to amaze me that people who were not outgoing and didn't necessarily deal with the public, yet they still have this strong desire to volunteer and to give service. If the appropriate slots are found for them, they don't have to worry about being the point of contact for the visitor's question. Equally, recently retired people out of the US Fish and Wildlife Service who have this wealth of knowledge and experience are just thrilled at the notion that they can talk to people and they can share their knowledge and their long history, so I see in that large volunteer core a diversity of roles for people and a reinforcement that comes in the understanding that they're giving quality time and they're getting quality results back. Lisa, did you sense that – what's kind of the satisfaction level and did you talk to people about that in your survey?

You know, I didn't ask people – are we talking about volunteers or are we talking about the staff?

Both.

I didn't ask people specific questions about their satisfaction with the volunteer program, but in conversations and in the comments that people shared, it's a hugely important program for both our volunteers and our internal staff. There's a lot of positive feeling that's developed through being able to build these

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relationships and making these opportunities for people to give back, do something, to connect not only with each other but having a good time working on a project, but also to feel like they're really a part of things, and that's one of the huge benefits of the volunteer program. just that sort of positive attitude that our volunteers bring to the work that they do, I think that really influences our staff as well when you get to go out and spend a day with a volunteer crew who are just so gung-ho about working on this particular site or getting rid of this invasive plant or spending an afternoon with kids. It's a really positive feedback loop all the way around.

Let me go through a couple of questions that have come in. From Julie Moldan, is there a way we can get information on the issues by region so that we can focus on areas where we need to improve?

Good question. You caught me with kind of a blank on that.

Well Jim's sitting right here too then if there's a matter of moving some resource around, maybe we can throw that question to him.

Well I don't know the direct answer to that, if our research can be broken out that way, but I would say that as we move forward in developing our strategy and plan of action for elevating this program we'll have full involvement of the regions, the regional volunteer coordinators who consent with their units, forests and

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districts and stations and areas and the like and tailor the level of response to particular issues to those needs. That's the way I would approach that if we don't have the direct survey.

And now that I'm thinking about it for a moment or two, I think that maybe one of the ways to approach that is not necessarily a question of breaking it up just by region but by looking at what the unit is, whether it's near an urban forest or whether it's quite isolated with the size of the organization. I think there are a lot of themes that run through what is a very diverse organization, so we can certainly break it out in a lot of different ways to try to be useful to folks.

Great. Okay, thanks. There are a couple more good questions that have come in, so thank you everybody for finally getting off your duffs and typing in some good questions. This is from Katy – boy these names are tough, Lajuness, who asks what's the agency doing to take advantage of the current administration focus on public service and are there strategies in place to collaborate with the Department of the Interior's youth office? I'm very glad you asked that question, Katy. We this past year really got engaged at the national level through parks and recreation on the United We Serve Program, and the Forest Service was leading the way on a number of models too, and I didn't see a lot of great connections between Department of the Interior and the Forest Service, but a great opportunity for fertile ground. So Jim, maybe you'd like to address that.

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What is being done at the leadership level to say how can we support the administration with an interest and focus on youth particularly?

Well, we're part of the continuing dialogue. I had discussions with Bob Stanton who is the director of the Department of the Interior's youth office. We have been waiting a little bit until we have some capability to carry the ball forward in terms of staffing and the like, so we haven't jumped in real heavily in terms of making any such commitment, but we're part of the federal family here at the national level and coordinate with them all the time and try to understand and learn from what each other is doing, try to be complementary as much as possible, and develop support in a unified way to Capital Hill and back up the line as well. So we are tied in and we know all the people. We try to work in a complementary fashion, and as usual there is more to be done there too.

Well you know, the formal United We Serve Program ended on September 11, but it's clear that the administration is going to come out with more comprehensive and broad-based public service campaigns to elicit volunteer service from the public and connect the two national goals for improving healthy lifestyles and combating childhood obesity and addressing urban issues especially, reaching out to youth at risk, so those are all good markers for all of us to take note of that as we start to look at the potential for creative and innovative volunteer programs, to be addressing the administration's top national priority.

And that is a part of the reason that we feel very optimistic about the ability to elevate the program area because it is important at the very highest level. The president himself has spoken a lot about community service. The Public Land Service Core Act is moving through congress. We testified on that along with Bob Stanton, and a number of efforts like that, so a number just like Rich is saying about NRPA, a number of nonprofits and NGOs and other organizations are moving forward. The American Recreation Coalition brings us all together on this frequently and helps keep a focus on this whole area of volunteerism.

_____ asked a good question for Lisa. Were you able to determine what percentage of volunteer programs were headed by paid volunteer coordinators versus volunteer volunteer coordinators?

Well thanks for asking that. That's a great question because the issue of volunteer volunteer coordinators has really become something that people talk about lately. You know, and I don't in front of me have a number that I can share with you. I would have to say off the top of my head without having the actual number reference that that's an initiative that's being used kind of in bits and pieces across the country in some areas. People have discovered the use of, for example, Americorps volunteer leaders, and that's really spread in that immediate area, but in other areas we've had challenges with that. again we go back to our processes, our administrative and grants and agreements programs

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where at times people say well that's really not gonna work for us or we're not really sure how we can do that, so it is growing, but it's still a pretty small percentage. There's a lot of interest in it though, so I think that's something we need to be talking about.

_____ made a comment on that very subject. He says – Lisa referenced how some friends groups have more capacity to coordinate trained volunteers than others. As a full-time staff person with PCTA I'd encourage agency partners to look at these nonprofit partners where present and appropriate as de facto volunteer coordinators and trainers. Some of the nonprofit groups, particularly ones associated with larger entities such as NSD, have an incredible capacity to coordinate, train, track, and also reward and stroke volunteers. That's my personal comment, but clearly the recognition of volunteers is a big part of the satisfaction of their experience, and sometimes as service personnel we get wrapped up in the fact that yeah we love them and we appreciate them but we don't take the time to tell them that, and the notion of recognizing and really telling them how important to our mission their service is is really important. So thanks for that good comment.