

The Chief of Engineers Annual Natural Resources Management Awards

**2016 HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN
AWARD FOR INTERPRETIVE EXCELLENCE
NOMINATION**

Name of Nominee:

Montgomery H. Biggs

Position, Title, Series, Grade:

Park Ranger, GS-0025-07

Organization, Location, Mailing Address:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District, CENWD-OD-B
Bonneville Lock and Dam Project
Cascade Locks, Oregon 97014

Point of Contact/Phone:

Greg A. Webb

Park and Natural Resource Manager (541) 374-7996

HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN AWARD FOR INTERPRETIVE EXCELLENCE
Nominee: Montgomery H. Biggs, Park Ranger, Bonneville Lock and Dam Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Park Ranger Montgomery “Monty” H. Biggs serves as an Interpretive Park Ranger and Water Safety Coordinator for Bonneville Lock and Dam. He is an interpretive role model who works at the largest and most visited interpretive center operated by the Corps, receiving over half a million visitors annually.

Ranger Biggs personally provides hundreds of interpretive and outreach programs relating to the missions and objectives of the Corps of Engineers to diverse audiences. All visitors, including non-traditional audiences such as inner city youth, persons with disabilities, English as a second language and multicultural visitors, receive his welcoming smile and exuberant willingness to enhance their experience. His interpretive programs demonstrate creativity and originality as he uses props, displays, and storytelling to help people relate to the National Historic Landmark, Bonneville Lock and Dam.

Ranger Biggs creates a positive experience for visitors. At the beginning of each program he talks with his audience to establish their level of understanding and background, then adapts each program to fit their needs and interests. No two interpretative presentations are alike for this reason. His programs are interesting and engage the visitor. Through use of sound interpretive principles, clear themes, good organization, and thoughtful provocation he helps people relate their experiences to the role and missions of the Corps.

Using a rich variety of interpretive techniques, a great depth of knowledge, and a good-natured and cheerful approach, Ranger Biggs helps all learn more about the Corps of Engineers and their environment. Park Ranger Montgomery Biggs is a valuable interpreter and an exceptional representative of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN AWARD FOR INTERPRETIVE EXCELLENCE
Nominee: Montgomery H. Biggs, Park Ranger, Bonneville Lock and Dam Project

1. CREATIVITY/ORIGINALITY:

Ranger Biggs serves as an Interpretive Ranger and Water Safety Coordinator for Bonneville Lock and Dam. His creativity, leadership, and dedication are complimented by his solid work ethic. It is his robust personality and presence that make him special. He consistently provides superior programs illustrating the art of interpretation. He makes connections between the visitors and the Corps' missions, local resources, geology, and history of the area. He is an innovative role model for others and provided training for a new Park Guide and assisted in training eighteen volunteers.

All of Ranger Biggs' interpretive programs incorporate Freeman Tilden's six principles of interpretation; relating, revealing, provoking, addressing the whole person, age appropriateness, and using the art of interpretation to create memorable experiences. Some tell the Corps story, some emphasize environmental education and stewardship, and most carry messages of water safety. A master interpreter, Ranger Biggs custom tailors each program to the group he serves and weaves these objectives into the fabric of his thoughtful programs.

Ranger Biggs continually develops his programs to keep the material relevant to the audience. He uses tangible and intangible concepts, relating the subjects of his programs to everyday life. He keeps audiences engaged by providing informative and entertaining programs. An example of creative interpretation is his discussion of juvenile fish passage and the survival rates at the dam. Ranger Biggs asks visitors to speculate on the survival rate for juvenile salmon passing through the turbines; the standard response is "0%". Ranger Biggs asks if they are imagining a blender making a big "salmon smoothie?" He then goes on to dispel this image and reveal all of the ways the Corps works to ensure most juvenile fish pass the dam successfully as well as the actual survival rate of 96%.

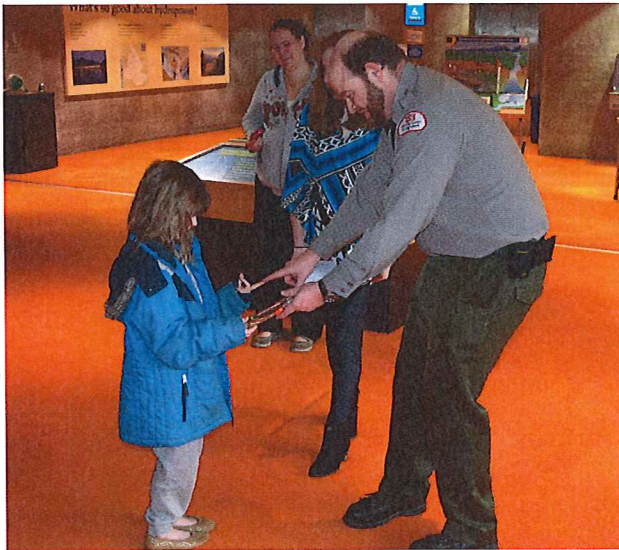
While developing new programs, Ranger Biggs ensures the material can be adapted to engage all ages. For an interpretive program for pre-kindergarten visitors, he developed an activity engaging students to learn about the life cycle of the pacific salmon by acting out important characteristics and stages. He adapts all his programs appropriately for the audience. Ranger Biggs has developed a unique interpretative program for general public tours of Bonneville Lock and Dam, which capitalizes on the most fascinating aspects of the project's history, operation and its role in supporting the surrounding region/ecosystem. When visitors leave one of his programs, they understand how the Corps generates clean renewable power, successfully aids in fish migration, and that one barge replaces 134 transport trucks on our regional highways.



HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN AWARD FOR INTERPRETIVE EXCELLENCE
Nominee: Montgomery H. Biggs, Park Ranger, Bonneville Lock and Dam Project

2. MAKES A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR VISITORS:

Enthusiastic, entertaining, and dedicated are all words that describe Ranger Biggs' demeanor. His programs are consistently among the finest offered at Bonneville Lock and Dam. In fiscal year 2015, Ranger Biggs presented 392 interpretive programs to 8,521 individuals, providing a total of 326 hours of engaging interpretation. At the beginning of his programs he talks with the audience to establish rapport by learning about their background and interests. This makes his programs interesting and engaging to the visitor. Through use of sound interpretive principles, clear themes, good organization, and thoughtful provocation he helps people relate their experiences to his topics, ensuring they will remember their visit.



One member of the public wanted to ensure the Corps knew what an exceptional interpreter and employee we have in Ranger Biggs. They wrote to the following to the Portland District Public Affairs Office: "I just wanted to let you know that you have an excellent spokesperson representing the Bonneville Locks and Dam: Ranger Monty Biggs. We had the pleasure of listening to Ranger Biggs during a recent visit to the visitor center. His presentation was extremely well done. His passion and excitement was only exceeded by his knowledge on the topic. With representatives like Ranger Biggs on your staff I am confident that the public is

well informed and will continue to support your efforts to keep the Columbia River Projects the vanguard for the Army Corp of Engineers power and environmental programs."

Many of the 392 programs Ranger Biggs presented were to school groups visiting during a field trip or curriculum enhancement. High school students can be a challenging age group to engage. Ranger Biggs received accolades from a high school teacher stating "Monty Rocks! He is made for this Job. Knowledgeable, articulate, and funny. High School kids really liked him." This particular field trip was focused on fish passage and hydropower missions.



Each year Bonneville staff participate in the Portland Boat Show and the Northwest Sportsmen's Show which are key outreach events designed to reach the target audience of males ages 18 – 35 with lifesaving water safety messages. Ranger Biggs partnered with Freshwater News, a fishing and boating publication, to provide Corps "Are you Next?" water safety bags for the Portland Boat Show. Ranger Biggs also staffed the Corps' booth at the show, where he educated visitors on safe

HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN AWARD FOR INTERPRETIVE EXCELLENCE
Nominee: Montgomery H. Biggs, Park Ranger, Bonneville Lock and Dam Project

navigation lockage via a touch screen monitor demonstrating the steps of locking a recreational vessel through Bonneville's navigation lock. While donning his inflatable Personal Flotation Device (PFD), Ranger Biggs encouraged visitors to wear their life jackets and to boat responsibly. He impressed upon adults that "if you love them, put a life jacket on your kids; because they love you, put a life jacket on yourself." The Northwest Sportsmen's show receives 60,000 annual attendees. Ranger Biggs assisted at the Corps' booth which attracted 7,500 individuals. At this show, he was able to contact family groups and outdoor enthusiasts about various water safety topics, recreation opportunities, and corps missions.

For years, Bonneville Lock and Dam has provided a web camera view of migrating fish passing up the fish ladder. This quickly became the most visited component of the Portland District webpage. Unfortunately, this excellent streaming video attraction was discontinued due to limited internet band width. Ranger Biggs is tackling this problem through coordination with a local internet provider, ensuring upgraded equipment is purchased to restore this valuable and popular webcam for online viewing.

3. ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF USACE AND THE SITE:

Ranger Biggs received positive feedback from several members of the public on his interpretive tours of Bonneville Lock and Dam. Comments ranged from praise for the volume of his presentation, to visitors expressing real excitement for the mission of the project and Corps. Several visitors shared their unsolicited opinion that Ranger Biggs provided them with an excellent overview of the history, operation, and significance of the project. One visitor speculated that Ranger Biggs "could himself generate electricity if connected to the power grid!" Ranger Biggs consistently searches for ways to connect visitors to the Corps' missions. He also researched and identified several hydropower interpretive tools for purchase that share the basic principles of generating electricity with visitors.

Ranger Biggs has established general public programs diverse enough to connect most visitors to an excellent variety of topics. After learning an audience's interests, his program can weave a story that connects visitors to...

- the astounding geologic forces that shaped the Columbia River Gorge
- the rapids that challenged Lewis & Clark and steamships thereafter
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his "New Deal"
- the positive changes Bonneville has brought to the region (commercial navigation, flood-risk reduction, widespread availability of clean/affordable electricity)
- the Powerhouse, where the basic physics of generating and transmitting electricity are explored
- the relationships of Native Americans with the surrounding landscape
- the origins of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and our Civil Works mission
- the Second World War and Bonneville's role in winning the "Battle of Production"
- the Corps' lasting commitment to preserving the surrounding ecosystem and the methods by which we pass salmon safely through the dam
- the water cycle is also reviewed to emphasize the renewable nature of Bonneville's power production

HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN AWARD FOR INTERPRETIVE EXCELLENCE
Nominee: Montgomery H. Biggs, Park Ranger, Bonneville Lock and Dam Project

These programs help visitors relate to the history, recalling the daunting challenges faced by our nation in the 1930's and how Bonneville was constructed with the limited technology of that era to address those challenges, as well as the contemporary aspects of the dam, sharing innovative technology used to facilitate greater efficiencies in power production and fish passage. With such a wealth of topics and information, any visitor can find something to take home with them.

As a member of the Portland District Water Safety Team, Ranger Biggs provides input on district wide programs such as the "Wear It to Win It" social media campaign, review of water related incidents, and specific suggestions for how to reach the target audience of men ages 18 – 35. He has served as a district representative on the Northwestern Division Public Safety PDT. In addition, he has worked with Public Affairs to produce a jetty safety public service announcement. The service announcement serves to educate the public of inherent dangers around jetties. He articulated the false sense of safety people feel around jetties and the realities of the life threatening dangers of large waves sweeping family members out into the turbulent waters. Those same waves can bring you back to the jetty by slamming you into the rocks.



Ranger Biggs consistently searches for ways to improve visitor experiences. He redesigned an outdated and faded interpretive display board in the Bonneville Visitor Orientation Building to share updated messaging from the Corps' National Water Safety Campaign. Ranger Biggs selected some of the most compelling and informative water safety material, then arranged and affixed the new water safety materials to the display for the benefit of the visiting public.

HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN AWARD FOR INTERPRETIVE EXCELLENCE
Nominee: Montgomery H. Biggs, Park Ranger, Bonneville Lock and Dam Project

CITATION:

Park Ranger Montgomery Biggs serves as Interpretive Park Ranger and Water Safety Coordinator for Bonneville Lock and Dam in the Portland District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Ranger Biggs consistently provides interpretive excellence and a contagious enthusiasm each day. He serves as an interpretive role model by adapting to diverse audiences and using a rich variety of interpretive techniques and props to help visitor related to the National Historic Landmark. He provides programs that are both educational and engaging for visitors of all ages. As a district water safety team member, he ensures key messages reach the target audience both on and off site. His dedication to the Corps is demonstrated everyday through his commitment to hard work and willingness to get the job done. Ranger Biggs brings great credit upon himself, the Portland District, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



Park Ranger Montgomery Biggs sharing the hydropower mission in Bonneville Lock and Dam Historic First Powerhouse