

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

TRAILHEAD AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

"It was crazy busy, virtually a line of people waiting to ask questions at all times."

Covering the Region

From Earth Day weekend to Labor Day, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance, the U.S. Forest Service and Oregon State Parks debuted the Trailhead Ambassador program. On Saturday and Sundays, trained volunteers were stationed at ten of the busiest trailheads in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and in the Mt. Hood National Forest. In the Gorge, volunteers welcomed hikers at Dry Creek Falls, Latourell Falls, Multnomah Falls, and Starvation Creek Falls in Oregon; Dog Mountain and Cape Horn in Washington; and Mirror Lake, Tamanawas Falls, Timberline Lodge, and Trillium Lake on Mt. Hood.

The goals of this program are multifaceted -- to reduce trailhead and trail congestion, have less search and rescue incidents, improve visitor experiences, reduce the spread of invasive plant species, and encourage responsible hiker ethics. Volunteers answer questions about parking passes, hike alternatives, trail hazards, and ambassadors provide info on leave-no-trace ethics. Most-heard questions are "Where can I see a waterfall?" and "Is this hike family-friendly?"



94 individuals
donated **1,848**
hours, while engaging
with over **23,700**
visitors at **10**
trailheads; equating to
a labor value of
\$45,627.

Learn more at: gorgefriends.org/ambassador

In Their Own Words

The 94 ambassadors influenced visitor's course of action by recommending shoe changes and more water, applying bandages, handing out maps, recommending places to eat, and more. There definitely was a need for this program as one ambassador wrote, "I was fully engaged with visitors from 8-2. I loved feeling like I was making a difference."

And why do ambassadors volunteer? One wrote, "It has long been my belief that people will do the right thing on the trails if they are informed and understand the negative impacts." And another, "Since I don't feel physically capable of helping with trail restoration right now, the Trail Ambassador program was the perfect choice for me."

Amelia Madarang, age 18, has volunteered the entire season with her dog TJ. "I bring my dog with me to every Trailhead Ambassador shift I do. People often start the conversations with us by asking if they can pet my dog. The first shift I ever did was at Latourell Falls, and we had a little boy come up to us nervously with his dad and ask if he could pet TJ. Later in the conversation, the boy asked if he would see other mountain lions like the one he was petting," said Amelia.

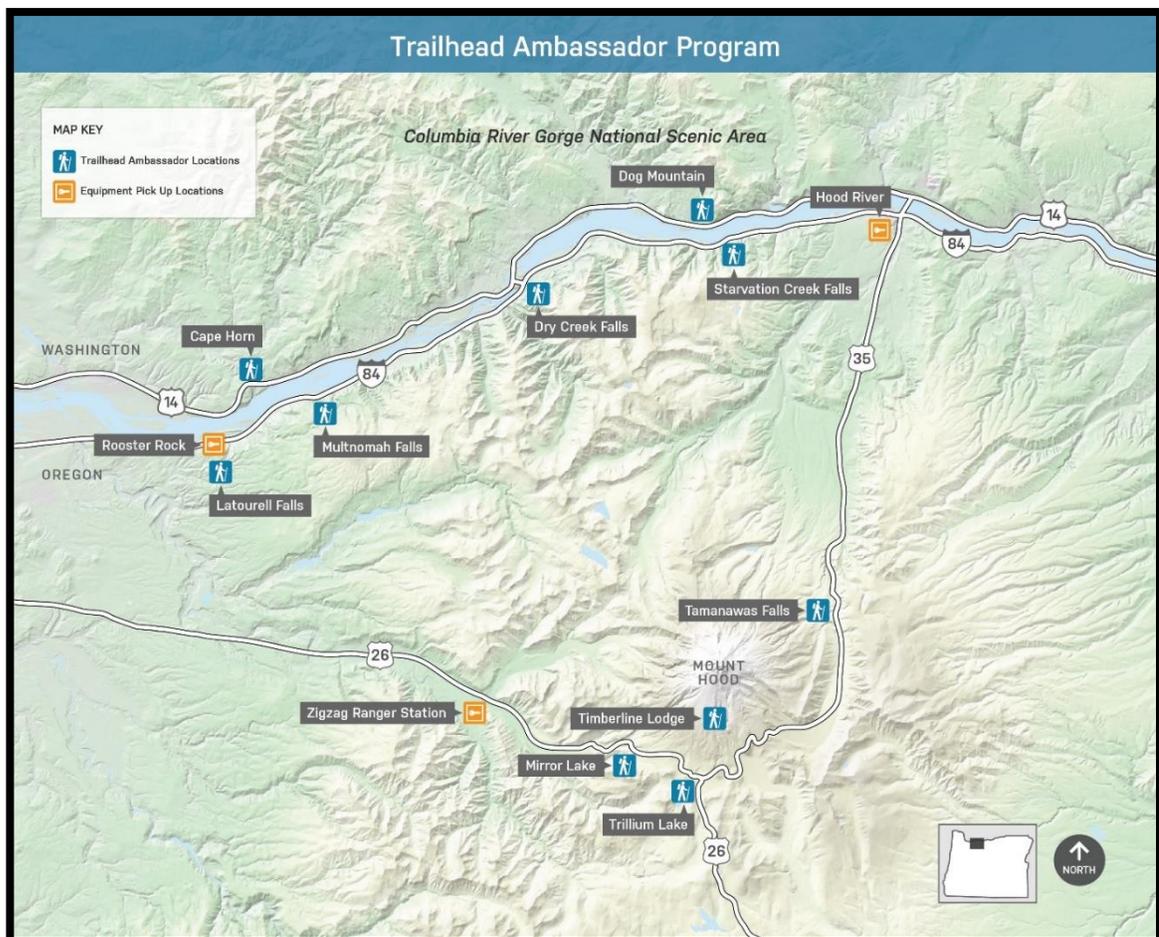


Photo: Ambassadors at Latourell Falls by Micheal Drewry | Map: Lisa D. Holmes/Yulan Studio

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