



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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Welcome

Thank you for volunteering with Five Rivers MetroParks (“MetroParks”). Our volunteers are a diverse group of citizen advocates who are integrated in all levels of the organization through active participation. Volunteerism at MetroParks is a staff-led, volunteer-supported relationship that educates and engages citizens in the protection and stewardship of the natural and cultural heritage of the Miami Valley. Your efforts are vital to maintaining the programming and operations of the agency. Volunteers play a key role in enriching the visitor experience.

The purpose of this handbook is to give you an overview of MetroParks’ volunteer program and assist you in gaining a better understanding of the park system. You’ll also find important information about what will be expected of you, and what, in turn, you can expect from MetroParks, to support and guide your efforts. As you begin your volunteer service, we are certain you will have questions that will need more specific answers than may be covered in this handbook. Please consult the Volunteer Services Department when questions arise.

MetroParks has a wide variety of volunteer opportunities in areas such as business operations, conservation, education, horticulture, park maintenance, recreation and special events. We welcome you to explore the many ways you can contribute your time and skills, and it is our hope that you have a positive and fulfilling volunteering experience.

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

Protect the region’s natural heritage and provide outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature.

Vision

To be the conservation leader of a vital, active, nature-based community.

Values

MetroParks embraces a set of core values that guide our daily work and keep us centered on our mission. These values form our organizational ethos:

Excellence	Fun	Fiscal Responsibility	Professional Growth
Community	Integrity	Respect	Diversity
Innovation	Commitment	Collaboration	Sustainability

Volunteer Categories

MetroParks offers several volunteer opportunities that reflect the diverse operational and programming needs of the organization. Depending on the volunteer's level of commitment an individual will be qualified into one of the following volunteer categories. Some volunteer categories may require additional subject and/or site-specific orientation and training.

Long-term Volunteers

Long-term volunteers provide service at regular intervals, often for a year or longer. These volunteers serve as a reliable, ongoing, and valuable resource for our organization. All long-term volunteers are required to complete the volunteer onboarding process. Long-term volunteers are eligible for VIP incentives.

Short-term Volunteers

Short-term volunteers provide service to the organization, typically for a set period of time, to complete a specific assignment. Some individuals are mandated to volunteer for a variety of reasons such as to gain school credit, satisfy a program requirement, complete a service project or to satisfy a court-ordered requirement. Short-term volunteers are required to complete the volunteer onboarding process and depending on the type of volunteer service being provided, may be subject to a background check. Short-term volunteers may also be eligible for certain VIP incentives.

Youth Volunteers

Youth between the ages of 14 and 17 are eligible to volunteer and are required to complete the volunteer onboarding process, except for the background check. Volunteers under the age of 14 may volunteer and must be accompanied by a parent or guardian during their volunteer assignment. Youth volunteers are not to be left unsupervised or in a situation where an adult is left alone with a single youth. It is best to have multiple adults, multiple youth, or at least 3 people. Not every volunteer opportunity is appropriate for youth volunteers and is at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator.

Episodic or Event Volunteers

Episodic volunteers, sometimes referred to as "event" volunteers provide service on a single day such as an agency event or a national day of service. In some cases, an episodic or event volunteer can provide service to the organization over a long period of time but does not have to commit to a regular ongoing, long-term assignment. In the case of the latter and depending on the service being provided, the volunteer may be subject to a background check. Episodic volunteers are not eligible for volunteer incentives.

Group Volunteers

Families, service clubs, schools, non-profit or governmental agencies, or a corporate or religious organization are all examples of volunteer groups. Group volunteers never work one-on-one with children or other vulnerable populations, nor are they permitted to handle money. Group volunteers are not authorized to operate motorized equipment, power tools, computers, or have access to MetroParks' buildings. Youth group organizations must provide their own adult chaperones to supervise the group and engage in the volunteer service. Families with youth under the age of 14, must be accompanied by an adult who engages in service and assumes supervisory responsibility.

Volunteer Onboarding Process

Individuals interested in providing ongoing volunteer service to Five Rivers MetroParks must comply with the following onboarding steps:

- Attend a volunteer orientation
- Complete a volunteer application
- Review the volunteer handbook and sign the Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgement Form
- Meet with a Volunteer Coordinator to discuss the details of their volunteer assignment
- Review and sign a Volunteer Position Description
- Agree to and pass a background check

VIP Program

MetroParks values the service of its dedicated volunteers. As a way of recognizing your volunteer service and saying thank you, we have developed a comprehensive benefit and incentive program.

Benefits of volunteering include the opportunity to:

- Make friends who have similar interests
- Develop new skills and gain valuable experience
- Make a positive impact in your community and to the environment
- Gain satisfaction by helping to carry out the Mission of Five Rivers MetroParks

Volunteers who complete a minimum of 25 service hours can also earn incentives such as:

- Volunteer uniform pieces, which may include a volunteer t-shirt, hat and lanyard
- An invitation to the annual volunteer recognition event
- Access to volunteer-only programs
- Discounts on public programs, and shelter and campsite rentals

Service hours are recorded by submitting a Volunteer Timesheet by October 31. To redeem incentives based on recorded volunteer hours, volunteers should contact the Volunteer Services Department and complete any necessary forms.

Volunteer Expectations

As part of your volunteer service with MetroParks, and depending on your volunteer assignment, you can expect to:

- Participate in meaningful service to MetroParks according to its Mission, Vision and Values
- Be given an adequate assignment based on skills, interests and relatable training
- Receive orientation and training for any assignment accepted
- Be treated as an important attribute to MetroParks
- Be informed of any changes in policies or procedures that may affect volunteers
- Work in a physically safe environment, free of harassment and hostility
- Receive a volunteer position description outlining the expectations of the volunteer assignment
- Receive ongoing feedback and an annual assessment of performance
- Be recognized for your donation of time and skills

MetroParks Expectations

Additionally, as the beneficiary of successful volunteer engagement, MetroParks has a fiduciary responsibility to the public it serves, and as such has the right to:

- Decline volunteer placement in the organization
- Release a volunteer if their work is deemed unacceptable or whose skills do not fill a need
- Require a background check for volunteers
- Expect volunteers to adhere to their volunteer position description
- Expect volunteers to fulfill their volunteer commitment and document their service hours
- Require volunteers to dress appropriately and be well groomed

Policies & Procedures

Accidents

Volunteers are required to report all accidents and injuries immediately to MetroParks staff. An Accident/Incident Report should be completed within twenty-four (24) hours of the accident/incident. Upon completion, these forms will be maintained in the Human Resources Department.

Alcohol and Drug

MetroParks is genuinely concerned about alcohol and drug use and abuse and the effects it may have on a volunteer's performance, visitor safety and the public's confidence in our services. No one shall be under the influence/impaired by any substance during their volunteer assignment. Additionally, no volunteer while on MetroParks property, or while conducting MetroParks business is permitted to use or consume, possess, purchase, sell, or distribute any substance, drug or alcohol, lawful or unlawful, except where authorized by management. Any volunteer undergoing a medically prescribed treatment with a controlled substance, which may cause impairment, must report the treatment to the Volunteer Services Department prior to reporting to their assignment.

Attendance and Punctuality

Excellent attendance is essential for effective performance and productivity. Volunteers are expected to adhere to the attendance requirements of their volunteer position.

Background Check

It is the policy of Five Rivers MetroParks to require background checks on volunteers, depending on the service being provided. If a volunteer is charged or convicted of any offense during the volunteer period for MetroParks, they are required to immediately report the information in writing to the Volunteer Services Department. MetroParks aligns with the National Recreation and Park Association's Recommended Guidelines for Credentialing Volunteers which includes the following Criteria for Exclusion: A person should be disqualified and prohibited from serving as a volunteer if the person has been found guilty of the following crimes. "Guilty" means that a person was found guilty following a trial, entered into a guilty plea, entered into a no contest plea accompanied by a court finding of guilty, regardless of whether there was an adjudication of guilt (conviction) or a withholding of guilt. This recommendation does not apply if criminal charges resulted in acquittal, Nolle Prose, or dismissal.

- **SEX OFFENSES**
 - **All sex offenses** – *Regardless of the amount of time since offense.*
Examples include: *child molestation, rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sodomy, prostitution, solicitation, indecent exposure, etc.*

- **FELONIES**
 - **All felony violence** – *Regardless of the amount of time since offense.*
Examples include: *murder, manslaughter, aggravated assault, kidnapping, robbery, aggravated burglary, etc.*
 - **All felony offenses** other than **violence** or **sex** within the past 10 years.
Examples include: *drug offenses, theft, embezzlement, fraud, child endangerment, etc.*

- **MISDEMEANORS**
 - **All misdemeanor violence** offenses within the past 7 years.
Examples include: *simple assault, battery, domestic violence, hit & run, etc.*
 - **All misdemeanor drug & alcohol offenses** within the past 5 years or multiple offenses in the past 10 years.
Examples include: *driving under the influence, simple drug possession, drunk and disorderly, public intoxication, possession of drug paraphernalia, etc.*
 - **Any other misdemeanor** within the past 5 years that would be considered a potential danger to children or is directly related to the functions of that volunteer.
Example include: *contributing to the delinquency of a minor, providing alcohol to a minor, theft (if person is handling monies, etc.)*

Computer and Internet Usage

MetroParks provides computers and internet usage to volunteer positions requiring access. Computer and internet access are intended to promote efficient conduct of business activities. Access to the internet through the MetroParks network is a privilege and carries an expectation and accountability of responsible and ethical use. Any use that interferes with normal business activities, involves solicitation, or is associated with any for-profit business activity, is strictly prohibited. Internet and computer access must be approved and granted through the Volunteers Services Department and MetroParks IT Manager. Volunteer Coordinators will require an Authorized Use Policy form to be signed by volunteers needing to use a computer or internet for purposes of their volunteer assignment.

Confidentiality

All transactions between MetroParks patrons, staff, and volunteers are strictly confidential. Volunteers are expected to uphold this policy. Any recorded information about a visitor's use of MetroParks is considered confidential and is protected by Privacy Laws and MetroParks policy. This includes any information concerning program registration, facility rental/reservation or use of personal information. This policy of confidentiality ensures that volunteer's and patrons' information is protected.

Diversity and Inclusiveness

We embrace the strengths of our differences and understand that others share different viewpoints and represent different cultures.

MetroParks is committed to providing equal access to volunteer opportunities and in accordance with Federal civil rights law and MetroParks civil rights policies and procedures, MetroParks, its programs, offices, employees, and volunteers are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, military status, veteran status, genetic information, or other unlawful bias except when such a factor constitutes a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ).

Our agency takes its non-discriminatory policy very seriously and expects volunteers to exhibit a positive attitude when dealing with all members of the public, staff and other volunteers. MetroParks supports the Americans with Disabilities Act by making reasonable accommodations in serving individuals with disabilities. If accommodations are needed, requests should be made at least one week in advance by contacting the Volunteer Services Department at (937) 275-7275 (PARK).

MetroParks values the trust our visitors place in us and will be sensitive in how we work, striving to create opportunities for both visitors and ourselves. Our community trusts us to treat them and their funds with honesty and respect. We will exercise our fiscal responsibilities and legal requirements with care and consideration.

Dress Code

MetroParks volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and to be properly dressed. A professional appearance is a key factor in creating and maintaining a favorable image. Fundamental is the concept of appropriateness in relation to the type of volunteer assignments being performed. Recommendations to attire are at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator.

Apparel should not attract undue attention from other volunteers or park visitors. Within these concepts there is plenty of room for individual expression in exercising choice of apparel suited to a particular volunteer position. The following items are to be avoided, in order to maintain a positive and safe experience for volunteers and park guests:

- torn, ill-fitting, overly tight or suggestive clothing
- clothing and accessories that could create a safety hazard in the work environment
- casual foot wear such as flip flops, slippers, and moccasins

Good personal hygiene is imperative for proper grooming. Hair should be neat and clean. Mustaches and beards are to be kept neat and trimmed. Perfume, cologne and after-shave should be used in moderation remembering that some individuals may be allergic to fragrances. Shoes should be in good repair and specific to the volunteer assignment.

Emergencies

If the situation requires 9-1-1 assistance, make that call first, and then immediately call the Montgomery County Sheriff's Non-Emergency Dispatch at (937) 225-HELP (4357) to request MetroParks Ranger assistance. It is very important our Rangers are immediately aware of all emergency situations, which could include but are not limited to: domestic dispute, suspicious persons, vandalism in progress, vehicle break-in or theft or other non-life-threatening situations that require law enforcement attention. Always try to get a good description of people or vehicles involved and vehicle license numbers.

When in doubt, call 9-1-1.

Equipment and Vehicle Usage

The use of agency equipment and vehicles is at the discretion, with expressed permission, and oversight, of MetroParks. Volunteers must be 18 years of age to operate equipment and must provide a current and valid operator's license to operate a vehicle. Training on all equipment and vehicles will be administered by MetroParks or the contracted equipment manufacturer and requires an annual check-off. To insure the safety of themselves, MetroParks employees, and the public, volunteers are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by MetroParks as specified in the equipment manufacturer module. Volunteers will also adhere to the following policies and courtesies:

- Volunteers are responsible for the cleanliness and care of any equipment or vehicle they operate during their volunteer shift
- The use of personal power tools or equipment is strictly prohibited
- Volunteers are not permitted to use chain saws
- Smoking and cell phone usage is not permitted in park vehicles or while operating equipment
- In the event of an accident while operating equipment or driving a MetroParks vehicle, the volunteer must promptly report the accident to a MetroParks staff or to Volunteer Services
- In the event of an accident involving another person's vehicle or property, or the accident causes injury to any person, the accident must be immediately reported to the local law enforcement agency by calling 9-1-1 for emergencies. Non-emergencies should be reported by contacting the MetroParks staff onsite, the Volunteer Services Department or the MetroParks Ranger Division at (937) 225-HELP (4357).

Firearms

Possession of firearms (even with a concealed carry license), explosives or other weapons on MetroParks property or while performing services for MetroParks is strictly prohibited.

Harassment and Discrimination

MetroParks is committed to providing an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment based on an individual's sex, race, age, ancestry, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics. MetroParks will not tolerate an environment that creates a hostile workplace through unwelcome sexual advances or other improper harassment or discrimination based on an individual's protected status.

Specifically, no volunteer shall harass another volunteer or employee by making unwelcome sexual advances, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. The creation of an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment may include such actions as persistent comments regarding an employee's sexual preferences or the display of obscene or sexually oriented photographs, posters, drawings, cartoons, epithets, greeting cards, articles of clothing or other written works. The creation of an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment may also result from actions, statements or other conduct that relate to an individual's protected status.

Volunteers should report any incidents of sexual or other improper harassment or discrimination, whether by an employee, a manager, or a volunteer to any MetroParks staff, a MetroParks Ranger, to the Volunteer Services Department or to the Human Resources Department. A thorough investigation will be completed. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible as to not hamper the investigation process. No reprisal, retaliation or other adverse action will be taken against any volunteer, who in good faith, reports improper harassment or discrimination or assists in the investigation of such matter. If a volunteer feels falsely accused of misconduct, they must explain the situation in writing.

Inclement Weather

MetroParks provides year-round outdoor experiences and services to the public. Volunteer assignments may require working in all types of weather conditions. However, it is the policy of MetroParks that volunteers should not report to perform services in severe weather. In the event of inclement weather, you will be notified in advance, as much as possible, of any cancellation by either a member of MetroParks or the Volunteer Services Department.

Media

If a volunteer is approached by a media representative while volunteering with MetroParks, the volunteer is required to refer that individual to the Director of Marketing and Public Relations, a Volunteer Coordinator or a MetroParks staff member.

Nepotism

Family members of MetroParks employees who wish to volunteer with the organization cannot report directly to the MetroParks employee they are related to. Family members of MetroParks employees, who wish to become Official MetroParks Volunteers, will be required to complete the volunteer onboarding process. Family members include, but are not limited to: spouse, partner, parent, and child.

Separation from Volunteer Service

Voluntary Separation

We realize volunteers may need to discontinue their volunteer service with us at some point. The volunteer should provide ample notice, in writing, of their intention to resign. Volunteers will be provided the opportunity for an exit interview upon separation.

Involuntary Separation

If a volunteer is not performing or behaving satisfactorily to the expectations of their volunteer

assignment, the supervisor and the Volunteer Coordinator will address this with the volunteer. The Volunteer Coordinator will then begin the process of documenting the steps taken to address the volunteer's performance. If a volunteer disregards a policy established by MetroParks or the unsatisfactory performance or behavior of the volunteer continues, a volunteer will be asked to terminate their service with MetroParks. A volunteer may reapply one year to the date of termination. Re-engagement in the Volunteer Program is at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator.

Smoking

Due to the acknowledged hazards arising from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke or secondhand smoke, it shall be the policy of MetroParks to provide a smoke free experience for all employees, volunteers, visitors and patrons. Therefore, tobacco use, and smoking is prohibited in all MetroParks facilities and premises and while conducting MetroParks related business. Smoking is also prohibited within twenty-five (25) feet of any MetroParks building entrance or exit, operable windows and/or air intake vents. Volunteers may however smoke in employee-designated smoking areas.

Social Media

Whether a MetroParks volunteer opts to create or participate in social media sites for personal use is their decision. "Personal" use of social media is considered any participation that is not authorized by MetroParks. Use of social media sites through MetroParks' equipment must be related to the volunteer assignment for an approved social media application or project. Personal social media activities should be conducted on non-volunteer time (e.g., authorized breaks) using personal communication devices.

If you choose to participate in a social media site, please exercise sound judgement. Do not post any content or comments that would be contrary to MetroParks' policies. However, you may share messages presented from official MetroParks' public accounts. MetroParks is a very positive, contributing, visible part of Montgomery County and surrounding community. To preserve this status, we must respect our "neutral" role within the community we serve.

Tracking Volunteer Service

Tracking volunteer service hours is important. It documents each volunteer's commitment of time to the community and allows Metroparks to demonstrate the value of the volunteer program. Volunteer timesheets will be provided by the Volunteer Services Department and volunteers are expected to manage their own service hours based on their volunteer assignment. In some cases, a volunteer timesheet binder may be available at the facility you are volunteering in which case you will sign-in and sign-out according to your volunteer assignment. If volunteering at an event or for a community or corporate day of service, volunteers are required to sign-in and sign-out on the timesheet provided onsite. Volunteer Services will maintain time sheet reconciliation.

Completed time sheets should be submitted to the Volunteer Services Department by October 31. Volunteers may request a copy of their recorded volunteer hours from the Volunteer Services Department.

Volunteer Identification

Volunteers are required to wear a name badge while on duty. On duty includes completing a regular volunteer assignment, participating in training, or conducting any MetroParks-related business. Name badges must be worn in a manner and location that is easily visible to all patrons. Defacing, altering or decorating the name badge is strictly prohibited. All name badges remain the property of MetroParks.

Workplace Violence

It is the policy of MetroParks to provide all volunteers with an environment that is free from workplace violence. Violence will be met with an immediate response with the purpose of diffusing the situation, protecting employees, volunteers, and visitors, and preventing further incidences. Acts of violence committed by volunteers result in ending the volunteer relationship.

Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgement

I have read and hereby acknowledge receipt of the Five Rivers MetroParks Volunteer Handbook and I agree to abide by the rules and regulations set forth herein.

I understand that the policies and procedures contained within are not to be construed as all-inclusive and are to be used in the performance of my volunteer assignment with Five Rivers MetroParks.

I understand that if I fail to abide by any of the policies, procedures, or guidelines set forth in this handbook I may be subject to termination from Five Rivers MetroParks' Volunteer Program.

Additionally, I understand and acknowledge there is no salary or other compensation for my services as a volunteer.

Volunteer Name (Print) Date

Volunteer Name (Signature) Date

Guardians' Name if Under 18 (Print) Date

Guardian's Name if Under 18 (Signature) Date