Looking Forward
Strategic Investment Plan

Creating a Vision Together...

Gifford Pinchot National Forest
Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument
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Overview

For more than 100 years through years of quintessential recreational experiences, a devastating 1980 eruption and thirty years of emerging life, the Forest Service has been honored to manage Mount St. Helens. The Mount St. Helens Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) focuses on decisions, strategies and investments that can be made to meet the public and legislative mandates of Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. The SIP highlights how the Forest Service is the best federal agency to manage this unique and changing landscape for this and future generations. Forest Service management allows visitors unparalleled access, contributes to the economic viability of local communities, provides a platform for ground breaking research, and protects the natural processes that allow the return of life to this dramatically altered landscape. Premier visitor experiences, recent significant investments, and emerging partnerships make Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument a sound investment.

The Key Actions (decisions, strategies, and investments) to meet these strategic goals include:

- The establishment of a separate Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument Administrative Subunit
- Targeted Investment in roads, recreation, and facilities Infrastructure
- The expansion and strengthening of MSHNVM Partnerships, Volunteer Resources, and Community Engagement
- An Increased focus and investment in Research at MSHNVM
- Increased Public Safety through the transfer of Spirit Lake Tunnel to the Corps of Engineers and increased law enforcement
- Enhanced Resource Protection through cave management and invasive weed removal
- A strong focus on Interpretation and Education at Johnston Ridge Observatory and other interpretive sites.

Some of the factors supporting the Key Actions listed in the following pages include:

- A Congressionally Legislated mission
- The Comprehensive Management Plan implementation and $100 million build out
- Community and stakeholder expectations
- Emerging partnership capacities
- Fee based operations since 1997
- Mount St. Helens Citizen Advisory Committee Recommendations

The Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument will do their part to attain the Key Actions in the Strategic Investment Plan and have identified where community assistance can help to meet these goals over the next five to ten years.
The purpose of this document is to provide context for charting Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument’s (MSHNVM) path for the next five to ten years. The central part of the Strategic Investment Plan will help us formulate decisions and actions to seize recent investment opportunities and to continue the momentum the Forest Service has in managing the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument.

At 8:32 Sunday morning, May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted. Within a few moments, nearly 150 square miles of forest was blown over or left dead and standing. Fifty seven lives were lost and the ensuing 9-hour eruption left a dramatically changed landscape.

In 1982, the President and Congress created the 110,000-acre National Volcanic Monument to be managed for research, recreation, education, protecting local communities, allowing natural processes to unfold, and entrusted the Forest Service to manage. The MSHNVM Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) subdivided the Monument into a series of land-types based on resource values, potential sensitivity to disturbance, and potential uses for recreation, education, and interpretation.

From 1985 to 1997, two visitor centers and an observatory were constructed, State Route 504 was relocated and extended, a number of viewpoints were created, and trail development and a climbing program were established along with programs for recreation, interpretation, education, and science.

2000-2008 (Fee based operations, Visitor services reductions, Partnerships)
The decision to close the Mount St. Helens Visitor Center at Silver Lake in 2000 highlighted the increasing inability to reconcile public expectations about facilities and services with significant drops in federal funding. To meet these expectations and the legislated mission of the Monument, the Forest Service focused on leveraged funding, external financing and increased volunteerism. After a successful partnership to co-manage the Mount St. Helens Visitor Center, the Forest Service transferred ownership of the Silver Lake facility to Washington State Parks. In the same year, the Monument retired the Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center and Pine Creek Visitor Center, reduced operations at dispersed interpretive sites, and increasingly relied on partnerships to deliver interpretive information and other Monument services.

These challenges framed an important transition, with an increased emphasis on working with partners to deliver services and an emphasis on providing experiences rather than on infrastructure investments. Despite these efforts, public concern over closing facilities and a decrease in interpretive services has reinvigorated questions about which agency might best manage the National Volcanic Monument.
2008 and Beyond (Mount St. Helens Citizens Advisory Committee, Forest Service Investments, Community Partnerships, Recovery Projects)

In response to reduction of visitor services at the Monument, the Mount St. Helens Citizen Advisory Committee (MSHCAC), consisting of elected officials and representatives from various groups with a stake in the outcome of the ensuing discussions, was tasked by Washington’s Congressional Delegation to provide a local vision for the future of MSHNVM. Specifically, the Committee was 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 at MSHNVM, in the last two years the Forest Service has charted a new path for MSHNVM.

Recent investments, opportunities and partnerships that provide momentum that can be capitalized on include:

- Reopening of Pine Creek Information Station, serving thousands of visitors, on the south and east side of the Monument.
- Permitting 13,000 climbers annually who attempt the south rim of the volcano.
- New seismic exhibits at Johnston Ridge Observatory through partnerships and grants.
- Reopening of Forest Roads 99 and 83 accessing Windy Ridge and Lava Canyon.
- Reopening Lava Canyon footbridge with a ribbon-cutting event on Public Lands Day.
- “Valuing Place” Rangers added around the Monument.
- 30th Anniversary Research “Pulse” integrating scientific studies.
- $5.87 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act infrastructure investments.
- $1.74 million Forest Service funded infrastructure investments.
- Increased operational funding for the Monument’s pilot program as a Valued Places model.
The vision for MSHNV is to fulfill its legislated mission and to provide premier public experiences. The return of life and changing geological landscape provides a unique opportunity for people to experience their national forest heritage and to build a deeper connection to nature. The Monument’s Mission is:

- 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

Mount St. Helens provides a unique forum for the Forest Service to engage local, national, and international audiences. Curiosity and awe for this volcanic landscape bring hundreds of thousands of people to the Monument and to the popular Volcanocam. This interest creates a platform for the Forest Service and community partners to share messages about public lands, resource stewardship, commitment to research and education, and public service.

In addition, the MSHCAC suggests Mount St. Helens is, “a key tourist destination and economic engine for local communities while preserving natural resources and remaining a world leader for scientific research.”
The following pages detail the key actions identified to manage the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument to meet the legislated mission, and the intent of the Mount St. Helens Citizen Advisory Committee. Each Key Action topic is broken further down by categories. "Current Investments" highlights recent activities and partnerships. "What’s Next?" takes a look forward, and describes the additional investments and activities which the Monument and partners are focusing on. "Why Make It Happen?" succinctly describes the intended outcome of working with our communities. "How can we work together?" summarizes the essential community partnerships that will accelerate progress towards the shared objectives.

The Key Actions are prioritized in the order listed in the following pages. The priorities are based on importance to meet legislated mission and recommendations of the congressionally chartered MSHCAC. For example, a new administrative unit designation is an overall high priority, and investment in MSHNVM trails, Johnston Ridge Observatory, roads and bridges, and Coldwater are priorities under infrastructure investments.

— An important tenet of the Strategic Investment Plan is that Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument and Gifford Pinchot National Forest staff will pursue and seize opportunities across the whole strategy. For example, as funding streams, partnerships, and innovative energy spark an opportunity, Forest staff will capitalize on accelerating the implementation of promising action items. —
Infrastructure Investments

Trails

Access to the Monument’s amazing landscape on safe, well maintained trails is the Monument’s priority infrastructure investment.

The trail network gives visitors, recreationists, and scientists access to the unique landscape features while limiting travel impacts off-trail. Well maintained trails welcome and reassure visitors that they are on a known route. Trails are emphasized as investments for recreation, tourism, community health, and public education. Public interest in trails and access to the Monument will continue to grow, and trail maintenance workloads often exceed Forest capacity. Partnerships and community involvement are the best means we have to (1) maintain the entire trail system, (2) expand trail system and public access, and (3) confirm that Mount St. Helens is a great investment for additional trail opportunities.

Current Investments: Additional funding in 2010 and 2011 nearly tripled the Monument’s budget for trail maintenance. Even with this investment, the tremendous volunteer emphasis by partner organizations has been the backbone on priority trails such as the Loowit trail around the mountain, the Hummocks trail, and the Boundary Trail.

What’s Next: Our goals for the Monument trail system are three-fold:

1. Enhance existing trails, emphasizing recurring maintenance, visitor safety, and up to date trail information.

2. Invest in new trails that improve public access by providing hiking loops, connections between existing trails, and connections to communities and community trail systems. However, strong partnerships to maintain the Monument trails are a requirement for a trail expansion. Trails we are evaluating: a north climb; a connection between South Coldwater trailhead, Hummocks, and Coldwater Lake trail head; a vista trail from Ape Cave; a connector trail between Coldwater and Castle Lakes.

3. Campaign to increase the visibility of hiking and biking opportunities for each of these interest areas: education, science, community health and well-being, recreation, and tourism.

Why make it happen?

Investments in the trail system are the most cost-effective means to promote public access and greater public use of the Monument, and we already have a growing legacy of public and partner participation in trail management.
How can we work together?

• Join us as a volunteer and partner on trail projects to enhance community support and community commitment to sustain and expand the Monument trail network.
• Participate on the Monument’s trail scoping committee.
• Champion trail investments, help craft grant requests, foster greater community involvement.
• Join the campaign to highlight the tremendous trail opportunities to visitors, tourists, communities.

Partners

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

Who should I contact?

Lisa Romano, Chief of Interpretation/Community Engagement, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831
Johnston Ridge Observatory (JRO)
The unique Johnston Ridge Observatory (JRO) provides an iconic experience for many of our Monument visitors. As our most frequently visited site, the Observatory continues to be a centerpiece in our Monument investment strategy.

We are working with partners and donors to continually update JRO with fresh, cutting edge exhibits, science discoveries, and memorable experiences. With JRO as an emphasis in our investment strategy, we continue our successful plans to ensure that the center maintains and enhances its appeal to local, national, and international audiences.

Current Investments:
A significant investment and face lift for this popular facility included new interactive seismic displays, a theater sound and projection upgrade, new and reformatted films, new doors and windows, structure maintenance, resurfacing on the eruption trail, and the addition of the outdoor amphitheater. These enhancements garnered public interest and media attention, and are an affirmation that this is the Monument’s flagship facility. The intent of the Monument investment strategy is to keep Johnston Ridge facilities and programs fresh and well maintained and inviting to visitors May to October.

What’s Next?
- Mobile food concession sites enhanced for better visitor services. Sites are located adjacent to JRO entry walkway and an added site serving visitors at the new outdoor amphitheater.
- Entrance booth and improved information kiosk on pedestrian walkway from parking to the Observatory. These portal improvements will simplify visitor orientation, enhance the experience for visitors and educational groups needing assistance, and improve our ability to host feature events in the Observatory and amphitheater.
- Working with partners to develop the next phases of exhibit upgrades with interactive website connections. This is the next investment in the ongoing interpretive plan to provide updated and replacement exhibits which compliment and expand current programs.
  - The dramatic setting of the outdoor amphitheater, opening in 2012, 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.
  - Expanding and enriching Volcano Volunteer opportunities to participate in 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 and across the nation and even internationally. Our expansion of volunteer housing continues.
• Establish a “Friends of JRO” community group with focus on expanding educational eco-tourism and hosting community events in the improved and expanded facilities.

**Why make it happen?**

The unique, internationally recognized Johnston Ridge Observatory remains the Monument’s premier developed destination. Sustained maintenance for this high profile facility and investments in interpretive and educational exhibits ensures its continued seasonal operation. In response to MSHCAC and community interests, the Forest Service is working with local community partners and the Mount St. Helens Institute to expand educational programs, offer more in-depth interpretation, and provide hands-on science and ecotourism experiences at JRO and the new amphitheater.

**How can we work together?**

• Community Events: You can develop community events using the JRO outdoor amphitheater to deliver programs that are compatible with the Monument’s mission in science, research, education, and recreation.

• Experience the volcano as a volunteer and partner: We would love to have you and your friends join the fulfilling opportunities to participate in and support the Volcano Volunteer program, offering memorable interpretive presentations and visitor services in the JRO vicinity. Volunteers can help us bring the volcano’s science and intrigue to your community schools and community events.

• Expand Eco-tourism: Participate in and support the Friends of JRO tourism group with focus on expanding educational eco-tourism and hosting community events.

• Exhibits: MSHNVM works with partners and donors to continually update exhibits and present fresh messages at JRO, and we are eager to make those partners visible.

**Join in with these valued Partners:**

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

**Who should I contact?**

Lisa Romano, Chief of Interpretation/Community Engagement, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831
**Roads and Bridges**

Every visitor’s first impressions of the National Volcanic Monument are formed on the forest and community roads serving as portals. Safe and enjoyable travel experiences within the National Forest and Monument are ensured by well-maintained, safe and scenic roadways. Visitors, stakeholders and elected officials experience road conditions as tangible indicators of accessibility on the Monument. The public expects to find roads open and in good repair.

**Current Investments:**

The Forest Service and Federal Highways Administration have made major repairs and improvements on the 99 road and 83 roads, and re-opened the 81 road following the extensive flood and slide damage. In addition, we have improved the cost outlook for Monument roads by decommissioning miles of damaged, higher-risk roads; the roadbeds are now storm-proofed and many were converted to trails used by hikers, bikers, horses, skiers and snowmobilers.

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

**What’s Next?**

- The 90 Road (Lewis River road) will receive over $10M in repairs and enhancements in the next few years, raising it to standards required to transition it to a county and then state highway. Initiated in 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.
- Continued replacement of high quality, visitor-friendly interpretation signs and information panels on all the Monument’s travel corridors.
- Fire and Ice Scenic Loop concepts will be developed and implemented on the Monument in partnership with a broad array of county and community stakeholders. This effort integrates closely with and compliments the community partnerships which re-invigorated Pine Creek Visitor Center.
  - Maintaining and enhancing scenic overlooks and vistas will be emphasized as part of a forest-wide approach, with Monument emphasis on the 25 and 83 Roads. Wildcat Thinning and Restoration projects were strategically designed to enhance a former vantage point that has become overgrown.
  - Continued investments in priority roadways most vulnerable to slides and washouts.
• Capitalize on the existing scenic designations, particularly the SR 504 corridor, and promoting a community-based strategic vision to enhance the scenic values.

• Determining practical investments in the 26 road loop. Mountain bikers opportunity while this is evaluated.

• Pursue opportunities for alternative travel (shuttle/public transit) on SR504 corridor.

• Pursue scenic designation and road investments to improve visitor safety on the 25 Road between Pine Creek and Randle.

**Why make it happen?**

Safe roadway travel and quality signs are integral parts of both visitor experiences and local community pride.

**How can we work together?**

• Community Events: You can develop community activities to clean and enhance roadsides and overlooks, and become sponsors of 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 adoption program to clean up roadside litter and debris. Climbers on Climbers Bivouac Road, Snowmobilers and mountain bikers around Marble Mountain are setting the pace. Join or host a National Public Lands Day event.

• Fire and Ice Scenic Loop: Participate and support joint efforts of multiple counties and communities.

• Adopt a Vista: Volunteer to assist with vista management efforts, helping prune tree branches and spruce up after roadside thinning projects.

• Sponsor additional interpretive signs and interpretive materials for roadside travelers.

**List of Partners:**

- Skamania County
- Federal Highways Administration
- Washington Dept of Transportation
- Swift Community Action Team
- Mount St. Helens Institute and Conservation Corp volunteers
- Skamania County Sheriff and corrections crews

**Who should I contact?**

Tom Mulder, Monument Manager, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7810
Coldwater Science and Learning Center

Science and education are valued elements of the National Volcanic Monument, and will be important as part of the investments in Coldwater’s future. The Coldwater facility was retired as a Visitor Center in 2008, and though limited, has use primarily as a training and education venue. It continues to be an important administrative office, control center for JRO environmental controls, and warehouse for interpretive resources and retail merchandise.

MSHCAC recommended a reinvestment in Coldwater Ridge as an overnight destination to include science, interpretation, education, visitor services, food and university partnerships. The recommendation acknowledges benefit from economic development, increased educational opportunity, and utilizing existing infrastructure. The committee also acknowledged that the site and facility are expensive to operate and maintain, and more investments and development are required to feasibly become an overnight destination.

Forest Service staff and several key Coldwater partners have explored and considered a wide variety of potential uses of the Coldwater facility; a common need among many alternatives was to make the existing structure safe and more energy efficient, and a common theme is that emerging community partnerships, just as at Pine Creek Information Center, will play an essential role in determining the array of future uses and the direction and pace of reinvestment.

Current Investments:

Recent investments at Coldwater include replacement windows of much greater durability and more suitable to the harsh site conditions, energy efficiency enhancements, modernized environmental controls, partial roof replacement, restored walkway and parking surfaces and treatment to extend the life of the building exterior.

Yurts and restrooms were constructed to expand capacity for multi-day stays by highly-valued, enthusiastic volunteers while they participate in programs at JRO and in the Coldwater vicinity.

What’s Next?

- Refinement of initial draft concept and a draft business plan for Coldwater reinvestments, including focus on potential Science and Learning Center, a hub for expanding educational partnerships with schools and colleges, a hub for outfitter guide services, an outlet for visitor services including food and retail gift sales, a venue for community event partnerships, and a visitor information portal, and visitor activities for shoulder seasons when JRO is inaccessible due to snow and avalanche hazards.
- Implementing the Coldwater version of the highly productive “Pine Creek” model of joint investment via community partnerships with committed stakeholders, community leaders, and local businesses.
- Continued outreach for an interim food service.
- Issue a Prospectus (competitive opportunity for commercial operations) to potentially include food service, gift store and related retail, outdoor gear rental, outfitter guide services, and other services and programs compatible with the Monument’s objectives and legislated mission.
- Addition of a stand-alone restroom in the upper Coldwater parking lot to allow future public uses such as camping, RV sites, winter snow play regardless of the building’s availability.
- Continued investments in the aging facility, such as heating and cooling system repairs and water system updates.
- Continued removal of science exhibits which reflect 1993 biological messages and technology. Our intent is to continue to transfer the delivery of Coldwater’s original
target role for interpretive ecology messages into JRO exhibits and programs. The Monument and partners will use newer more flexible state of the art interpretive exhibits and techniques to reduce space requirements and allow more flexible multi-purpose uses of Coldwater floor space while the more extensive JRO exhibits are open.

- Continue to jointly explore with Cowlitz County and the state the potential for integrating Coldwater educational and recreational winter programs with a nearby winter snow play area.
- The Forest Service’s Regional Forester has nominated the Monument’s proposed Ecological Discovery Camp initiative (an ingredient of the Science and Learning Center focus at Coldwater) for a significant fund-raising campaign via the National Forest Foundation. If selected by the Foundation as a featured investment with notable national visibility, the initiative would bring additional funding and sponsorships for facility enhancements, potential investments for overnight accommodations, and extended stays for participants in citizen science programs.
- See notes on potential High Lakes land acquisition. If public access to the High Lakes area is acquired, it is viewed as an optimal game-changing component of Coldwater partnerships and investment strategies.

**Why make it happen?**

Community and regional interests align well with Forest Service renewed investments in Coldwater’s potential value to the local economy, to local education, and as an asset capable of adding to local “quality of place” experiences. Through community partnerships and joint investments, a vibrant Coldwater facility offers promise for a new focus as a productive community asset. Recent investments are generating new momentum and public interest, and combined efforts of local communities, Forest Service “Valued Places” status, and extensive ranks of partners and stakeholders can create a new success story.

**How can we work together?**

- Local partnerships and volunteer hosts: Applying the Pine Creek model, we look forward to developing a mutually beneficial community focus, jointly developing visitor programs, staffing the facility, and hosting the public. Two of the Monument’s essential regional partners, Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI) and Discover Your Northwest Interpretive Association (DYNW), are already involved and ready to commit greater staff and resources pending community efforts and equally enthusiastic involvement by nearby community champions. Expanding local community involvement is one of the next essential ingredients for the re-birth of Coldwater facilities.

**List of Partners:**

- Mount St. Helens Institute
- Discover Your Northwest interpretive association
- Pacific Northwest Research Station
- US Geological Survey

**Who should I contact?**

Peter Frenzen, Monument Scientist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7835
Public Overnight Facilities

The unusual landscape and popular recreation activities on the Monument attract hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, and the MSH Citizen Advisory Committee emphasized the growing public request for overnight operations at the Monument. Effective overnight facilities do not currently exist on the northwest side of the Monument, near Highway 504. MSHCAC recommendations recommend that the Coldwater Ridge facility become an overnight destination. This suggestion compliments Forest Service interest in accommodating and expanding the length of educational/recreational experiences at Coldwater for visitors and students, which requires overnight options.

The increasing demand on campsites on the south side of the Monument reflects the growing influence of the Vancouver/Portland urban interface. Adjacent landowners such as PacifiCorp, Olympic Resource Management, and Weyerhaeuser are limiting public access to their land, increasing public pressure on camping at the Monument. PacifiCorp campgrounds on the adjacent Lewis River reservoirs are operating at capacity and send spillover to the Monument dispersed campsites and the developed Kalama Horse Camp. Many heavily-impacted dispersed (undeveloped) sites are expanding, and are creating sanitation and safety concerns. These unmanaged sites pose a demand on Monument staffing and resources but provide no camping revenue. Recurring user conflicts at Kalama Horse Camp create a management dilemma which could be reduced with added campground capacity nearby. Monument recreation managers have coordinated with PacifiCorp to explore the possible shifting of the power company’s recreation investments to add camping adjacent to Marble Mountain parking.

Current Investments:

Monument staff began an informal inventory of existing campgrounds in the Highway 504 vicinity in 2010, evaluating occupancy, fees, and amenity levels in both public and privately owned camping facilities. That led to the next step in 2011, which is a more formalized evaluation of potential camping areas in the vicinity of Coldwater and a feasibility assessment that considers likely costs, revenue, user demand, and operational needs for a variety of campground amenity levels.

What’s Next?

- A formal, detailed campground conceptual design for the Coldwater vicinity will include a financial feasibility review, an evaluation of potential for commercial campground concessionaire operations, identify the preferred campground development sites and initiate a funding proposal to allow public scoping and a project Environmental Assessment (NEPA).
- A determination will be made whether to include potential campground operations in a broader prospectus (assessment of competitive interest) for Coldwater food services and other commercial business opportunities in the Coldwater vicinity.
- Continued advocacy for acquiring public recreational access to the High Lakes area. If the High Lakes were acquired, that area offers some of the most desirable of potential campground locations in the Coldwater area.
- Mt. Margaret backcountry campsites will be evaluated to determine if the location and number could or should be improved in order to enhance interest and use in the backcountry.
- Marble Mountain and Kalama horse camp area will be evaluated to assess whether the current mix of dispersed camping, nearby developed camping, and resource impacts from unmanaged growth of camper use can be addressed in a cost-effective manner.
Why make it happen?

Despite national data that indicates the public interest in camping may be dwindling, the demand for campsites is high and rising in the vicinity of the Monument. The area’s shortage of adequate camping limits the potential array of educational-recreational programs that the Monument and partners can establish and market.

Dispersed camping, i.e. camping in undesignated, undeveloped sites is increasing on the Monument’s south side, particularly when the PacifiCorp developed campgrounds are full along the Lewis River reservoirs.

How can we work together?

- Integrated development plans: Feasibility studies for Monument campgrounds will be most effective and compelling if we demonstrate that they are integrated with County vision and investment plans regarding camping, lodging, recreation, and scenic byway needs. We look forward to working with our county partners to make this happen.

- Participate in Campground operations and provide visitor services: Campgrounds on public lands are commonly operating financially as a net loss. To tip the scales on the positive side of the ledger, we partner with volunteer campground hosts that streamline operations and reduce losses due to vandalism. Quality campground hosts and interpretive volunteers add to visitor satisfaction and visitor return rates. If overnight options for visitors on the Monument is a key ingredient in local economic potential, community participation in this endeavor will be beneficial to our neighbors. Community groups such as backcountry horsemen and volunteers with the Mount St. Helens Institute who are interested in enhancing camping opportunities have adopted campgrounds for recurring enhancement projects. Evening educational interpretive programs by Volcano Volunteers, interns, and community partners interested in sharing the history, geology, ecology, and local meaning of the volcanic features are popular draws.

- Private investment in a concessionaire campground: We have minimally explored commercial enterprises such as franchise KOA operated campgrounds. Although there are challenges with privately built facilities on public lands, it may be an avenue for our community partners to accelerate campground construction and marketing.

- Community Support and Law Enforcement: With increased overnight stays comes a growing challenge of overnight vandalism and user conflicts. A strong sense of community pride, shared ownership, participation, support and concern 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.

List of Partners:

- Backcountry Horsemen
- Mount St. Helens Institute and Volunteer Campground Hosts
- PacifiCorp (campgrounds and shared recreation programs)
- Cowlitz County Recreation
- Skamania County Sheriff

Who should I contact?

Lisa Romano, Chief of Interpretation/Community Engagement, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831
Coldwater Lake – Education and Recreation Objectives

Coldwater Lake was newly created by an epic landslide in the 1980 volcanic eruption which dammed the steep-sided valley of Coldwater Creek. The lake drains via an engineered stream outlet which is managed and monitored for safety of downstream communities. Recreation on and around the lake features the scenic lakeshore boardwalk with new planking, picnicking, modern restrooms, emergency phone access, boating, fishing, rich interpretive programs and signs, and popular hiking trails with access to the backcountry and the hummock-strewn landslide zone.

Slide hazards dominate the lakeshore and steep ridges overlooking Coldwater Lake. Active rock slides are continual in the steep chutes bordering the lake, continually shifting the shape and appearance of the shoreline and lake bed.

Current Investments:
The lakeshore boardwalk planking and railings were rebuilt in 2010, restoring a beautiful recreational feature and refreshing public access to the lake and shoreline while limiting impact on the still-evolving ecology of a newly formed lake.

What’s Next?

• Evaluating and identifying lakeside sites that could provide safe, manageable low impact campsites with canoe/kayak access and initiate public scoping process to develop NEPA proposal.
• Outfitter Guide feasibility assessment, to identify potential visitor demand, interested service providers, and implications for 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 that enhance access and understanding of the lake ecology.
• Project NEPA to evaluate impacts and feasibility of outfitter guide, partnerships, and limited site enhancements.
Why make it happen?

Coldwater Lake provides unique opportunities to integrate educational and recreational objectives of the Monument. Although researchers continue to study and monitor the lake, and lake level monitoring is an essential aspect of Monument commitment for the safety of downstream communities, the lake’s educational and recreational values can be enhanced with what is envisioned as little impact on research and safety. The enhancement of education-related visitor services, such as gear rental and aquatic interpretive programs, and unique boat camping will increase access to the pristine lake and potentially add an additional realm of citizen science and visitor experiences and opportunities.

Intent is to identify the best approach to expand camping and recreation opportunities which will enhance rather than detract from the lake’s important research, interpretive, scenic, and educational values.

How can we work together?

• Community Partnerships in Education and Recreation: Throughout the Monument, community partnerships facilitate and accelerate opportunities for expanding or adding new, more robust outdoor activities. Partners often provide essential insights, skills, creativity, and resources that a public agency may lack.

List of Partners:

- Pacific Northwest Research Station and affiliated researchers
- Mount St. Helens Institute
- Discover Your Northwest interpretive association

Who should I contact?

Lisa Romano, Chief of Interpretation/Community Engagement, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831
Outfitter Guide, Enhancing Visitor Services

Outfitter guides hold permits that allow them and their clients access to the Monument’s unusual hiking, backpacking, or climbing opportunities. In addition, the Forest Service issues bus permits each year for organizations involved in tourism programs at the Monument’s educational facilities.

Current Investments:

Forest investments in recent years have been focused on administration of existing and recurring permits.

What’s Next?

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

• Outfitter Guide Needs Assessment: In order to expand the outfitter guide options at Mount St. Helens, federal policy requires that an assessment be conducted in order to realistically evaluate the level of public interest in prospective activities, the number of competitive outfitters interested and able to safely and economically operate, and weigh the potential impacts on other visitors and on any of the Monument’s resources and research programs. Public input is an essential ingredient to this assessment.

• After completion of the Needs Assessment, the Forest Service will identify the programs or combination of programs that best fit the unmet public needs and opportunities for additional outfitter guide services on the Monument, and determine the level of environmental assessment (NEPA) that would be appropriate for proposed activities.

• Guided by insights from the Needs Assessment and NEPA, the Forest Service would conduct a competitive commercial outreach, and approve an array of outfitter services that would be appropriate and sustainable both financially and environmentally.

Why make it happen?

Access to the Monument’s unique landscape may be enhanced for many visitors if they have the supporting services of a capable outfitter guide rather than venture out alone and unprepared. If coordinated properly, the program may increase public access to sensitive or challenging areas, while relying on the professional outfitter to protect fragile resources and enhance public safety.

If local communities support and invest in effective working relationships with the Forest Service and outfitting permit holders, local businesses may leverage the exposure into additional tourism and business transactions.
How can we work together?

- Provide input to the Outfitter Guide Needs Assessment: ensure that community interests are voiced and that promising opportunities are identified.
- A close working relationship between local hospitality industry and outfitter guides best fits the Monument vision of a successful outfitter guide venture, so that guest experiences are likely to be extended and enhanced. Local businesses that successfully anticipate and cater to the interests of an outfitters’ clientele and form effective partnerships between portal communities, the outfitter guide service, the Forest Service, and our partners around the Monument can be leveraged to meet broader interests.

List of Partners:

□ Diverse array of current permittees and tourism organizations

Who should I contact?

Rod Ludvigsen, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Special Use Permit Coordinator, (360) 449-7844
**SR 504 Utilities**

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 expanding service, and are posing rising maintenance challenges. At a national level, the Forest Service agency direction to local managers is to cease providing de facto utility services. Significant breakdowns as were experienced in 2007 and 2011 would halt operations at Johnston Ridge Observatory until repairs can be made. 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 to not only operation of Monument visitor facilities, but for the efficient operations of extensive volcano hazard monitoring provided by USGS through Johnston Ridge Observatory.

**Current Investments:**

The Forest Service has invested in the replacement and updating of some of the most vulnerable power line equipment to temporarily improve reliability.

The Cowlitz PUD, in partnership with the Forest Service, Cowlitz County, and Washington Dept of Transportation has 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, skills, and investments needed to facilitate PUD management of the power line.

**Why make it happen?**

PUD ownership of the SR504 power line would allow users to be served directly by the PUD. In the future, land owners adjacent to SR504 would be able to access power from the utility district whose role is to provide public power rather than be constrained by the limitations of Forest Service ownership. Stable financing of repairs and maintenance under PUD management would be more compatible and practical for all current and prospective users.
How can we work together?
• Continued involvement and cooperation of all existing and potential power line stakeholders allows the partners to speak with a united voice and communicate needs most clearly to elected officials whose endorsement and assistance will be necessary to invest in the power line and effect a transfer of ownership to PUD.

List of Partners:
• Cowlitz County Public Utility District
• Cowlitz County
• Washington Department of Transportation
• Adjacent land owners

Who should I contact?
Tom Mulder, Monument Manager, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7810
**Eastside Visitor Facilities**

Pine Creek Information Station is in its third year as a successful community coalition, annually serving 15 to 18 thousand visitors through map and gift sales, interpretive programs, and Monument and local information. This key visitor center is operated via a partnership consisting of Skamania County, Skamania County Chamber of Commerce, Skamania Sheriff’s Department, Skamania Fire Protection District 6, the Mount St. Helens Institute, Discover Your Northwest interpretive association, North Country Emergency Medical Services, and dedicated local community groups such as Swift Community Action Team and Cougar Area Trail Seekers. This re-opened visitor facility is a key achievement in direct response to energized leadership by our community partners, the interest of MSHCAC, elected officials and local community leaders.

Likewise, the Cascade Peaks Information Station provides visitor information, passes, and retail sales near Windy Ridge, and is the primary contact point for visitors requiring emergency assistance along the remote but popular east entrance road (Windy Ridge – 99 Road). Positioned directly in the blast zone, 30 miles from Randle, WA and over 50 miles from Cougar and Carson, Cascade Peaks is also operated jointly with essential staffing and investments by community partners and volunteers.

The extremely popular snow park at Marble Mountain suffered a setback last winter when the log shelter was destroyed by fire. The large log shelter was a joint investment with a great deal of sweat equity from the local user groups, and 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.

**Current Investments:**

Site clean-up and investments by Pine Creek partners and volunteers have helped transform the facility. The South RAC provided funds to enhance and operate the Information Center. Unneeded and damaged buildings were removed and the visitor portal received a face lift. 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 cabins with a lake-front view provide substantial expansion and enhancement of sorely needed housing for the growing volunteer program which serves visitors on and around the volcano. Satellite communications and internet connections are provided by SCAT and DYNW, and the site is a local hub for visitor emergency services. Skamania County developed an effective partnership which delivered cell phone coverage to Pine Creek and the Lewis River area, with tremendous benefit for visitor safety and convenience. Forest Service funding and Skamania County interns have not only restored but expanded traditional interpretive programs for visitors and added educational programs for schools at heavily visited sites including Ape Cave, Windy Ridge. RAC investments at Lava Canyon have replaced the flood damaged bridge and restored access to this popular visitor destination.

**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 for visitors and to make the site even more amenable for partners and volunteers hosted there.

- Community Participation: Continued expansion of community involvement in the Volcano Volunteer interpretive program and volunteer Climbing Stewards is a focus for enhancing services and programs popular with visitors. Additional investments in housing, training, and resources for these valued volunteers will be joint endeavors with partners such as the Mount St. Helens Institute, who help the Monument provide memorable experiences and exceptional opportunities for the dedicated volunteer participants.
• Cascade Peaks has been prioritized as another pending project in the next round of Forest facility investments at Mount St. Helens. A smaller, more durable and cost effective structure will be designed to replace the aging modular structure and replace the old generator with efficient, sustainable electrical power. A partnership with WSU will contribute to the new site design concept to better serve visitors and take advantage of the memorable blast zone vistas. With two WSU classes working on the conceptual plan this fall, the site plan will emphasize services for visitors, while supporting visiting researchers, school groups, and educational citizen-science programs that are capitalizing on the unique access to features of the volcanic blast zone. We hope to expand this university partnership with WSU, researchers, and MSHI.

• Marble Mountain Shelter: While partners and devoted fans such as the Trackriders and MSHI continue to find resources to rebuild the popular shelter, the Forest is working on design and planning to ensure a replacement structure will meet current code and provide a safe gathering place.

Why make it happen?
The east and south portals to the Monument continue to experience a growing demand for visitor services and amenities which 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 in great numbers. Joint investments in popular facilities contribute to greater visitor satisfaction, better energy efficiency, and improved cost efficiency for Monument and partner operations.

How can we work together?
• Community partnerships and active volunteers continue to be a priceless catalyst for enhancing visitor experiences at the Monument, central to the restored and expanded visitor services and interpretive programs. Through shared efforts, our community partners help ensure that inviting facilities and programs are part of memorable experiences for partners, volunteers, and other local neighbors who enjoy the outdoors at Mount St. Helens. We invite you to be involved!

• Fire and Ice Scenic Loop: The broad regional support and community involvement in enhancing the attractions of the Fire and Ice Scenic Loop will make investments and programs at the Monument’s south portals even more vital and valuable as a contributor to a vibrant local economy. Monument and Forest staff look forward to participating in and promoting this campaign.

• Marble Mountain Re-build: Replacing the popular shelter will take continued community involvement and support. A “barn-raising” event and re-opening ceremony will be a moment of pride for all.

Who should I contact?
Lisa Romano, Chief of Interpretation/Community Engagement, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831

List of Partners:
Skamania County
Skamania County Chamber of Commerce
Skamania Sheriff’s Department
Skamania County Fire Protection District 6
the Mount St. Helens Institute and their volunteers
Discover Your Northwest interpretive association
Swift Community Action Team
Cougar Area Trail Seekers.
North Country Emergency Medical Services
Volcano Rescue Team
PacifiCorp
Destination Packwood
Washington State University
Cowlitz-Wakiakum Council of Governments
School for the Blind
Partnerships, Volunteers, and Community Participation

Volunteers and partners are essential components of all MSHNVM programs. Volunteers and partners recognize they are simultaneously helping provide rewarding visitor experiences, and furthering community interests by supporting tourism and contributing to a local quality of life. Expanding visitor services through volunteers and partners became a strategic priority in 2004 (MSH strategic plan by Metro Group). Volunteer and partner accomplishments have been growing, notably with the Mount St. Helens Institute and projects such as the re-opening of Pine Creek Information Center as a community effort. The high rate of leveraging our federal appropriated budget with partner investments is a compelling success story which Regional Forester Mary Wagner was able to proudly describe to the MSHCAC.

Volunteerism is taking many forms, from one-time participation to ongoing involvement, and covering a range of activities around the Monument. The volunteer program has become more than a means to an end. Volunteerism on the volcanic landscape is itself becoming one of the public’s most highly valued experiences at the Monument.

Indeed, as you travel around the Monument now, you find visitors are often encountering volunteer staff as well as Forest Service staff for interpretive stories, educational programs, and physically demanding conservation projects such as trail maintenance or erecting elk enclosures. In volunteers, our visitors find kindred souls that enhance their Mount St. Helens experience. Increasingly, the popular interactions with visitors in the climbing program now come from the volunteer Mountain Stewards, who enthusiastically support and enrich the climbers’ experience. The same is true at Coldwater Lake and SR504 overlooks, where roving MSHI Volcano Volunteers are an appreciated resource for touring visitors.

Sustained, dedicated involvement of the long-term volunteers is currently most limited by the long distances volunteers must travel to staff popular but remote interpretive sites such as Johnston Ridge, Coldwater, Ape Cave, and Windy Ridge. Many of the most dedicated volunteers come from Metropolitan areas, and some come from across the continent and globe. The time and expense of volunteer travel to remotely located interpretive sites is deeply appreciated. Rustic overnight facilities are and will increasingly become part of the draw for many volunteers.

Current Investments:

Coldwater Ridge yurts and restrooms have recently added additional attractive overnight capacity to the Coldwater volunteer and partner bunkhouse. Pine Creek rustic cabins with a group cooking shelter and new restrooms and showers are being completed this season, and will provide lake-front accommodations for volunteers and partners who support programs at the Information Center and around the Monument’s southern and eastern features.

One of the most rewarding benefits for volunteer interpreters is the world-class training provided to partners and volunteers as well as Ranger staff each year at Mount St. Helens. Skilled Monument interpretive specialists who are frequently asked to provide training to other agencies nationally and internationally are equally as popular while providing the very best of skills training at Mount St. Helens. Volunteers and partners find they have comfortable access to renowned geological and ecological researchers, expert volcano specialists and teachers who offer their time and insights to the training program.
What’s Next?
- Enhancing interpretive training for volunteers, partners, and customers by initiating a Ranger Academy. Providing a very high level of interpretive skills for volunteers and paying customers, the program will offer university credit and extended internships to gain practical experience. The overall intent is to elevate the Ranger Academy, using the Coldwater facility as a key asset, into a regionally and nationally renowned place to hone interpretive skills.
- Addition of a new Monument staff position focused on enhancing joint efforts with partners and local communities to share programs and investment efforts.
- Grand opening and dedication of the new volunteer overnight housing in cabins at Pine Creek.
- A modern shower and restroom facilities for volunteers staying at Coldwater Ridge.
- A group cooking shelter and fire circle for the volunteer facilities at Coldwater Ridge.
- Enhancements for volunteer/partner site hosts at Cascade Peaks, Ape Cave, and Climbers Bivouac.
- Increasing opportunities for students to become involved at the Monument. With partners such as CEDC, we hope to help students develop skills and explore career opportunities.

Why make it happen?
Enhancing the investments for the growing volunteer workforce and partners who contribute to safe and memorable visitor experiences is money well spent. It is recognized nationally that a growing component of outdoor recreation and eco-tourism is active volunteerism in treasured landscapes like those found all around Mount St. Helens. With this growing interest in fulfilling volunteerism, the investments and focus in this arena are some of the most effective investments we can make for long term enhancement of Monument programs and visitor experiences.

How can we work together?
- Dedicated partners and skilled, welcoming staff are essential ingredients to a growing volunteer program that nurtures rewarding volunteer opportunities. Integrated volunteer programs with community partners will make volunteer-driven outcomes even richer and more helpful to our visitors and to the quality of life for our community neighbors.
- Community interest and support for volunteers, whether volunteers are local or coming from across the region or country, can simultaneously contribute to the local economy and make volunteers and guests feel more welcome and eager to return. The more that volunteers experience first-hand a rewarding and enthusiastic local community support, the more we see those volunteers become part of the community and daily refer visitors to familiar local businesses and activities.
- Community teamwork. An important ingredient in the tremendous success at Pine Creek Info Center, and a great value for volunteers there, is the early agreement among partner organizations that all can speak positively to and positively about each other, setting aside some traditional differences, and finding shared solutions as challenges arise.

Who should I contact?
Lisa Romano, Chief of Interpretation/Community Engagement, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831
Research Support and Integration

In the 31 years since the last major eruption of Mount St. Helens, the Pacific Northwest Research Station has maintained a vibrant research program aimed at understanding the ecological processes involved in recovery of a landscape after a massive disturbance. The results of ongoing studies at the Monument have provided valuable insight into the role of refugia of biodiversity in recolonization and these results are guiding recovery actions following other major disturbances, including volcanic eruptions, elsewhere in the world. Research in forest management is providing new approaches to managing young forest stands for increased complexity and structure, characteristics critical to the reestablishment of habitat for a variety of animals.

The fundamental and applied science underway at the Monument provides information vital to understanding of how ecosystems will adapt in the face of common disturbances, such as fire and insect infestation, and new disturbances such as climate change. An impressive track record in the generation of new knowledge has allowed leveraging a small base of support with significant, but periodic competitive research funding and collaborator support. Those collaborative partnerships between federal and state agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations will be more productive if the intensity of research at the Monument is increased. In addition, the Monument provides an outstanding educational resource that can play a vital role in training the next generation of ecologists who will deal with disturbances associated with climate change. Finally, the delivery of science into application must be accelerated so that society can meet the challenges that will face us in the coming decades.

In response to these challenges, the Pacific Northwest Research Station proposes to establish a Mount St. Helens Volcano Disturbance Ecology Research Team. Establishing a critical mass in research capacity at the Monument will allow for the development of opportunities for visiting scientists, graduate students, and a vibrant science/research internship program. It would expand the outreach and educational capability by ensuring a continued flow of high quality research information from basic and applied research and expanded participation by collaborating agency and university scientists.

A more focused research effort also provides an outstanding opportunity to establish a Citizen-Science Program, allowing people from all walks of life to experience the vibrant landscape 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 to provide new avenues to communicate with the public.

Current Investments:

The Monument and Forest have restored basic funding to support the Monument Scientist’s role as the research liaison and chief Public Affairs spokesperson regarding the science at Mount St. Helens.
**What’s Next?**

- A stronger focus on enhancing local education with community partners, allowing local schools and colleges to take greater advantage of educational and research activities, expertise, and resources.

- Proposal to establish a Mount St. Helens Volcano Disturbance Ecology Research Team by the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station

- Coldwater Science and Learning Center concept and business plan to outline investments towards citizen science and eco-tourism.

**Why make it happen?**

Scientific discovery at Mount St. Helens is an important catalyst in the Monument’s ongoing appeal to citizens and science enthusiasts, and fulfills an important mission objective described by Congress when the Monument was established. Leveraging the long term investments in research and learning into further opportunities for public participation on this unique landscape enhances the special combination of education and recreation that Mount St. Helens offers.

**How can we 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 compliment educational excellence in science for all our neighboring communities, and together we aspire to have school science and learning achievements that are the envy of the region.

**List of Partners:**

- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Forest Service Research
- US Geological Survey
- Universities and College researchers, grad students, and affiliates nationally

**Who should I contact?**

Peter Frenzen, Monument Scientist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7835
Public Safety

Public and employee health and safety are a priority mission in the Monument legislation and in our daily operations.

The Spirit Lake tunnel was developed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to protect downstream communities from flood hazards. 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.

Current Investment: The Forest Service continues to manage and maintain the tunnel. It is drained annually and carefully inspected, and repairs made before flows resume.

What’s Next: Because it competes for essential maintenance funding with public visitor centers, the Forest continues to look at practical and cost effective means to maintain the tunnel, while working with both Skamania County and Cowlitz County to pursue the recommended reassignment authority for the Corps of Engineers to ultimately administer and fund tunnel operations and maintenance.

Why make it happen?

To ensure appropriate funding and expertise are dedicated by the Corp of Engineers to carefully protect downstream communities.

Emergency Services and Volcano Readiness

On the continental USA's most active volcanic landscape, a coordinated affiliation of federal, state, county, and non-profit emergency responders must retain readiness, serving all sides of the Monument. The 2004 eruption activity drew tremendous media attention. The Forest was not initially prepared to manage the impacts. It is imperative that the Forest Service be prepared to ensure public and employee safety around a volcano which can re-awaken at any time. While some volcano readiness preparations can be accomplished through wildfire training, planning and resources, there is no federal funding mechanism for managing the impacts of geologic events. Due to this, all costs by default compete for the Monument’s limited recreation funding.

Current Investments: Since the eruptive activity slowed in 2008, the Monument and Forest have been losing experience and skill to retirements and turn-over.

What’s Next:

- Coordination with federal, state, and county officials to refresh contingency plans and ensure that strong cooperative relationships continue. Desktop and emergency simulation exercises to enhance readiness for volcanic events will be scheduled jointly with key partners.
• Long-term funding for partner-run search and rescue operations on the Monument will become critical if Secure Rural Schools legislation and Title III are not replaced. A search and rescue organization covering the north end of the monument, similar to North Country EMS and the volunteer Volcano Rescue Team (VRT) on the south, is a desirable outcome to be achieved jointly with Cowlitz County in order to ensure a safe and inviting climate for visitors and recreational users who enter the Monument from SR504.

• Safety and law enforcement patrols will increase in importance as a result of adding overnight facilities for visitors and guests, particularly on the SR504 corridor. Strong partnerships with the Skamania and Cowlitz County Sheriffs’ departments will be essential.

**Why make it happen?**

Visitors and neighboring communities rely on the Forest Service and other emergency management partners to remain prepared for an orderly response when volcanic activity occurs. When emergencies or accidents occur, timely assistance should be a shared goal.

**How Can We Work Together?**

• MSHNVM volcano event readiness requires an important investment in compatible communications equipment and staff time to reestablish efficient lines of communication for adequate readiness levels.

• A cost-effective method of significantly increasing communications will be to partner with a telecommunications company to deliver cellular phone service to the Coldwater Ridge area.

**List of Partners:**

- Skamania County Sheriff Department
- Cowlitz County Sheriff Department
- Lewis County Sheriff Department
- Washington State Police
- US Geological Survey
- Washington Dept of Emergency Services
- FAA

**Who should I contact?**

Ross Williams, Deputy Fire Staff Officer, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, (360) 891-5146
Resource Protection Investments

Protection of natural resources, natural features, and natural processes are part of the core legislated mission of the Monument.

Invasive Species - Scotch broom and other aggressive non-native plants are becoming more difficult to control as they move into the disturbance zones of the 1980 blast. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed in 2008 for treating invasive species on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. This EIS identified the Monument as the most at risk landscape in the study. Managing invasive species is a key stewardship role the Forest Service provides in support of research efforts.

Current Investments: Removal and control of invasive weeds in the Monument’s disturbance zones has 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.

Why make it happen?

Invasive weeds interfere with natural processes, altering the return of native life to the volcano’s disturbance zones.

How can we work together?
- 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.

Cave Management - Decontamination protocols to prevent the spread of fatal White Nose Syndrome in bat populations in the Monument’s extensive system of lava tube caves is looming closer. Ape Cave, one of the longest lava tubes in the Northwest, is a showcase destination and generates a large and essential revenue stream which funds visitor services and recreation investments on the south side of the Monument. Ape Cave has 100,000 visitors annually and is visited year-round. It is the second most visited site on the Monument for school groups on field trips and is routinely part of the ecology curriculum for local school districts.

As pressure to prevent the spread of this disease increases the likelihood of a proposed closure of Ape Cave, the Monument proactive public education and prevention approach can demonstrate that the Forest Service is able to creatively and effectively manage this risk at Ape Cave, while continuing to provide the public with rewarding and educational cave experiences.
Current Investments:
Our initial cave management strategy has emphasized public education about the dramatic significance of the white nose syndrome. This education effort has laid the groundwork to ask for partner cooperation and support for a changing management approach for cave access and protection of bat populations.

What’s Next?
- As the fatal White Nose Syndrome spreads and is found in bat populations closer to the west coast, the prediction is to anticipate closing most or all caves to human entry and protecting bat habitat from infection. In anticipation of that pressure, the Forest Service and partners will expand public education, monitor local bat populations, and explore ideas about how to continue to highlight Ape Cave as a heavily visited educational resource while implementing decontamination procedures for visitors before and after entering the cave.

Why make it happen? Public use and education at Ape Cave is extremely high, and revenue from passes and lantern rentals support many of the less cost effective interpretive programs on the Monument. We would prefer to manage cave access differently to emphatically prevent risks of infection of the local bat population, without closing the cave totally to educational outings.

How can we work together?
- Early public support for public education and alternative decontamination protocol will be essential in order to avoid outright closure of the cave to visits.
- Community partnerships and volunteers can help minimize costs of managing decontamination, and seek creative ways to jointly generate supporting funding to allow the continued emphasis of Ape Cave as an educational outing for local schools.

List of Partners:
- Skamania, Cowlitz, and Lewis County weed control programs
- Oregon Grotto and local cave protection volunteers
- Discover Your Northwest

Who should I contact?
Peter Frenzen, Monument Scientist, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7835
**Interpretation and Education**

Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument is a famous source for outdoor education, where educational opportunities intersect with scientific research, particularly in the fields of ecology and geology.

**Current Investments:**

With additional funding from the Regional "Valued Places" field ranger program, the Monument has restored and expanded interpretive presentations at all the traditional Monument portals, and added educational curriculum programs to assist schools visiting Ape Cave.

Economic stimulus funds (ARRA) provided the resources to begin a Monument-wide replacement of interpretive signs with high quality, state of the art educational signs.

In partnership with the Mount St. Helens Institute’s education staff, we are reaching more schools with more science programs than ever, and exploring new approaches for delivering science via videoconferencing, the internet, and remote learning.

**What’s Next?**

- Mount St. Helens will continue to become the premier location for learning and practicing interpretive craft and related skills in science, outdoor teaching, and communication. The expanding community that is learning, practicing, and teaching this craft will integrate Forest Service employees, interns, volunteers, educational professions, and partners. To continue this emphasis, it is important that MSHNVM partner with other agencies and educational programs to provide college credit, continuing education credit for teachers, and an “academy” for interpreters and outdoor educators.

- Monument educational programs will focus increasingly on more in-depth visitor experiences, investigations, and participation rather than traditionally brief engagement by interpretive rangers, promoting longer stays and deeper understanding of the Monument’s geology and ecology.

- Continued installation of the new interpretive signs which will be greeting and informing 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 to enhance the information available to tourists and staff regarding Monument facilities, programs, and trails.

**Why make it happen?**

Many of the Monuments 750,000 annual visitors have come to experience the high quality education and nature interpretation that distinguishes our staff and partners. Capitalizing on an arena where the Monument is already renowned, the vision is to leverage that reputation and high skill into additional programs and partnerships that benefit not only visitors, but local schools and our community neighbors who are part of the visitor experience.
How can we work together?

- Partners and volunteers are an important part of the education and interpretation team that continually works to enhance visitor and student experiences.
- Volunteers and partners can assist with physical installation of new interpretive signs, and assist with the conceptual development and design of the next generation of signs so that sign investments can be integrated with communities and visitor information centers.
- First and foremost, our local schools should be beneficiaries of the educational and science learning resources and investments at Mount St. Helens. Community partners and volunteers can help bring that science emphasis into the local schools, and help local schools be engaged in the learning climate at the Monument.

List of Partners:
Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI)
US Geological Survey
Pacific Northwest Research Station and affiliated scientists

Who should I contact?
Lisa Romano, Chief of Interpretation/Community Engagement, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7831
Recreation Access and High Lakes

Acquisition of the High Lakes area northwest of the Monument boundary as National Forest recreation lands outside of the legislated Monument will provide highly prized winter recreation, fishing, hunting and other recreational opportunities, and provide an ideal campground location with vistas and close proximity to Coldwater.

As recommended by the MSHCAC, a recreation focus around the High Lakes can provide infrastructure improvements that improve safe access, quality educational experiences, and longer stays. The acquisition would create additional recreational opportunities, including fishing at Mount St. Helens without the wind issues of Coldwater Lake. The acquisition provides opportunities for campgrounds to be developed within 30 minutes of Johnston Ridge Observatory.

The northwest side of MSHNVM is a Class 1 Research Area. SR 504 currently only accesses the Class 1 Research Area where the public encounters limited recreation opportunities. The limitations on access and uses are a concern of local communities and the Forest Service. Acquisition of the land outside of the Monument for recreational uses will alleviate this concern.

This acquisition will strengthen the interaction between visitors and Forest Service personnel through unique recreational and educational opportunities, allowing for a greater understanding and connection to the landscape. Acquiring this parcel will provide improved access to the Mt. Margaret Backcountry for not only recreation, but 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 core mission areas. New activities will be accommodated so long as they remain compatible with public lands in close proximity to an active volcano.

Current Investments: The Forest Service is a participant in the Mount St. Helens Coalition, promoting acquisition and resuming public recreation at the High Lakes. The 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 Coalition will confirm broad support locally and regionally, and enlist the help of elected officials to find resources to complete a purchase or trade to return the High Lakes to public ownership.

Why make it happen?

High Lakes have traditionally provided valuable recreation outlets for the public, and in particular the nearby communities. Acquisition of the High Lakes offers the most desirable recreational access to not only the high elevation lakes, but to the breathtaking ridgetop vistas of Mount St. Helens, the blast zone, and the other volcanoes of the North Cascades.
How can we work together?

- Public participation and support in the Mount St. Helens Lands Coalition will strengthen and accelerate efforts to acquire the High Lakes.

- Community participation will be vital for sound management and conservation projects to protect the High Lakes while promoting recreational opportunities. Purchase of the lakes area should carry a local community pride of ownership for restoring recreational access.

- An valuable investment in the High Lakes area will be access trails, 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 the science and educational focus for field studies and outdoor school for local schools and the community college, capitalizing on the close proximity to the educational and research resources of the Monument.

List of Partners:

- Columbia Land Trust
- Skamania County
- Cowlitz County
- National Trust for Public Lands
- Gifford Pinchot Task Force

Who should I contact?

Tom Mulder, Monument Manager, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7810
**New Administrative Unit**

The Gifford Pinchot National Forest recently established a more focused Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument unit to emphasize the Monument and surrounding communities. As recommended by the MSHCAC, the Monument ranger district has been realigned into two units, with the Monument Manager and staff directing 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 is now designed the Mount St. Helens District, managed by a Deputy District Ranger under the Mt. Adams District. This change in alignment has allowed the Monument’s staff to successfully focus on this Strategic Investment Plan.

**What’s Next?**

- Greater clarity publicly regarding the Monument’s budget, revenue, staffing, and visitation.
- A further increase in the emphasis on community partnerships.
- The Monument serves as a highly visible model of the Forest Service “valued places” approach to managing the nationally treasured landscapes.

**Why make it happen?**

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

**How can we work together?**

- The Monument and the Forest staff and partners are enthusiastic about the renewed focus, and the opportunity to be richly engaged with and in communities.

**Who should I contact?**

Tom Mulder, Monument Manager, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, (360) 449-7810
**Strategic Planning**

MSHNVM has spent 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 after strategically assessing Monument needs and how to best use available resources and public interests. This proactive approach has allowed us to expand educational services and public engagement and better utilize Monument staff, facilities, and resources. The Monument will continue to make strategic planning a standard method of addressing overall Monument operations.

**Analysis of Operational Efficiencies**

Operation efficiencies are analyzed on a recurring basis and changes are implemented accordingly. Recent improvements include shifting of 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**

Monument employees coordinate the unit safety program via a grass roots approach which emphasizes that employees are empowered and passionate about identifying, sharing, andremedying hazards. MSHNVM safety record contributes to cost-effective programs.

**Competing for Special Funding**

As long as special funding initiatives continue to be an important component of MSHNM’s financial portfolio, the Monument and Forest must allocate skills and capacity to pre-position the Monument to successfully compete for one-time funding such as ARRA, NPL (Chief’s National Priority List), Valued Places, CIP (Regional and National Capital Investment Program), and Federal Highways funding. To effectively present competitive proposals under these initiatives requires an annual assessment and prioritization of essential maintenance and capital improvement needs. Highest priority needs require proactive pre-planning and initial investments for site plans, NEPA, contract preparation, and contract administration in order to have viable “shovel ready” projects.

**Expand Relationship with other Agencies and Organizations**

Without exception, all Monument programs and services now rely on effective teamwork and essential partnerships with other Federal, State, and National agencies and officials, and with a growing list of non-profit and community organizations. Paying attention to those relationships and ensuring good, frank dialogue will allow us to continue to jointly achieve Monument objectives that cannot be achieved alone. These joint efforts diversify MSHNVM’s funding and staffing options, often bring unexpected resources and opportunities to the table, and provide a joint sense
of community ownership for Monument outcomes. Partnerships and community teamwork contribute to Congressional support of Forest Service management efforts.

Non-Profit Partnerships

The 2005 Monument strategic plan has been implemented, focusing on the expansion of non-profit partnership with the reinvigorated Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI). Expanding volunteer programs, a growing intern program, hosting significant educational events, re-opening and staffing previously closed public facilities, acquiring new private and public funding for education/interpretation are all part of this encouraging trend. MSHNVM staff continues this emphasis, and work with MSHI to further leverage resources and staff. Community involvement and a growing sense of community “ownership” are increasing as MSHI demonstrates that it can open doors and foster relationships in ways that the Forest Service cannot achieve without them. The partnership has been highly visible, particularly at Pine Creek Info Center and Cascade Peaks information station, where closed or underutilized facilities are once again a vibrant part of MSHNVM public services. The tremendous role of other non-profit partners, such as Discover Your Northwest interpretive association, continues to be an important ingredient in the array of public services and creative leveraging of funding and staffing. Expanding rustic overnight accommodations for volunteers is the most recent investment (ARRA and NPL are implementing first phase) that will allow a significant increase in volunteer participation.

Research

PNW Research Station is supporting science education and knowledge transfer at the Monument both with commitment of researcher time and with financial support to MSHI science programs. PNW jointly proposes the establishment of a Mount St. Helens long term volcanic ecology disturbance program, which will jointly fund increased science awareness, public affairs, and website skills to elevate the strength of the science education program at Mount St. Helens. USGS and multiple universities are deeply committed and engaged in long term studies at Mount St. Helens, and their results directly contribute to the vibrant interpretive programs on the Monument. The rich and diverse research results have allowed MSHI to compete successfully for private grants to fund state of the art JRO exhibits to convey discoveries to the public.

Integrated NFS funding

Traditionally the educational programs at the Monument have been viewed as solely recreation program expenses, while educational programs elsewhere are supported by other resource funds. Fishing days, wildflower days, salmon days funded from non-recreation appropriations suggest that the educational programs provided for the public and schools at Mount St. Helens could and should also appropriately be jointly supported with vegetation management, timber, fish and wildlife, and research.
**Strategic Position Management**

As MSHNVM employees become increasingly proficient in delivering services to the public through partnerships, our skill needs for our permanent workforce must continue to shift accordingly. Emphasizing communication and collaboration, volunteer recruitment and retention, understanding and working with non-profit entities and with county officials and staff are key attributes of MSHNVM's new workforce. Public relations, program management skills, contract administration and agreements expertise, website management, and teaching ability are growing in importance and overtaking traditional skill emphasis. Being intentional about this skill transformation allows for further leverage, delivery of public services, and fulfillment the MSCHAC recommendations.

**Increase Public Awareness of the Monument**

Increasing the visitation and involvement of visitors is an intentional ingredient in MSHNVM's county and community partnerships. Hosting, participating in, and exploring new high-profile events and programs on a broader scope than traditional science and education is occurring. 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 further visitation and media attention. Thanks to the R6 Valued Places investments, MSHNVM is participating in a tourism-focused advertising campaign with County partners.

**Involvement of Schools, Universities, Educational Organizations**

The strategic vision emphasizes that one of the uniquely valued features of the Monument is the tremendous educational opportunities it provides. An active volcanic landscape, noticeably changing each year, attracts public interest in experiencing and learning at, about, and from this memorable place. The potential for NSF grants and partnerships with academic institutions drives our pursuit of expanded educational partnerships. MSHi's success with educational pilot programs such as More Kids in the Woods, Volcanoes after Dark, Volcano Explorers, and ever more popular field seminars is building MSH's reputation as a place that draws participants for unique educational experiences.

**Increase Fee Revenue**

Already successful in delivering programs that the public is willing to support with visitor fees, the Monument is poised to initiate two new elements. First is to thoughtfully increase access to the Monument by highlighting trails, programs, and special Monument features in ways that are compatible with resource protection and education objectives. Completing connector trail loops, offering guided outings, and fostering more partner-provided programs is expected to generate more fee-paying visits. Secondly, the fee strategy for the west side of the Monument will be refined to improve the clarity and fee compliance.
**Strategic Plan Updates**

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

This Strategic Investment Plan process has been a very valuable tool in assessing the financial capabilities and communicating the budgetary status and opportunities to constituents. The Monument is committed to keeping this information valid and current.

**Who should I contact?**

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

Kevin Naranjo, MSHNVM Business Analyst, (360) 449-7811
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