

October 10, 2012

Letter of reference and support of the Emergency Volunteer Corps of Nehalem Bay (EVC) in application for the 2012 Community Resilience Innovation Challenge

A deeply committed core of like-minded volunteers has forged a remarkable private-public coalition in 3 small coastal towns that is one of the most visionary and organized local, grass roots emergency preparedness groups in the United States. Supporting their efforts with the Challenge Grant will help bring their innovative ideas, collaborative programs and organizational expertise to communities throughout the Pacific Northwest and the rest of the country.

Born out of need for community and regional resilience, the Emergency Volunteer Corps of Nehalem Bay (EVC) was formed in February 2008 following a storm that brought hurricane-force winds and flooding to the North Oregon coast, isolating the 3 small communities of Manzanita, Nehalem and Wheeler (total full-time population: 1,374) for almost a week.

Using earthquake and tsunami preparedness as the foundation for outreach, education and preparedness training, the EVC now includes hundreds of active volunteers and an organizational structure that focuses their efforts into all aspects of readiness, response and recovery. EVC is a nonprofit organization that receives small contributions from the 3 local city governments and fire district, outside grants and private contributions, but their partnerships reach well beyond their regional borders.

Local partners include the School District, their County's Economic Development Council, Health Department, and Emergency Management Departments, and the Rinehart Clinic (a federally designated, not-for-profit Rural Health Clinic). Statewide and federal partners include Oregon State Parks, the American Red Cross, the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Weather Service and Oregon Emergency Management.

With a meager budget of under \$10,000 per year (excluding one time grants) EVC has established and staffed committees responsible for: creating short and long term sheltering strategies following an earthquake, tsunami or other natural disaster; community wide water storage solutions; communications options during an emergency and Ham radio training; evacuation strategies and drills leading in preparation for a local tsunami event; pet preparedness and sheltering; caching and long term storage of emergency supplies and; an online emergency database and resources center that can be downloaded as a free, web-based template for other coastal communities to use.

EVC has established a local medical corps that is now a registered Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) unit under the office of the U.S. Surgeon General. EVC volunteers also worked with Oregon legislators to update Oregon liability laws in order to effectively utilize a pool of retired health-care providers in their community. This leadership action has benefited all MRCs across the state.

EVC offers and funds Red Cross classes and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training on a regional basis. They've even established CERT classes at the High School—a first for the region. CERT teams hold bimonthly drills and are actively involved in partnering with local public safety officials in response to a myriad of emergencies.

They have adapted the successful Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) earthquake preparedness program to better suit a coastal community within a tsunami inundation zone. They use the adapted MYN program as the foundation of EVC's regional emergency response plan. They have over 100 active MYN Captains and dozens of neighborhoods participating in the program.

In sustaining this program, EVC has developed an innovative zone organization that supports neighborhoods both in ongoing education and in emergency response. All CERT members and MYN Captains are trained in the FEMA National Incident Management System.

In addition to CERT, Red Cross and MYN workshops and training, classes during the past year have included preparedness topics that most communities haven't even thought about, including: emergency kit preparation for well beyond the first 3 days of a disaster; how to maintain and distribute a potable water supply during an emergency, creating long term food caches, shelter operations training, using communication tools in an emergency (FRS and Ham radio), disaster leadership training and business continuity planning.

EVC has reached out to underserved populations as well, holding Spanish language outreach and education workshops for Hispanic families. Volunteer recognition events and informative presentations and workshops by preparedness experts help keep EVC members motivated.

EVC coordinated and led community wide tsunami evacuation drills in 2008 and 2012, and EVC team members have volunteered their time and expertise to help other Oregon coastal communities and school districts stage successful evacuation drills. Tabletop exercises on a variety of preparedness topics occur at least 2 times a year.

Volunteers have participated in the production of a nationally funded video presentation on tsunami preparedness as well as being featured on CNN. In 2011, EVC received an Award of Excellence from the Western States Seismic Policy Council for their innovative outreach efforts.

As one EVC volunteer wrote, “[The leadership at] EVC has made all this happen and have essentially created an ‘Emergency Preparedness University’ with the limited resources available to them... When ‘THE BIG ONE’ hits, EVC have made sure that we will be ready. Lives will be saved because of their efforts.”

Supporting EVC with the Challenge Grant will literally mean the possibility of taking their ideas and fostering more resilient communities throughout the Pacific Northwest and the rest of the country.

James Roddey,
Director of ReadySetPrepare.org, and former Earth Sciences Information Officer and Tsunami Outreach Program Manager for the state of Oregon.

jroddey@comcast.net
www.ReadySetPrepare.org
[@iamjroddey](#)