

2015
Jurisdictional Scan: Campground Host Programs

Does your jurisdiction have a campground host program in place?

JURISDICTION	REPLIED	YES/NO	CONTACT NAME
B.C PARKS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YES	Becc Hoskins

COMMENTS:

10 years ago we had a thriving park host program that was managed by our staff. When we moved to a contractor model for our park operations, the Hosting program shifted to our Park Operators to manage rather than us. I have attached the old program manual for your information, hopefully you find it helpful. As part of our renewed volunteer Strategy I am beginning the process of bringing the program back to life with more central coordination. Later this month I am meeting with our Society of Park Operators to solicit feedback on the program to help me decide how we can offer support and guidance to make the program more successful and consistent from park to park. It's very much a work in progress for us at the moment.

Here is where we post hosting opportunities online:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/aboutBCParks/employment/volunteerOpportunities.html>
(link no longer active)

ALBERTA PARKS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YES	Brad Marshall
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COMMENTS:

Some form of a provincial Host Program has been in place in Alberta for at least 40 years. The program in Alberta originated in three government service business units:

- Forestry operated recreation area campgrounds
- Provincial Park campgrounds
- Transportation roadside campgrounds

Each business unit had an official or unofficial Host program and placements, with the decision to have a Host placement determined at local levels.

In the 1990's, all provincial government campgrounds were amalgamated under provincial parks, and this resulted in a single Alberta Parks Host Program. In 2000, I was hired in a fulltime Coordinator of Volunteer Services role, which allocates about 10% of my time to provincial oversight of the Host Program. Having a central point of contact/coordination for the Host Program enables placement coordination, training and supply support, problem solving central record keeping and advocacy.

In recent years, Alberta Parks has offered between 35-65 locations for placements, out of approximately 250 total campgrounds. Note some campgrounds receive more than one placement (some of our large campgrounds have 2-3 concurrent placements).

Alberta Parks also currently deploys Hosts in few day-use only locations (no campground anywhere in park). These locations have facilities and services onsite to enable a fulltime

campsite being utilized.

Regardless of a campground or day-use site, the following are the general internal items for consideration before launching a new volunteer placement or program:

- Need Assessment
- Policy
- Risk Management
- Resourcing Commitment
- Site Availability/Suitability
- Placement Coordination
- Orientation and Training
- Supervision and Performance Management
- Supply Management
- Record Keeping
- Recognition
- Evaluation

Placements currently require a commitment by volunteers of at least 4 weeks, however most placements tend to be between 12 and 20 weeks. Host placements are not required to follow our maximum stay regulation of 16 days. During their service, we expect a minimum of 5 hours/day of service, for 5 consecutive days spanning the entire weekend, we two consecutive days off mid-week (same as for staff). Most Hosts do 10 hours/day and at least 5 consecutive days.

Unsolicited applicants may come forward either at the site level, through contact with district/regional/provincial staff, or via our online website. By far most applicants identify having exposure to the program and being encouraged to apply, through contact with current volunteer Hosts out in the system.

At the end of each season, successful Host placements are provided “first right of return” back to the same site, for the same time period, unless there is some change in the operational status at that location. After returnees are confirmed for next season, those seasoned Hosts looking for a transfer are accommodated. Then any remaining locations are opened up for new placements. We strive to complete all of this between November and February, as in February our online reservation system goes active. Field staff like this approach because they prefer to have known proven volunteers at their park, especially high profile/high volume locations.

Regardless of how an applicant comes forward, and how they get matched to a site with a current vacancy, ultimately it is the supervisor for the placement that has the final decision to accept or decline a new applicant. Part of that decision making process includes reviewing the application, interviewing the applicants, calling references as required. Note Criminal Record Checks are not a mandatory requirement for all Hosts currently but some specific placements do require it (this is the same approach currently taken with staff).

Once a placement is approved, volunteers are encouraged to attend a central provincial spring Host workshop, which provides an opportunity to learn, share and receive central supplies.

Upon starting their placement, their supervisor is required to administer our standard volunteer agreement (see attached), and review the Host Orientation Handbook(see attached) with them. Supervisors are also responsible for provide onsite orientation as required,

including provision of publications and other distribution materials. Note seasonal staff are not permitted to supervise volunteers, however they may serve as a communication link.

Regarding assessment of performance of the program with regards to desired outcomes, Alberta Parks is currently conducting a Program Review for the Host Program. This initiative was founded in a 2014 Ministerial request to substantially expand the program, and so the value of the program has already been confirmed, so we are now working through how best to improve and grow the program, within the current operational climate. This could include expansion into regular front country campsites, day-use, focus on supporting comfort camping, or backcountry campgrounds.

Regardless of how, how much and where we expand and grow the Host Program, we know there will be some sites where it is feasible currently. Factors in such sites include:

- Inadequate telecommunication options – landline, cellphone, radio (operational/OH&S/Emergency)
- No sewage disposal options (convenience and legislative compliance)
- Remote location with insufficient staff presence (we don't put volunteers, where staff don't have a daily presence/reasonable response time).
- Poor/non-existent regulation compliance (we don't put peacekeepers in where there is no peace to keep).

From a general statistical analysis, the Host Program annually contributes about 50,000 hours Alberta Parks, or \$750,000 of direct service support in visitor services, reservation support, infrastructure protection, peer level compliance and general operational support. Keeping in mind these folks provide their own accommodations, use their own vehicles to supplement their volunteering, and in the case of full-time RVers, aren't really ever off-duty all summer long, total contribution to the crown is more likely around 1 million annually, and that's from approximately 80 individual volunteers.

In conclusion our volunteer Hosts have moved beyond merely augmenting and supporting staff, to now being integral components of our operational program and service delivery team, at the locations they are deployed. Our provincial public information unit gets asked by callers if an particular site being considered has a volunteer Host, because callers like the security and comfort from knowing that someone will be there to help them if they need it. This is especially the case with seniors, single travelers, single parents and more recently, new Canadians. The public has come to accept that the staffing models in many parks, don't afford an active and fulltime presence of staff, however the presence of a Host does mitigate their concerns, and results in referrals(\$), extended stays(\$), repeat visitation (\$).

SASKATCHEWAN PARKS		YES	Denise Coleman
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COMMENTS:

Do any jurisdictions have a campground host program in place?

Yes, Saskatchewan has a campground host program in place.

If a host program is in place -

How was it established?

The program was operating in 2006 when I became involved and I believe had been established a number of years prior to that – perhaps five or six more years. I don't have any files going beyond 2006 so cannot give you the exact number of years.

Is there a “manual” or “guiding document” available and shareable?

Yes, I could absolutely share with you all of our electronic files. Upon

request, I will forward.

Have there been any assessment of the performance of the program with regard to desired outcomes

I have never done an assessment of the program.

Have any jurisdictions explored the idea of volunteer host programs and chosen not to implement?

Participation in the campground host program by our provincial parks is voluntary and some parks decide not to participate.

If so, why was that decision made?

My best guess would be the program is not required at that particular location.

MANITOBA PARKS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YES	Mike Gilbertson
<p>COMMENTS: We've had a program in place for about 20 years. We continue to make the odd small change, but it's worked fairly well over the years. See attached document in resources below</p>			
ONTARIO PARKS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YES	Amy Yakelashek
<p>COMMENTS: A park host program has existed in Ontario Parks for more than twenty-five years, although until this past year, the program has been organized and delivered at the park level. For the 2015 season, Ontario Parks established a Park Host Program Manual and Guidelines (please find attached for your reference). These documents were created as a means to formalize the program and to ensure consistency across the province. Participation in the program is at the discretion of the Park Superintendent at each park location.</p> <p>In terms of the success of the program, it is essentially only monitored at the park level at this time [please see Appendices 8 (Park Host Survey), 9 (Park Host Performance Evaluation) and 10 (Annual Program Report Template) of the Park Host Program Guidelines document].</p>			
SEPAQ (QUEBEC)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO	Claire Ducharme
<p>COMMENTS: We have no Campground Host program in our parks</p>			
NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR	<input type="checkbox"/>		
NOVA SCOTIA	<input type="checkbox"/>		
PARKS NEW BRUNSWICK	<input type="checkbox"/>		
P.E.I PARKS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO	Shane Arbing
<p>COMMENTS: We looked into this a few years ago, for our camping operation, and were slammed immediately by the local union at the prospect of taking work away from unionized employees. We do operate a volunteer Trail Ambassador Program on Confederation Trail...our completed section of the Trans Canada Trail. These folks cycle a section of trail talking to users about</p>			

<p>regulations, providing direction, taking feedback and reporting maintenance issues. This particular program has always been run by volunteers so we have not had any union issues. If anyone in your shop is interested let me know and I'll put them in contact with our Trail Coordinator.</p>			
<p>GOVERNMENT OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>Richard Zieba</p>
<p>COMMENTS: The NWT does not have a volunteer host program, has not considered one in the past, and is not currently considering such a program. The issue primarily is workload – these types of organizations take a lot of hand holding work, and we don't have staff capacity.</p>			
<p>NUNAVUT PARKS</p>	<p>X</p>		
<p>YUKON PARKS</p>	<p>Inquiring Jurisdiction</p>		<p>Eric Schroff</p>
<p>COMMENTS: <u>Original Email:</u> Good morning Dawn. Yukon Parks is investigating the possibility of establishing a volunteer host program for our campground system. We would like to know what other jurisdictions are doing in this regard.</p> <p>It would be helpful if we could get a quick jurisdictional scan seeking information on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do any jurisdictions have a campground host program in place? ● If a host program is in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How was it established? ○ Is there a “manual” or “guiding document” available and shareable? ○ Have there been any assessment of the performance of the program with regard to desired outcomes ● Have any jurisdictions explored the idea of volunteer host programs and chosen not to implement? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If so, why was that decision made? ● If you could pass some version of this request along to our colleagues it would be greatly appreciated. 			
<p>PARKS CANADA</p>	<p>X</p>		

Response Rate: 8/13 for **61%**

Key Findings:

- Campground Host programs that do exist have generally been in place for decades and have a wealth of data to inform their existence and success.
- Alberta in particular seems to have a thriving Campground Host Program.

- There is the possibility of running into issues with unionized employees if they feel work is being taken away from them.
- Participation in a Campground Host Program is often at the discretion of individual park supervisors; having a program in place does not mean that the program is offered everywhere.

Future Questions to Ask:

- How often should a Campground Host Program be revisited, evaluated, and updated?
- What have been some of the challenges in maintaining a successful Campground Host Program?

Links to Resources:

- [British Columbia Volunteer Park Host Handbook](#)
- [Alberta Parks Volunteer Agreement](#)
- [Alberta Host Handbook](#)
- [Saskatchewan Record Keeping and Evaluation](#)
- [Saskatchewan Program Administration](#)
- [Saskatchewan Volunteer Orientation Checklist](#)
- [Saskatchewan Staff Manual](#)
- [Saskatchewan Volunteer Service Application](#)
- [Saskatchewan Volunteer Project Outline](#)
- [Saskatchewan Volunteer Handbook](#)
- [Manitoba Policy Document](#)
- [Ontario Park Host Program Manual](#)
- [Ontario Park Host Guidelines](#)