
Title: **Volunteer Policy**

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PURPOSE:

The volunteer policy describes the procedures that guide the recruitment, placement, use, and retention of volunteers. The purpose of this policy is to provide WRD employees who supervise volunteers with a consolidated, easy to use guide for working with their volunteers.

POLICY:

A. Recruitment Roles

1. *Recruitment*- Recruiting qualified volunteers is a joint responsibility between the volunteer supervisor and the volunteer coordinator.

a. Volunteer Supervisor- The volunteer supervisor is responsible for identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the prospective volunteer and the timing and location for the volunteer assignment.

b. Volunteer Coordinator- The volunteer coordinator is responsible for assisting the volunteer supervisor in locating qualified volunteers for specific assignments.

2. *Application*- Any volunteer who is likely to become an affiliated volunteer is required to complete the Volunteer Application. Volunteers can find the application at www.gooutdoorsgeorgia.com and if volunteers do not have a computer a DNR employee can go online for them or get them to fill out the paper form and then the employee can then enter the information at www.gooutdoorsgeorgia.com when they turn in the form. All applications must go into the online system.

B. On-Boarding

1. *Waiver Release*

a. Adults- Each adult volunteer, over age 18, will sign a waiver release form prior to starting his/her assignment.

b. Minors- Minor volunteers, under age 18, are required to have the waiver release form signed by a parent or guardian. In lieu of the parent/guardian, an adult leader authorized by the parent may sign the form.

2. Medical/Physical Screening

a. Waiver Release- The waiver release form includes a statement regarding the volunteer's health and physical ability to perform the assignment.

b. Prescribed Burning- Volunteers who participate in prescribed burning will successfully complete the appropriate Work Capacity Test (WCT) on an annual basis.

3. *Registration*- Each volunteer will be registered in a division-wide data base.

4. Criminal Background Checks

a. Requirement- Each affiliated volunteer and unpaid intern will be subjected to a criminal background check prior to starting his/her assignment.

b. Previous Check- A criminal background check is not required if the volunteer's organization or employer has already conducted one and the lack of a criminal record can be verified by the Division.

c. Renewal- Criminal background checks will be renewed every 3 years depending on the nature of the volunteer's assignment.

5. Uniforms

a. Offered Component- Every affiliated volunteer is eligible for a uniform component that includes the WRD/DNR logo with the word 'volunteer' clearly identified. Occasional volunteers may be offered a uniform component at the discretion of the volunteer supervisor.

b. Requirement to Wear- If the volunteer has been issued a uniform or component, the following volunteer assignments will require the volunteer to wear it: Hunter Education Instructors; volunteers who greet the public outside an office setting; those volunteering on private land; and any other circumstance identified by the volunteer supervisor. In lieu of a uniform component the volunteer may be issued another form of WRD identification.

c. Administration- The volunteer uniform program will be administered in accordance with guidelines approved by the Director's Office. The affiliated volunteer will receive a uniform (button

down, t-shirt, hat, etc.) as a tool to help them serve the Department of Natural Resources. The occasional volunteer may be offered a uniform component at the discretion of the volunteer supervisor. (name tag, badge, vest, hat, or t-shirt)

6. *Weapons Carry License*- Any volunteer who chooses to carry a handgun while performing their volunteer assignments is required to provide a copy of their weapons carry license and adhere to DNR HR SOP #022 regarding handgun carry.

C. On-Site Management

1. *General Orientation and Training*

a. Orientation- Each affiliated volunteer will be offered a general orientation session when he/she starts the assignment. The purpose of the session will be to establish clear expectations for the volunteer and inform the volunteer of his/her rights and responsibilities as outlined in the WRD Volunteer Policy.

b. Training- Each volunteer will be provided appropriate training specific to the assignment.

2. *Safety*

a. Orientation- Volunteer supervisors should provide safety orientation to volunteers specific to the assigned task.

b. Required Training- To encourage safe work habits, volunteers are required to obtain the same certifications/training as employees before engaging in the activity.

c. Injury or Property Damage- If a volunteer is injured or property is damaged, the volunteer supervisor should report it his/her supervisor and to the Department of Administrative Services/Risk Management Services. This is required even though the volunteer has signed the waiver release form.

3. *Volunteers Under Age 18 (Minors)*

a. Younger Minors- Minors less than 16 years old years old will be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or responsible adult while engaged in his/her assignment.

b. Prohibited Actions- Minors are not allowed to operate a state-owned motorized vehicle nor vessel. Nor are they allowed to serve as a Hunter Education Instructor. In general, a minor should not be allowed to use inherently dangerous tools or equipment. Any additional restrictions are at the discretion of the volunteer supervisor.

c. Work Permit- A work permit is not required if the minor is not getting paid or receiving compensation for services.

4. *Operation of Vehicles*

a. General- Volunteers may be authorized to drive a Department owned, rental, or privately-owned vehicle while accomplishing Department business. If authorized, the volunteer will follow all guidance outlined in Admin SOP# 030.

b. Reporting a Vehicle Accident- If a volunteer is involved in an accident while operating a vehicle on Department business, the volunteer and volunteer supervisor will follow the reporting procedures in Admin SOP #030 including: obtaining the other driver's name, address, and phone number, and the name of the responding police department; report accidents involving bodily injury or property damage as soon as possible after the occurrence by contacting Automotive Resources International (ARI) at 1-800-CARCARE; notifying their supervisor.

c. Liability Coverage- While driving, the volunteer is treated just like an employee for the purposes of liability coverage. The coverage only applies once the volunteer is on the work site, not during his/her commute.

5. *Private Lands Access*- Prior written permission from the landowner or operator is required if a volunteer is working on either private land or a non-navigable waterway. This only applies if the volunteer is not working under the direct supervision of a WRD employee.

6. *Computer Access*- Volunteers may be given access to the DNR computer network and they should follow HR005 SOP - Appropriate Use of Information Technology Resources.

7. *On-Site Fees*- While volunteering on areas requiring a public fee, the volunteer is not obligated to pay the fee.

8. *Dismissal*- The volunteer supervisor is authorized to dismiss a volunteer in consultation with his/her Regional Supervisor or Program Manager. The volunteer has no appeal rights if dismissed.

D. Program Management

1. *Retention and Incentives*

a. Tiered System- Volunteer retention will be enhanced through a division-wide tiered incentive program where incentives are commensurate with levels of contribution. The purpose of the incentive is to provide the Division the substantial benefit of receiving the volunteer's future service. Volunteers must submit their volunteer hours at www.georgiawildlife.com/about/volunteer to receive their incentive items.

b. Administration- The incentive program will be administered in accordance with guidelines approved by the Director's Office. This incentive program is designed to create a solution to help recognize and incentivize volunteers to join and continue to promote the conservation and wise use of Georgia's natural resources. The goal of this program is to capture all the hours of service provided by GADNR Volunteers. This will increase the number of Volunteers signing up to serve and show the volunteer that DNR values their time and contributions to the state. Volunteers will receive incentive items at predetermined incentive levels recognizing and thanking the Volunteer for their service.

2. *Tracking Volunteer Contributions (Timesheets)*

a. Standard Timesheet- All volunteer hours and miles traveled will be tracked using the standard timesheet for individuals or for groups. It is mandatory to use paper timesheet when reporting for federal match.

b. Valuing Contributions- Contributed time will be valued based on comparable employee salary levels plus fringe. Contributed mileage will be valued based on approved reimbursement rates for employees.

c. Federal Match- The timesheet will identify whether the volunteer's contribution is eligible to serve as a federal match.

3. *Record Keeping and Reporting*

a. Record Keeping- The volunteer supervisor is responsible for maintaining up-to-date records to support his/her volunteer program.

b. Reporting- The volunteer supervisor is responsible for providing timely reports to the volunteer coordinator. Volunteer supervisors and volunteers can report nonfederal matching hours at www.georgiawildlife.com/about/volunteer.

4. Meals, Lodging, and Transportation

- a. Reimbursement- Volunteers may be offered reimbursement for the cost of meals, lodging, and transportation if prior approval is received from the Director's Office and in accordance with the statewide travel policy. However, Volunteer Supervisors should avoid placing volunteers into assignments that will place them in travel status. When placing a volunteer in travel status seems unavoidable, Volunteer Supervisors should request travel approval for the volunteer from the Director's Office through their Regional Supervisor or Program Manager prior to placing the volunteer in travel status.
- b. Group Meals- A meal may be provided to groups at state-wide or local volunteer events in accordance with the statewide travel policy regarding group meals.
- c. Residences- Department owned residences and facilities may be made available to volunteers with approval from the Regional Supervisor or Program Manager.

5. Employee Development and Accountability

- a. Training- Volunteer program management training will be offered to all employees. It will include basic components of recruitment, supervision, incentives, and retention.
- b. Performance Management Plans- Supervisors should include volunteer management in the Performance Management Plans of those employees who work with volunteers.