



# Site Steward Responsibilities

## *Conservancy Nature Preserves And State Natural Areas*

### **Site Steward Responsibilities**

#### **Visit the site regularly and become thoroughly acquainted with the site**

- Ideally, a steward should visit the site once a month. This can be flexible but you must visit the site on a quarterly basis at a minimum.
- Visits may require:
  - Inspection of site improvements (signage, fencing, etc.).
  - Assessment of work needed or completed.
  - Conducting habitat restoration activities
  - Observations of rare species and documentation of invasive species.
  - Notation of any problems or illegal activities.
  - Visits may include project work, such as brush cutting or seed collecting.

#### **Report your observations from site visits. This is important for informing the Conservancy of site conditions and issues.**

- Fill out the observation reporting form, and turn it in on a monthly basis to the Conservancy's Land Manager. Reports may include photographs to document observations.
- Stewards are asked to report problems, but are not responsible for enforcing rules and regulations. Stewards should, if possible, record and photograph all details on any observed illegal activities with relevant dates and times. Any illegal activities should be immediately reported to the Conservancy.

#### **Develop an understanding of the purpose, protection, and management goals for the site.**

- All Conservancy nature preserves have management plans, ecological evaluations, or other materials that the Conservancy may provide for you. The Conservancy's Land Manager may meet with you to help get you started.
- Conservancy staff will provide guidance and direction for project goals and management needs.
- Site Stewards will work with Conservancy staff to schedule volunteer projects to achieve the management goals for the site.
- Site Stewards are not responsible for final management decisions. A Steward's report of management needs are taken into account, but management activities are designed to meet specific management objectives and final decisions are the responsibility of the Conservancy.

#### **Participate in or lead volunteer projects and events for the site. For leaders, remember the following:**

- Coordinate with Conservancy staff to determine scope of project or event.
- Prior to leading a project or event, Site Stewards should assess the work site and any materials needed. Coordinate with Conservancy staff to get tools and equipment. Arrive early on the day of the project.

- When volunteers arrive have them sign-in on the volunteer project or event registration form after you have filled in the project information. Turn the form in after each project to the Conservancy's Land Manager.
- Before work begins explain the following to volunteers:
  - Personal safety is of primary importance on all volunteer projects. Go over safety tips (see below) with volunteers. Stress to volunteers the importance of knowing your limits, both mentally and physically.
  - Provide information about the nature preserve and its habitats.
  - Go over what is to be accomplished and why the project is being done.
- At the end of the day thank the volunteers for their efforts and invite them to the next volunteer project or event.

*These responsibilities are negotiable between you and Conservancy staff during enrollment.*

## **Tips for Safe Volunteer Stewardship**

**Your safety is your responsibility and should be your first concern. KNOW YOUR LIMITS, both mentally and physically. If you come across something that exceeds your physical abilities or seems strange to you, leave the area and seek assistance.**

- Dress appropriately: sturdy shoes (not sandals), long pants, hat, and work gloves. Bring clothing appropriate for the weather. Wear blaze orange during hunting seasons.
- Bring eye protection, sun screen, insect repellent, etc. A first aid kit is recommended, especially when participating in group volunteer projects.
- Bring water and drink plenty of it, especially on hot, humid days. Bring snacks that will keep your energy level up. For Volunteer Project days, or longer site visits, bring a lunch.
- Be conscious of the weather. Work only during daylight and be aware of possible storms. If you are caught in a lightning storm, find shelter in low-lying areas away from natural lightning rods such as trees. Avoid excessively hot or cold conditions.
- Know and avoid harmful plants and animals such as poison ivy, stinging nettles, rattlesnakes, and ticks. Do a thorough tick search after your visit.
- Communicate with others. Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. Bringing a cell phone might be a good idea, some sites may have poor coverage.
- Watch your footing. Steep areas may be unstable, wet areas may be slippery, and vegetation could trip you up. Avoid areas you are unsure of.
- Do not disturb animals you may encounter. Carefully leave the area if you are concerned. Avoid dead animals.
- Tips for safe garbage removal:
  - Never pick up needles or hypodermic syringes! Wear gloves when handling all other sharp objects.
  - Handle aerosol cans only while wearing eye protection. Never puncture them. Pick them up with the top facing downward and at arm's length. They could burst.
  - Do not overfill or compact trash bags. Broken or jagged objects can pierce the bags and cause injury
- Tips for lifting:
  - Plan the lift, and then test the load to see how heavy it is. If it is too heavy, ask for help.
  - Get a firm footing, bend at your knees, tighten your stomach muscles, and then lift with your legs.
  - Once you have the load keep it close to your body and keep your back upright.
  - Avoid twisting, lift smoothly, and don't jerk the object you are lifting. Push, don't pull.