

# Retirement Living

## A breath of fresh air

Thinking ahead to summer, what's a fun, inexpensive way to get outdoors, do something unusual, and also "give back" to society? Consider volunteering at one of the many state or national parks. You might be surprised at what's available.

For instance, at Alaska's famous Denali National Park, there's need for an "interpretive naturalist." The job calls for someone to research and present "thematic interpretive programs to park visitors through a variety of venues including guided walks and formal campground presentations." At Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, there's an opening for a volunteer "cultural resource management volunteer" now through January 2006. This job includes diverse skills, such as archeological fieldwork, museum curation, and data entry.

About one-third of those who volunteer in the National Park Service system work as guides, and another one in five do resource management or maintenance.

While in most cases accommodations are not included, basic housing may be available. For instance, at Ferry National Historical Park in the Blue Ridge Mountains ("where the Appalachian Trail intersects the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal") there are opportunities for people working as historian, archeologist, curator and library assistant, and gardener.

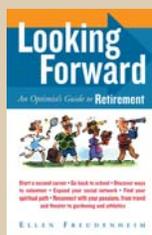
In most cases, these volunteer positions don't lead to paid employment in the National Parks Service. However, you can enjoy a purposeful vacation, and possibly gain some new skills or develop new interests in the process.

If you volunteer, you won't be alone. More than 125,000 volunteers contributed in 2002 to the National Park Service at an estimated value of \$72 million. There are over 300 different volunteer programs through the National Park Service, which is responsible for more than 84 million acres.

**How to find out what's available:** The National Park Service Volunteers Web site is very user-friendly; you can search by name of a park, or by the state you'd like to work in. The listing briefly describes volunteer programs, the duration of the project, and whether housing is available. See <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/vips/opportunities.cfm>.

### About this series

This series is written by Ellen Freudenheim, author of *Looking Forward: An Optimist's Guide to Retirement* (Stewart Tabori & Chang, NYC, 2004, \$15.95). Visit <http://www.lookingforward2.com> for more information.



***You won't get paid. But there are non-financial rewards: the thrill (and health benefits) of working in an outdoor environment; a new challenge; the pride in knowing you are helping the environment.***

**Other Federal Government Programs:** Uncle Sam has a lot of projects going on that could use a little volunteer assistance. Eight major government organizations have joined forces in creating a Web site at <http://www.volunteer.gov> that advertises volunteer opportunities. They include the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Interior, Veterans Affairs, and U.S.A. Freedom Corps among others. **RW**