

**The Chief of Engineers Annual Natural Resources Management Awards  
HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN AWARD FOR INTERPRETIVE EXCELLENCE**

**Nominee: Amber C. Tilton, Park Ranger, The Dalles Lock and Dam**

**Executive Summary**

Amber Tilton has been a Park Ranger at The Dalles Lock and Dam for four years. Since her arrival to The Dalles she has made tremendous impacts to a once struggling Interpretation Program. Amber's interpretation skills and programs have become a sought after commodity for our local partners, schools and visitors. Amber has taken the initiative to develop numerous interpretive programs and activities and then marketed them so well that now her talents are called upon several times a week by various activity planners.

Amber has developed a sustainable interpretive program that continues to grow as she finds new partners and opportunities. In times of declining budgets and less manpower, Amber has excelled in creating effective interpretation instead of excessive interpretation. Because Amber is only 1 of 2 full time Park Rangers at The Dalles she understands that more Interpretive Programs are not always better and she has to be more efficient with her time due to other Visitor Assistance and Recreation Program duties.

Dependable, creative, determined, motivated and most of all passionate are words that best describe Amber and her attitude towards Interpretation. Her goals and drive in making The Dalles Interpretive Program successful is relentless. The program has been thriving because Amber will ask the hard questions and go the extra mile to obtain her goals.

After the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the discontinuing use of our popular tour train due to budget reductions, The Dalles Lock and Dam became closed to public access. During that time our visitation dramatically decreased to a point where we were averaging 75% fewer visitors than during our most popular years. Amber has accepted the challenge to increase those visitor numbers and with her "can do" attitude she has successfully increased the total visitation to our Visitor Center and surround parks every year since she has been placed in the lead interpretative role.

Amber's leadership abilities have proven to be vital in managing our seasonal and volunteer staffs. She guides our seasonal and volunteer staffs in the management of our Visitor Center, tours of The Dalles Powerhouse and volunteer hosting duties in our recreational areas. Her ability to gather volunteers to complete jobs that otherwise would go undone has saved the Government thousands of dollars while allowing our permanent staff to execute priority tasks.

Amber is well deserving of the Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence. Her selfless service to the Corps of Engineers, The Dalles Lock and Dam and our visitors has become a corner stone to our Natural Resource Management Program goals and missions. With Amber's leadership The Dalles Interpretative Program will continue to successfully impact our visitors and surround communities in a positive manner.