

OHIO STATE PARKS & WATERCRAFT

Volunteer Handbook

VISION STATEMENT

To be a diverse and skilled team empowered to deliver the highest standard of outdoor recreation experiences and natural resource management.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide exceptional outdoor recreation and boating opportunities by balancing outstanding customer service, education, protection and conservation of Ohio's state parks and waterways.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

ODNR provides its volunteers an environment that is wholesome, safe, conducive to a positive experience, and free of discrimination and harassment. ODNR does not condone and will not tolerate discriminatory or offensive conduct. ODNR maintains a working environment free from any discrimination, and prohibits discrimination or harassment of applicants, employees, and volunteers, including discriminatory sexual advances or sexual harassment. ODNR is an Equal Opportunity Employer. ODNR does not discriminate in employment or the provision of services on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, disability, or military or veteran status.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Ohio Division of Parks & Watercraft Team!

You have joined thousands of generous individuals and groups who volunteer their time and talent to help make Ohio's system of state parks and waterways a memorable recreation experience for millions of visitors each year. It is our desire to provide you with a rewarding experience that is beneficial to you, the park, and our visitors.

This handbook has been designed to orient you to the Division of Parks & Watercraft volunteer program. This handbook should answer most questions you may have about volunteering. Those questions that you have that are not addressed in this handbook should be referred to your park manager or to the Volunteer Coordinator at Central Office in Columbus.

Thank you again for offering your services. We are confident your efforts will have a positive impact on our operations and be rewarding for you. Our goal is that you are never “just a volunteer” but are a respected and appreciated member of our team.

OHIO STATE PARKS & WATERCRAFT

In the early 1900s, President Theodore Roosevelt inspired Americans with his love of the outdoors and creation of a new national park system. In Ohio, the enthusiasm for conservation was translated into laws that created agencies and purchased land to protect forests, fish and game. In 1949, state lawmakers consolidated these offices by creating the Division of Parks and Recreation in the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

In response to the dramatic increase in the number of recreational boats following World War II, the 101st General Assembly created the Waterways Safety Fund in 1955 (Ohio Revised Code, Section 1545.75). The fund was originally administered by the Division of Shore Erosion and was established to provide monies for construction and improvement of public facilities

for boating on the navigable waters within Ohio. The fund also enabled the state to obtain federal matching funds for the establishment of harbors of refuge.

In 1959, the Ohio General Assembly passed a bill conforming Ohio law to the concepts and objectives of the Federal Boating Act and created the Division of Watercraft within the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The main functions of this division, which became operative January 1, 1960, were to register boats and motors and to fund capital improvement projects such as launch ramps and marinas.

In 2016 the Division of Parks merged with the Division of Watercraft to form the Division of Parks & Watercraft (hereafter referred to as “the Division.”) Merging the divisions allowed for a reduction of overhead, upgraded facilities, and a reduction of overhead.

Today, there are 75 Ohio State Parks operating in 59 counties; nearly all of which contain a lake or river. These parks include campgrounds offering primitive and full-service camping as well as a variety of getaway options including yurts, camper cabins, and deluxe cabin options. Overnight visitors may also choose to stay at one of nine resort lodges providing well-appointed accommodations with fine dining rooms, indoor pools and conference facilities. Boating options abound in Ohio. The Division supports lakes of varying horsepower, rivers, boat rentals, and marinas. Boating education is an important function of the Division and is manifested through naturalist programs, on the water instruction, and in classrooms across the state offering the Ohio Boating Education Course (OBEC). Safety is paramount and there are many division initiatives to bolster public awareness of boating rules and increase the use of life jackets.

The same lakes that offer boating opportunities also host swimming beaches and fishing for all ages. Hundreds of miles of hiking, bridle, mountain biking, paddling and backpack trails provide avenues of escape into the natural world in many of our state parks. Other features include scenic rivers for canoeing, historic and culturally significant buildings, beautiful picnic areas, a wide variety of naturalist-led activities, accessible facilities and much more.

Ohio is one of only seven states that does not charge entrance fees giving all Ohioans and visitors the opportunity to enjoy our parks and waterways.

The Division is operated from a central office located at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) headquarters in Columbus.

OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Division of Parks & Watercraft enjoys a long history with and depends on the contributions of individual volunteers and organizational partners.

Organizational partners include volunteer associations, community support groups, and Friends groups devoted to particular parks and trails. These organizations advance ODNR's mission and the interests of the state parks by, among other things, providing fundraising support and advocacy, as well as by funding park-specific projects.

Volunteers are individuals who contribute time, services, and/or expertise to ODNR and the Division without compensation. Volunteers come from all over the state of Ohio and bring a diverse set of skills, expertise, backgrounds, and perspectives to Ohio's parks and waterways.

Whether a volunteer is acting as an individual, or as a member of an organization, they must sign an individual agreement in the division's volunteer program.

PURPOSE OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The major objectives of the volunteer program are:

- Enhancement of the visitor experience offered by the Division of Parks & Watercraft.
- To allow direct involvement of the public in the daily operation of the Division of Parks & Watercraft.

In return, volunteers bring with them a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience that allows an extension of park services that may not otherwise be possible. They become advocates for Ohio State Parks & Watercraft policies and positions developing an effective voice in support of its programs and services.

This handbook serves as the official guidelines for the Division of Parks & Watercraft Volunteer Program (referred to hereafter as the program).

ROLES OF DIVISION PERSONNEL

In the interest of efficient operation, it is important to understand the roles of various division personnel directly involved in the program.

Park Manager

The park manager or the manager's designee is responsible for the recruitment, training, supervision, and evaluation of volunteers at the park level. The park manager maintains the park volunteer program within the parameters of established division policy. It is important that one person in the park be designated as the contact person for the local volunteer program. This will foster clear, effective communication with the volunteers, park management and central office.

Central Office Volunteer Coordinator

The volunteer coordinator is the manager of the volunteer program for the Division of Parks & Watercraft and operates from the Information & Education Section at Central Office. The Coordinator helps park managers and staff at all levels of the volunteer program. The volunteer coordinator offers advice in problem solving, recruiting, training and other aspects of the program to park staff and volunteers. The coordinator organizes the production and ordering of supplies for the program and answers questions regarding program guidelines and direction.

Division Chief

The Chief is the head of the Division answering to the Director of ODNR. The Chief has final say over the policies and direction of the volunteer program and is the deciding voice in mediating disputes.

Director

The Director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources leads the Department and oversees all 11 of its divisions. The Director is responsible for managing and setting the policies for all aspects of Ohio's state parks, preserves, and forests, including the volunteer program. At the time of this writing, Glen Cobb serves as the Division Chief and Mary Mertz as the ODNR Director. Both serve at the will of Governor Mike DeWine.

VOLUNTEER JOB CATEGORIES

There are a variety of ways volunteers can assist the Division in parks, marinas, and at public events.

Campground Hosts

Campground Hosts serve primarily as public relations liaisons providing information, assisting campers, helping with special events and performing other assorted functions.

Examples of duties include:

- Welcome campers
- Acquaint visitors with the park and surrounding area.
- Explain regulations to visitors.
- Light maintenance work (e.g., replacing light bulbs, weeding, etc.).
- Monitor conditions of, sweep and stock restrooms.
- Set a good example by maintaining a neat and orderly campsite. .
- Report necessary repairs to park staff.
- Assist with special programs and campground activities.

New Campground Hosts initially serve for a 28-day probationary period. Upon successful completion of this trial period, a Campground Host can be signed to a longer contract not to exceed a total of 182 calendar days. This limit is set by the legislature and is not flexible. An application to host will be filled out and provided to the manager who will arrange an in-person interview. If the arrangements are mutually satisfactory, a Campground Host Agreement will be filled out and put on file with the Division.

Campground hosts are required to complete and pass a background check at their expense (currently \$18.50) prior to moving on site. All adults who will be staying on site are required to complete a background check regardless of who is named in the agreement.

Pets are allowed on host sites subject to campground rules and the manager's discretion. All pets on site must be disclosed. Pets must be healthy, registered per county rules, and have all necessary vaccinations. Pets are expected to be well behaved and under owner control.

Campground Hosts typically volunteer at the park five days a week (including weekends and holidays), an average of four hours per day. Reduced schedules may be arranged depending upon operational needs at the discretion of the park manager. The minimum weekly work schedule is two days. Hosts are considered "on call" while they are in residence at the campground.

Campground Hosts must provide their own camping equipment and will be provided a complimentary campsite with electricity in return for services provided. The location of the site is at the discretion of the manager.

While on duty the Campground Host is expected to wear a volunteer ball cap/visor and nametag. Other uniform requirements are at the discretion of the park manager.

Some parks have found it necessary to restrict traffic in camping areas and issue paid car passes. A maximum two complimentary passes are issued per Campground Host site for personal use; visitors to Host sites must pay for their passes.

Host Sites: Hosts may decorate their campsites with planters or other personal items but may not make any permanent improvements or modifications or cause any damage to state-owned property. At the end of the hosting contract hosts agree to leave the site in the same condition as it was received.

Individual Volunteers

Individual volunteers are utilized in a variety of ways. Some Individual volunteers perform special service projects; others assist naturalists with interpretive programs; some help with

special events; and others pitch in with day-to-day activities. Individual volunteer duties are as varied as the people volunteering!

All Individual volunteers are required to sign a form that is valid for up to two years. Those under 18 years of age must have a form signed by a parent or guardian. Those under 18 are enrolled as Pathway Program volunteers (16 and over teens) or Junior Volunteers (15 and under).

Volunteers over the age of 18 must wear a volunteer nametag while performing duties that entail public contact. Other required uniform items are left to the discretion of the park manager.

Teens- Pathway Program

The Pathway Program (formally Green Teens) was started to encourage young people aged 16 - 18 to get involved in with state parks and waterways. Volunteering is an excellent way for upper-level high school students to begin career exploration and build a resumé for both college applications and future employment. Volunteering with the Division can allow teens to try out the natural resources as a profession and discover if it is a good fit before starting their formal education or applying for jobs at ODNR. Pathway volunteers may become active through a school club or scouting organization, or they may become involved as an individual.

Like all volunteers, Pathway Program applicants complete an Individual volunteer agreement and the release and waiver for minor form on the back of the contract signed by themselves and a parent/guardian. The contract may run for up to two years.

Junior Volunteers

The Junior volunteer program is designed for families that would like to include their children who are 5 - 15 years of age in their volunteer efforts. Junior volunteers must be accompanied by their parents or guardians, who are responsible for the child's supervision. They are only permitted to perform duties appropriate for their age and level of ability and should be limited to duties that involve full family participation. Junior volunteers may not volunteer during regular school hours, and regular rest periods must be provided.

Group Volunteers/Friends Groups

Several organized groups are on contract with the Division to provide a variety of services. Groups may be signed-up for one-time projects (e.g., Ohio Heritage Days, lake clean up) or on-going projects (e.g., trail work).

All members of the group must sign the Group volunteer sign-up sheets and must also complete an individual volunteer form. Group volunteers must wear a volunteer nametag when performing public contact functions. Other required uniform items are left to the discretion of the park manager.

OBEC Volunteers

The Division is responsible for the oversight of the Ohio Boating Education Course (OBEC) which utilizes volunteer instructors. This program is overseen by the OBEC Program Coordinator in Central Office who works cooperatively with the Volunteer Program Coordinator in managing OBEC volunteers.

OBEC volunteers are subject to the same rules as other Division volunteers but must also have taken and demonstrated proficiency in the OBEC Instructor Course provided by the Division. Volunteers wishing to participate in the OBEC program are required to pass a background check and attend course updates when required to maintain their instructor status. They will assist Law Enforcement and Naturalist Staff in presenting OBEC's to the public at various locations around the state. OBEC instructors will wear a name tag and provided instructor shirt while performing OBEC duties for the division.

Paddling Volunteers

Naturalists, officers, and Scenic Rivers staff across the state regularly offer introductory paddling courses during the warmer months. Volunteers who are interested in assisting will be put through a four or eight-hour ODNR-approved paddling curriculum and certified as paddling instructor assistants. Programs are conducted in canoes, kayaks, and on stand-up paddleboards with separate curriculums being offered for each discipline. These volunteers help at paddling and water safety events both at the parks and in other public venues.

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteer programs are implemented at the park level and will vary among locations based on the conditions and needs of the individual park or waterway. Some general guidelines, however, apply to all volunteers regardless of the location at which they serve. Those guidelines are outlined below.

- All volunteers must be 18 years of age or older, unless they are Pathway Program Volunteers (Teens 16-17) or Junior Volunteers (15 and under). Pathway and Junior volunteers must have permission in writing from their parent or guardian to participate.
- The Division does not guarantee volunteer placement. The Division will make every effort to match volunteer applicants to volunteer opportunities based on the interests and abilities of the volunteer and the needs of the Division.
- A volunteer must be physically able to carry out assigned duties. Reasonable accommodations can be and will be made where possible.
- Volunteers may not engage in activities that have not been specifically assigned to them or perform any activity or assignment for which they lack the training, expertise, skills, and/or abilities to perform in a safe and appropriate manner.
- By accepting and performing an assigned task or activity, a Volunteer warrants that they have all training, information, skills, experience, interests, and abilities necessary to perform that task or activity in a safe and appropriate manner.
- If a Volunteer is assigned a task or activity for which they do not have the necessary training, information, skills, experience, interests, and abilities, the Volunteer must immediately notify the supervisor or other ODNR, Division, or Park management staff member. ODNR will either ensure that the Volunteer receives additional training or information or will assign the Volunteer to a new task or activity.
- Volunteers enter voluntary service of their own accord and at their own risk. Neither the State of Ohio nor ODNR (or any of its divisions, agents, or representatives) assumes

any responsibility or liability for actions of the Volunteer or for any harm, damage, or personal injury caused or incurred as a result of the Volunteer's action or inaction.

- Volunteers are not considered employees of the State of Ohio and do not have an employment relationship:
 - The division of Parks and Recreation does not provide Worker's Compensation or any other insurance coverage for volunteers;
 - The Division will not represent volunteers in legal suits.
- Volunteers must adhere, at all times, to all federal and state laws, park rules and procedures, and instructions from ODNR, Division, and/or park management and staff.
- Customer service is part of the Division's mission and core values and should be forefront in the mind of the volunteer.
- Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in the same courteous and professional manner as Division of Parks & Watercraft employees. This includes, where applicable, Volunteers providing a high level of customer service to help ensure that park visitors have a pleasant visit and leave with a positive image of the park.
- Volunteers shall not engage in behavior or conduct inconsistent with ODNR's mission, vision, or values or the enjoyment and preservation of state parks and waterways.
- All volunteers must have a signed and completed volunteer agreement on file in the park and at central office before they begin assisting the Division.
- Volunteers are required to undergo and successfully complete a criminal history background investigation prior serving as a camp host or performing any volunteer assignments that require interactions with children. Volunteers will pay all costs associated with the background check, currently \$18.50, and understand that ODNR will not reimburse or refund the costs of the background check or any reason. The results of the background check are the property of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources; however, a copy may be provided to the prospective volunteer upon request and verification of their identity to the Coordinator. The background check can be initiated here:

https://ssci2000.secure-screening.net/escreening/OApp_LoginEntrance.asp?mode=direct&code=732700

- Volunteers must wear any safety equipment, gear, and/or uniform or other attire the Park Manager deems necessary and appropriate for the volunteer assignment and must, at all times while actively volunteering, wear any badge, name-tag, hat/visor or other attire the Park Manager provides to identify the volunteer as an official Park volunteer. State-issued attire identifying the Volunteers as official volunteers should be worn only during those times when Volunteers are actively fulfilling volunteer assignments on behalf of the Park and ODNR in accordance with express instructions from the Park Manager. Volunteers must return any badge, nametag, or other identification attire to the Park Manager at the end of each official volunteer shift.
- While volunteers in their role as customer service representatives may help remind visitors of park rules, it is not the duty of volunteers to enforce rules or sanction guests. Volunteers should report such infractions to park staff, officers or management who are on duty.
- ODNR does not tolerate harassment, discrimination, racism, or bullying of any kind. Noncompliance with this policy will result in immediate action, up to and including potential termination of the volunteer relationship.
- If a Volunteer observes any violation of the rules and policies outlined in this handbook, they shall immediately report such violation to their supervisor and/or other ODNR, Division, or park management.
- Volunteers will follow all identified safety measures in the performance of their duties and will use all provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they are provided. in the prescribed fashion.
- Volunteers are not to be involved with collection of fees or handling park money. Conversely, park employees should not be involved in the collection or accounting of Friends group money or money from donation boxes.
- Volunteers may at any time, for any reason, decide to discontinue volunteer service with the Division. Volunteers agree that likewise, the Division may at any time, for any

reason decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the Division. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer's supervisor.

USE OF EQUIPMENT, TOOLS, SUPPLIES AND RESOURCES

In general, Volunteers are not permitted to use power tools or equipment in fulfilling their volunteer assignments on State grounds. Exceptions may be granted only upon the written recommendation of the Park Manager and the advance written approval of the district manager.

Park Managers may, at their sole discretion, provide non-powered equipment, tools, supplies and resources for the volunteers to use in performing approved volunteer projects. Volunteers use such equipment at their own risk. Neither the State of Ohio nor ODNR assumes any financial or legal responsibility for any injury or damage resulting from a volunteer's use of such equipment.

In appropriate circumstances, Park Managers may permit Volunteers to use their personal equipment, tools, supplies and resources to complete approved volunteer projects. Volunteers who use their own equipment do so with the understanding that neither the State of Ohio nor the Department of Natural Resources will assume any financial responsibility or liability for damages to or replacement of personal equipment, tools, supplies, and resources used by the volunteer. Neither the State of Ohio nor ODNR assumes any financial or legal responsibility for any injury or damage resulting from a volunteer's use of such equipment.

A Park Manager may, at their sole discretion, deny or revoke approval for a Volunteer to use equipment, whether state-owned or the volunteer's personal equipment, if the Manager determines that such use presents an unreasonable risk of harm or destruction of state property.

Use of equipment, tools, supplies and resources may only be used in areas and for projects and during the timeframe expressly authorized and designated by park staff.

Volunteers shall not borrow state equipment, tools, supplies and resources for personal use.

Volunteers shall use all equipment, whether owned and supplied by the State or the volunteer's own personal equipment, in a safe manner in accordance with all applicable instructions, best practices, laws, and regulations.

Volunteers shall not use any equipment, tools, or machinery, without the proper training and expertise regarding safe operation. By agreeing to use equipment, whether state-owned or Volunteer-owned, a Volunteer certifies that he or she has the necessary training and expertise to use such equipment.

Volunteers must dress properly for the assignment, including wearing any appropriate personal protective equipment.

INJURY REPORTING

Working outside comes with certain hazards including but not limited to exposure to stinging insects, irritating plants (e.g. poison ivy and sumac), and potential trip hazards. Volunteers are reminded to be aware of potential hazards when working outside and be proactive in avoiding injury.

In the event a volunteer is injured while on duty, the park manager must be informed as soon as is practical. A record of the injury should be made within 48 hours of occurrence. Safety is top priority for the Division. While accidents happen despite our best efforts, they should be considered an opportunity to refine our practices and training. The Park Manager, Volunteer, and supervisor (if not the park manager) should meet within a reasonable time frame to discuss the specifics of the incident with the goal of future prevention.

Tick Bites

Tick bites should always be reported due to the possibility of tick-borne illnesses. As these illnesses can take weeks to develop, the initial bite report is necessary to document the possible source and timing of transmission.

Prevention is key. When working in natural areas wear long pants and sleeves, and long socks and consider tucking your pants into your boots or socks to prevent the ticks from accessing your skin. Wearing light colored clothing will help you spot ticks more easily. Consider the use of insect repellants and stay on trails or mown pathways whenever possible to reduce exposure.