

## Volunteer Position – Visitor Services



### **Introduction**

The National Bison Range is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System operated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The refuge is located in the Mission Valley within the boundaries of the Flathead Indian Reservation. Theodore Roosevelt established the National Bison Range in 1908 to provide "...for a permanent national bison range for a herd of bison..." Today the Bison Range is home to a few hundred bison as well as other wildlife species including elk, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, mule and white-tailed deer, black bear, coyote and numerous other smaller mammals and well as over 200 bird species. It is a premier wildlife viewing site.

This Refuge attracts over 120,000 visitors a year, most coming during the summer season of June, July and August. School groups make up a majority of visitation in May and September with about 3,000 students and teachers using the facilities for field trips to enhance educational opportunities. The Bison Range Visitor Services program is designed to provide all visitors with appropriate information to allow them to understand and appreciate wildlife, wildlands and the role of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

### **Major Duties**

Volunteers assist the Visitor Services staff to help with the large numbers of visitors and to provide enhanced interpretive opportunities. This volunteer program provides a good learning ground for those seeking experience in recreation, interpretation and outdoor environmental education fields.

Primary activities would include working at the Visitor Center information desk with direct contact with visitors and students. Information on wildlife viewing opportunities, access, safety, and rules and regulations about the Range are dispensed along with information about the local area. Informational videos are shown and volunteers will learn to operate the variety of audio-visual equipment used in the Visitor Center. Orientation talks and question-and-answer sessions may

be offered to schools and tour groups. Staff monitors the Visitor Center facility to assure that displays, visitor areas, and restrooms are clean and presentable.

Volunteers will be involved with entrance fee collections, including record keeping, balancing cash, and maintenance of accurate records on collections and types of passes purchased and used. They will learn how to handle cash and cash security in a responsible and accountable manner. Volunteers would also assist with the sales of books, posters and postcards through the Glacier National Park Conservancy bookstore.

Volunteers will periodically drive the scenic road to gather wildlife sighting information for the Visitor Center Desk staff. They will also answer questions and provide informal interpretation to visitors while in the field. Volunteers and staff assist visitors in case of emergencies. Basic first aid and CPR training are provided. Radio protocol and usage training will be provided to all staff.

Scheduling will attempt to give all front desk staff and volunteers time to work on special projects, attend training, participate in field activities and other activities to enhance and expand their experience and skills.

### **Training, Security and Background Checks**

All Bison Range Staff, including full-time employees, seasonal staff, interns and volunteers, are required have specific training and background checks depending on duties at the Refuge. Costs are incurred by the Bison Range. These include:

1. Defensive Driving (10 hours on-line course, renewed every 3 years) – to drive any government vehicle.
2. Federal Information System Security Awareness & Privacy and Records Management (FISSA+, 1.5 hours on-line course, yearly) – to access government computers, secure buildings and records.
3. Fingerprinting and Background Check.
4. ATV, weed control certification, chain saw operation, etc. – specialized and specific training depending on duties.

### **Useful Knowledge and Skills**

- Knowledge of wildlife, habitats and vegetation and general ecological concepts and natural history for preparation of programs, answering visitor questions, carrying out education programs and cautioning visitors about dangerous situations or wildlife.
- Ability to deal with all people and their diverse skill and educational levels, needs and interests.
- Ability to handle cash transactions and maintain accurate records in an accountable manner.

### **Volunteer Time Frame - Dates and Hours**

Visitor Services Volunteers may volunteer for short- or long-term stints, from a few hours a week to full-time service. The main volunteer season runs from mid-May to mid-October (when Red Sleep Mountain Drive is open) with June, July and August being the busiest for visitation.

Benefits are available to volunteers if they commit to work for a minimum of 32 hours a week for at least 6 weeks. The critical time is between Memorial Day and Labor Day (approximately

14 weeks as that is when the Visitor Center is on full hours). Volunteers are welcome to start earlier and/or leave later. The Visitor Center is open daily during the summer season. It is usually staffed with at least two people at a time. Work schedules include weekends and evening hours. Schedules can vary from five 8-hour work days or four 10-hour work days.

Volunteers can also be useful in the winter to provide Visitor Service coverage. Opportunities may be available at any time of the year, depending project needs and funds. Please don't hesitate to ask.

### **Housing, Expenses and Reimbursements**

Full-time volunteers are defined as someone who will work a minimum of 32 hours per week for a minimum of 12 weeks. Reimbursement will vary depending on budget and volunteer needs.

Full-time volunteers may be eligible for expense reimbursement if funds are available. This would be equivalent to \$15.00 per day (\$25.00 per day for a couple if both volunteer). A day is considered to be 8 hours. If a volunteer works four 10-hour days, that would be calculated to be 40 hours and, as such, would receive 5 days of reimbursement.

Full-time volunteers living outside the commuting area (defined by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as more than 50 miles one way) could be eligible for a trailer site (with hookups) or housing, depending on availability. Costs covered would be rent and utilities. Other costs, such as long-distance phone calls, would be the responsibility of the volunteer.

Vehicle mileage expenses may be reimbursed for full-time volunteers for initial travel to the Bison Range, again depending on availability of funds. This will consist of up to 56.5¢/mile from a place of residence or last station to the Bison Range. The costs will be determined for shortest route.

Volunteers are covered for medical costs of job related injuries or illness while at work. This does not extend to off-duty or travel time.

### **Applications and Resume**

Those interested in applying for the volunteer interpretive aide position should send a Volunteer Application for Natural Resources Agencies or a résumé. Please include past experiences with public contact, natural history background, skills and education. Please be sure to include when you could start, how long you would stay, days you could/couldn't work. References may be helpful in selecting final candidates.

Applications or resumes can be submitted at any time but selection for the main summer season may be made as early as April 1. Inquiries, questions and application materials should be sent to:

National Bison Range  
Attn. Pat Jamieson, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
58355 Bison Range Road  
Moiese, MT 59824  
(406) 644-2211 extension 207  
pat\_Jamieson@fws.gov