



VOLUNTEER STEWARD HANDBOOK



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Dear Steward,

Thank you for your interest in the Volunteer Stewardship Program with Preservation Parks of Delaware County (PPDC). Our mission is **to protect and conserve the natural and historic features of Delaware County and inspire outdoor exploration and learning**. Natural areas provide a sanctuary for people, plants, and wildlife. PPDC owns and manages a variety of natural areas within Delaware County. In addition to benefits to the environment and wildlife populations, these natural areas also provide a quiet retreat where Delaware County residents can learn about and reconnect to the natural world.

Volunteerism is key to the long-term sustainability of Delaware County's natural areas and builds public awareness of the importance of maintaining biodiversity and restoring urban nature. Equally important, volunteering creates a joyous connection between people and nature and fosters an environmental ethic in the community.

By joining-Preservation Parks of Delaware County's network of volunteer stewards, you join a growing group, connected by their willingness to maintain and enhance their own parks. You are now an integral part of this effort, and your help is invaluable in achieving our goals.

This manual introduces you to the Park District and serves as a guide to make your experience a safe and rewarding one. Should you have any questions about volunteering with Preservation Parks, contact Natural Resources Specialist, Lauren Richards, at (614) 314-8891 or email lrichards@preservationparks.com. I look forward to working with you in the parks soon.

Thank you for your time, enthusiasm, and passion in helping us to Protect, Conserve, and Inspire!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Richards".

Lauren Richards
Natural Resources Specialist

Introduction to Preservation Parks

BACKGROUND

Preservation Parks was created as an independent governmental entity of the state of Ohio on May 21, 1974, with district offices located at Hogback Ridge Park. It is a natural areas park system that is managed for plant and animal diversity as well as public appreciation, education, and low impact outdoor exploration.

Preservation Parks is funded primarily by property tax dollars approved by voters of Delaware County. Tax revenue is augmented by federal and state grants, along with contributions of land, materials, equipment and time from donors and volunteers like you. Preservation Parks is governed by a three-member Board of Park Commissioners.

Our parks connect thousands of visitors each year to nature, enriching their lives through a multitude of personal experiences including walking trails, picnic areas, natural play areas, nature exhibits, wildlife blinds, and other features. A wide range of public education programs strengthen people's awareness and understanding of the landscape and history of Delaware County. Our educational efforts also take us into classrooms in every Delaware County school system, public and private, with engaging programs that excite young people. In addition, we offer a range of equally engaging educational opportunities to senior groups and other community organizations throughout Delaware County.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Preservation Parks is to protect and conserve the natural and historic features of Delaware County and to inspire outdoor exploration and learning.

VALUES

- **Integrity:** We are true to ourselves and others, we keep our promises, and we are consistent between what we say and what we do.
- **Teamwork:** We value and respect each other in working together toward a common goal.
- **Creativity:** We embrace the use of imagination in the development and delivery of our services.
- **Stewardship:** We endeavor to exhibit responsible planning and management of resources.



Jack-in-the-pulpit

Overview

What is the Volunteer Stewardship Program?

The Volunteer Stewardship Program, part of the Preservation Parks Volunteers In Parks (VIP), is a community-based volunteer program that provides hands-on opportunities in ecological restoration, management, monitoring, and education within Preservation Parks of Delaware County (PPDC).

Why Volunteer?

Community involvement is key to the long-term sustainability of Delaware County's natural areas. The Stewardship Program introduces volunteers to native flora and fauna; increases awareness of environmental issues such as biodiversity conservation and ecological restoration; and creates a connection between the community and Delaware County's natural history. By sharing this experience with friends and neighbors, volunteers can play an important role in fostering an environmental ethic in their community.

Types of Volunteer Stewards

- ❖ **Site Steward:** A volunteer with knowledge of natural history/ecology, leadership skills, and a desire to oversee the work of stewardship volunteers. Site Stewards perform regular site visits, act as a liaison between Preservation Parks and the community, and often lead and organize stewardship workdays. See page 4 for more information about the Site Steward's role and responsibilities.
- ❖ **Stewardship Workday Volunteer:** A volunteer who participates in volunteer workdays at one or more natural areas throughout the park district. Workday volunteers engage in activities such as invasive plant removal, weeding native plant gardens, native seeding, seed collection for future dispersal, and native plant planting. This may be a onetime engagement or frequent occurrence. Workday volunteers who participate in multiple events are encouraged to register as volunteers with the Outreach and Volunteer Specialist.
- ❖ **Citizen Scientist:** Citizen scientists are individuals who are interested in participating in data collection for various scientific surveys and programs. Preservation Parks participates in monitoring programs including FrogWatch USA, Monarch Watch, and NestWatch. The Park District hosts an annual BioBlitz in one of its parks where park staff, scientists, volunteers, and citizen scientists work together to collect data to create a snapshot of the biodiversity within the park, identifying as many species as possible within a given timeframe.

Roles & Responsibilities

A Site Steward coordinates and oversees the volunteer management and restoration of a PPDC natural area. The Site Steward works collaboratively with Preservation Parks staff to protect, maintain, and restore the natural integrity of their adopted natural area. Benefits of becoming a volunteer Site Steward include learning about native Ohio flora and fauna, gaining hands-on experience in ecological restoration, and working with volunteers to enhance Delaware County's natural areas and foster an environmental ethic within the community.

Responsibilities

1. All new Site Stewards are required to complete the volunteer process which includes an application, interview, and background check. All volunteers will be issued a PPDC volunteer shirt when registering with the Outreach and Volunteer Specialist. Stewards should wear this shirt when leading events and completing projects in the parks.
2. Attend an orientation with the Natural Resources Specialist, who will provide an overview of the program, restoration history and goals for specific sites, and gather information regarding volunteer interest and knowledge.
3. One of the most important roles of PPDC Site Stewards is to act as a community advocate for the designated natural area in the surrounding neighborhood. This may include leading nature walks and tours, organizing workdays, or simply making park staff aware of emerging issues as they arise. The Site Steward is encouraged to be creative in the ways he/she positively involves the community in the natural area.
4. Site Stewards are encouraged to become engaged in the restoration management of the natural area. Management activities should generally be established by Preservation Parks and communicated to and approved by the Natural Resources Specialist prior to beginning work. Examples of projects include planting native species, controlling invasive species, monitoring, and litter removal.
5. Site Stewards are also encouraged to organize and lead volunteer workdays to assist in the management of the site. *It is required that Site Stewards attend a volunteer stewardship workday before planning their first event..* When a workday is planned, the Site Steward must agree to:
 - Coordinate with the Natural Resources Specialist regarding the details of the proposed workday including workday goals, work area, tools needed, and specific activities planned. Workdays will be advertised in volunteer opportunity newsletters and announced to PPDC volunteers.
 - Assist with the recruitment and recognition of volunteers.
 - Ensure volunteer waivers are completed, and submit them to the Natural Resources Specialist.

- After a workday, complete the volunteer steward log with results, number of volunteers, total volunteer hours, etc. and submit to the Natural Resources Specialist, who will input workday hours into Volgistics.
6. Site Stewards are expected to adhere to all applicable policies, terms, and conditions outlined in the Preservation Parks of Delaware County Volunteer Handbook and work cooperatively with Preservation Parks staff and volunteers.

Qualifications

1. Possess an interest in natural history and ecology. Ideally, volunteer stewards have previous experience in natural areas management; however, an interest and desire to learn are the most important qualities.
2. Be at least 18 years old.
3. Complete a Preservation Parks Volunteer application and orientation.



Staff planting ball and burlap trees at Char-Mar Ridge Park

Getting Started

Learn About Your Site

The first step in getting started as a Site Steward is to learn about your selected area of interest. Most likely you are already somewhat familiar with your site, which may be why you were interested in the stewardship program in the first place! You will have the opportunity to learn about your selected site in greater detail and play an active role in its management.

Once you have completed the Preservation Parks of Delaware County Volunteer Application and have been accepted into the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) Program, the Natural Resources Specialist will contact you to arrange a site visit and orientation. During the orientation, the Natural Resources Specialist will provide a brief overview of the history and ecology of the park.

If your site is a staffed park, introduce yourself to park staff. Also, you may want to consider attending a park district board meeting, if applicable, to introduce yourself and meet the board members. Park staff can help facilitate.

Consider Attending a Stewardship Workday at another PPDC Park

If you have not done so already, plan to attend a stewardship workday at another PPDC park. This is a great way to experience a stewardship workday first-hand, meet other volunteers in the program, and share ideas on management and volunteer recruitment. For a current list of volunteer stewardship workdays, contact the Natural Resources Specialist Lauren Richards at lrichards@preservationparks.com or (614) 314-8891.



Planting Trees at McCammon Creek Park

Assess the Stewardship Needs of the Site

Site Stewards are encouraged to learn about the management needs of their site. The Natural Resources Specialist can help familiarize you with the needs of the site and help identify activities that you might like to assist with such as planting, seeding, invasive species control, trash clean-up, or seed collection. Notify and discuss your workday plans with the Natural Resources Specialist in advance of your proposed workday.

Workday Planning and Procedures

Each workday event is unique; however, this guide will help you get started.

WORKDAY PREPARATION

1. **Plan:** The first step is to determine how much time you can dedicate to organizing and leading volunteer stewardship workdays. Remember the program should be enjoyable so do not feel like you need to take on too much at once, especially when you are getting started. The Natural Resources Specialist is available for consultation on management needs of the site and the type of volunteer activities that may be appropriate given the timeframe of the workday, the time of year, and the needs of the particular natural area.
2. **Set the date:** It is recommended to create a schedule for the season (or year) in advance. It is often easier to attract and match volunteers if there are regularly scheduled workdays.
3. **Advertise:** Garnering volunteer support is crucial for having a successful workday and building a successful program. The Site Steward should notify the Natural Resources Specialist as soon as he/she schedules a workday(s). The Natural Resources Specialist will coordinate with the Outreach and Volunteer Specialist to advertise upcoming stewardship workdays on Volgistics and/or in the Volunteer Newsletter. Site Stewards are encouraged to use their own creative resources to attract new and retain current volunteers. Workday announcements should be approved by the Natural Resources Specialist and should include helpful information such as notes about appropriate footwear, extra water, sunscreen, etc.
4. **Secure Tools and Supplies:** Site Stewards should communicate with the Natural Resources Specialist in advance if they need tools or supplies for their workday. Any supplementary materials such as plants, seeds, etc. should be requested at least one month prior to the planned workday. Please encourage workday volunteers to bring water, sunscreen, insect repellent, or other items they may need.
5. **Follow Up:** Follow up with the Volunteer Stewardship Coordinator after the event to report volunteer hours and work completed.



Seeding Native Species in Former Field at McCammon Creek Park

DAY OF WORKDAY

1. **Introduction & Orientation:** Start each workday with introductions and a safety discussion. As people introduce themselves, pass around a sign-in sheet and the Volunteer Liability Waiver to collect names and contact information. This helps the Park District build up our volunteer support base and maintain accurate records of volunteer participation and hours. After introductions, provide a brief history of the site, including relevant plantings and other restoration work performed in recent years.

Ensure activities around trails or public spaces do not interfere with regular park usage, and generally use caution. Highlight any safety concerns or hazards at your site or any potential risks involved in the workday activity. Instruct workday volunteers on the proper handling and use of tools that they will utilize for the day. It is a good idea to carry a First Aid Kit (supplied by Preservation Parks) and a cell phone in case of emergency. Encourage volunteers to rest if they feel fatigued at any point during the workday.

2. **Communicate workday activities & goal** - Explain the workday activities and how they fit into the overall management of the site. Be clear about which species you will be working with and show examples to eliminate confusion. Also provide details about where and how to dispose of organic waste or trash that might be collected at the workday.

Set a realistic goal of what the group hopes to accomplish during the workday (e.g., clear a defined section of invasive brush or plant a specific number of plugs). Setting an achievable goal will help foster a sense of accomplishment at the end of the workday.

3. **Take a Break** - Schedule a break halfway through the workday for rest and rehydration. At this time, take note of the volunteer's progress and re-assign tasks as needed.
4. **Take a Tour** - If time allows, take a short tour or nature walk at the beginning or end of the workday so volunteers can learn about and enjoy the entire site and gain a larger perspective of the natural area.

WORKDAY FOLLOW-UP

After the workday, log volunteer hours into the Work Log attached and email to the Natural Resources Specialist.

You may also wish to follow-up with a thank-you e-mail, note, or phone call to the volunteers who participated in the day's event. This helps reinforce the importance of volunteer's contribution and create a group dynamic. Expressing appreciation also encourages volunteers to return for another workday.

Habitat Management

Preservation Parks manages 1680 acres of natural areas, including forests, prairies, streams, fields of varying stages of succession, and wetlands. These areas are managed to promote and maintain native biodiversity for each site, to the extent possible under modern conditions. The objective of this strategy is to promote a healthier environment, conserve native biodiversity, develop and maintain natural area aesthetics, and provide landscapes for nature-based recreation and education. Native biodiversity refers to the number and variety of living organisms (plants and animals) that are native to an area. However, our natural areas are highly susceptible to degradation caused by unnatural disturbances associated with our agricultural and suburban landscape.

Often to promote native plant cover in recovering habitats, we remove and control non-native, invasive species in priority areas where they are threatening native populations. Control methods are conducted through physical or chemical means. Physical control methods include hand pulling, cutting, and mowing. Chemical control methods utilize herbicide applications including hand wicking, foliar spraying, basal bark, and cut stump.

In extremely altered landscapes such as former fields, we restore habitats and promote biodiversity by planting appropriate, habitat-specific, native species of trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers. For example, many of the Park District purchases include the property that was recently farmed. These former agricultural fields require significant restoration including tile removal, native seeding, tree planting, and sometimes wetland restoration.

For a variety of reasons, prairies have been established in many of our parks. Prairies increase habitat diversity and provide habitat for a variety of early successional species, pollinators, etc. Prescribed burns are a useful management tool for prairie areas as they evolved with periodic fire. Prescribed burns are completed periodically by park staff in these areas.



Staff conducting a prescribed burn

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who is responsible for maintaining habitat at each park?

A. Preservation Parks of Delaware County's natural areas are managed under the direction of the PPDC Natural Resources Manager in collaboration with various departments within PPDC. Habitat management is mainly provided via fulltime staff in the Natural Resources and Operations departments and seasonal interns in both.

Q. Who should I contact if a person is injured while volunteering?

A. In a life-threatening emergency, injury, or fire call 911. For non-emergency safety assistance please call Park Police at 614-989-1972. Immediately report any visitor incident to park police.

Q. Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns about other issues at my park that are outside the scope of the Volunteer Stewardship Program?

A. You should contact the Natural Resources Specialist. They can put you in touch with the appropriate manager for your issue or site location. You can reach Lauren Richards at richards@preservationparks.com or at (614)314-8891. Park Police can be reached at (614) 989-1972.

Q. What should I do if someone from the press contacts me?

A. As a Volunteer Site Steward you represent Preservation Parks of Delaware County and in this capacity, we request that all inquiries from the press are directed to go through Communication Manager Beth McCollam at bmccollam@preservationparks.com or at (740)524-8600 Extension 105.



Eagle scout and volunteers planting trees at Sycamore Run Park

Informational Resources

USDA Plants Database

<https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/java/>

USDA Invasive Species and Pest Management

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/ecoscience/invasive/?cid=stelprdb1043179>

Ohio Invasive Plants Council

<https://www.oipc.info/>

ODNR Wildlife Field Guides

<https://ohiodnr.gov/wps/portal/gov/odnr/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-odnr/wildlife/documents-publications/backyard-wildlife-documents>

Illinois Wildflowers

<https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/>

iNaturalist

<https://www.inaturalist.org/>

Native Plant Society of Northeast Ohio

<http://www.nativeplantsocietyneo.org/>

OSU Native Plant Information

<https://u.osu.edu/beelab/native-plants-for-native-pollinators/>



Common Milkweed



Wild Columbine

Training & Educational Opportunities

The Ohio State University Extension (Agriculture and Natural Resources Team):

The Ohio State University Extension Office's Agriculture and Natural Resources Team provides "Ohioans resources and educational programs focusing on profitable and sustainable agriculture, a clean environment and proper stewardship of Ohio's natural resources." Their website provides resources and educational material (including podcasts, newsletters, and articles) related to natural resources topics. Programs and events are also offered year-round.

Website: <https://agmr.osu.edu/>

Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (OCVN):

The OCVN program is offered by The Ohio State University in conjunction with OSU Extension and partnerships with natural resource agencies and park districts across the state. This program offers "hands-on natural resource and environmental education coupled with volunteer service". To fulfill the programs requirements, 40 hours of volunteer service are required with any Ohio organization that is compatible with their mission, this can be completed through the Volunteer Stewardship Program at PPDC.

Website: <https://ocvn.osu.edu/about-ocvn>

Ohio Invasive Plants Council (OIPC):

The Ohio Invasive Plants Council "is a coalition of agencies, organizations, and individuals throughout Ohio concerned about the introduction, spread and control of invasive, non-native plants in Ohio's natural habitats". OIPC provides invasive plant assessments, education about invasive plants through their website and newsletters, as well as offering events and workshops.

Website: <https://www.oipc.info/>

Midwest Biodiversity Institute (MBI):

The Midwest Biodiversity Institute provides education and technical training in aquatic resource monitoring and assessment methods. MBI provides publications including informative articles and technical reports. Citizen science and volunteer training opportunities including the Citizen Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (cQHEI), an introduction to wetlands course, and intermediate macroinvertebrates course are great training opportunities to take advantage of.

Website: <https://midwestbiodiversityinst.org/>

Wild Ones Columbus Chapter

Wild Ones "promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities". Wild Ones provides online education, resources on native plants, a monthly newsletter, and free monthly programs to their members and the public.

Website: <https://columbus.wildones.org/>

Preservation Parks of Delaware County

Contacts and Resources

Emergency..... DIAL 911

Park Police, Officer on Duty (614)-989-1972

Sandra McBrearty, Outreach and Volunteer Specialist.....(740)-524-8600, Ext 6
saundras@preservationparks.com

Lauren Richards, Natural Resources Specialist..... (614)-314-8891
lrichards@preservationparks.com

Chris Roshon, Natural Resources Manager (740)-272-2903
croshon@preservationparks.com

Beth McCollam, Marketing & Communications Manager.....(740)-534-8600, Ext 5
bmccollam@preservationparks.com



Volunteer group removing invasive species at Shale Hollow Park

Volunteer Liability Waiver for Individual Participants

Preservation Parks of Delaware County Volunteer Liability Waiver

Volunteer's Name: _____

Name of Project: _____

Location: _____ Date: _____

The undersigned hereby acknowledges that:

I am and or my child/ward is volunteering to assist the Preservation Parks. I and or my child/ward understand as a volunteer(s) that I and or my child/ward will not be paid for donated services, that I and or my child/ward will not be eligible for any workers compensation benefits and that I and or my child/ward will follow all rules and regulations of the Preservation Parks.

Any of my and or my child/ward donated services shall be under the direction of the Preservation Parks. I understand that any such services must be satisfactory to the Preservation Parks, which services may be discontinued at its sole discretion.

I hereby agree that I, and or my child/ward on behalf of myself, my heirs, assigns, guardians and legal representatives will not make a claim against the Preservation Parks, or any of its affiliated organizations, officers or directors, board, board members, agents, employees and/or volunteer workers for injury or death to me or damage to my property, however caused, arising from my donated services. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, I hereby waive and release any rights, actions, or causes or action resulting in personal injury or death to me, or damage to my property, sustained in connection with my donation of services.

I further hereby agree to indemnify and save harmless the Preservation Parks, its affiliated organizations, officers or directors, board, board members, agents, employees and/or volunteer workers against any claim for damages, compensation, or otherwise, on behalf of myself my child/ward, my assignees, heirs, guardians, executors, administrators, or personal representatives, and agree to reimburse or make good any loss or damages, or costs, including attorney's fees, that the Preservation Parks may have to pay if any litigation arises on account of any claims to the Preservation Parks.

I authorize the Preservation Parks to use my and or my child's/ward's name, statements and likeness, without charge, for promotional purposes in park publications, advertising, video, web, news media, or other format.

The Preservation Parks of Delaware County ("Preservation Parks") do not discriminate on the basis of creed, political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, gender, or status as a veteran. The Preservation Parks accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the Preservation Parks. Volunteers agree that the Preservation Parks may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the Preservation Parks.

I HAVE READ AND VOLUNTARILY SIGNED THIS FORM.

Volunteer's signature

Date

Emergency contact name and relationship (please print)

Phone Number

☐ 18 or Above

☐ Under 18

Volunteers under the age of 18 must provide a parent or legal guardian signature below.

Name of parent or legal guardian (please print)

Phone Number

Signature of parent or legal guardian

Date

Volunteer Liability Waiver for Group Participants



Consent to Participate Form : _____

Assumption of Risk and Waiver:

Volunteers and individuals participating in Park District programs, projects, events or shadowing (approved activities) with Preservation Parks of Delaware County (Preservation Parks) agree to participate in approved activities that may involve some level of risk of personal injury. It is understood that depending upon the activity, the participant may assume certain risks inherent to the particular approved activity. Participants have the right to refuse a tasks they are uncomfortable with.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, I agree to assume the reasonable risk of participation in the approved activities for which I participate. I do hereby voluntarily assume all responsibility for damages or personal injuries to myself or to others while volunteering. I do hereby release and discharge Preservation Parks of Delaware County and its agency and/or employees from every claim, liability or demand of any kind however caused or on account of the damages or personal injuries of any kind sustained while participating in approved activities with Preservation Parks.

The Undersigned, and if a minor, the Parents or Guardian of the undersigned, further promise to indemnify and forever save harmless Preservation Parks or its agents or employees from every claim, liability or demand of any kind however caused for on account of any damages or personal injuries of any kind sustained while participating in approved activities with Preservation Parks.

I give my full permission for PPDC and their sponsors to use any photographs, videotapes, or other recordings of me that are made during the course of this event.

Consent and Release:

I HAVE READ AND VOLUNTARILY SIGNED THIS INDIVIDUAL CONSENT TO PARTICIAPTE FORM.

Participant's signature

email address

1. Insert picture here
2. Set text wrap in front of text
3. Crop image to this box

VOLUNTEER STEWARD WORKDAY

Workday Description:

What type of work will you be doing?

Date: Tuesday, March 22, 2022

Time: 10:00 am

Location: Gallant Woods Park

Items to Bring: work gloves, water, lunch, sunscreen



PRESERVATIONPARKS.COM



Volunteer Steward Workday Log

Work Site: _____

Date: _____

Duration: _____

Workday Plan: _____

Volunteer Log:

Volunteer	Hours Volunteered

Workday Results: _____

Volunteer Steward Signature: _____