

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: NATURAL RESOURCES

<u>POSITION TITLE:</u>	Steward
<u>COMMITMENT:</u>	2+ Years/ (40+ hours/year)
<u>LOCATION:</u>	District-wide – Assigned preserve
<u>APPLICATION DEADLINE:</u>	None
<u>MINIMUM AGE:</u>	21



DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE POSITION

This position involves assisting staff in accomplishing the restoration goals for an ecologically valuable natural area. Stewards implement management activities that further site goals, which may include brush clearing, installing plants, seed collection and sowing, and invasive species control. Stewards may assist staff in monitoring specific flora, wildlife, natural communities, water bodies, and/or other resources at the site, or oversee and assist other volunteer monitors.

Stewards assist staff with community outreach efforts, and schedule workdays by coordinating volunteer activities at the site with the NR Volunteer Liaison. Some Stewards with special skills may initiate additional activities (e.g., research, educational programs) with the approval of the Stewardship Program Coordinator. Stewards are members of the Volunteer Stewardship Network (VSN) of The Nature Conservancy. Each steward is encouraged to contribute to the management plan for their stewardship site and share ideas and solutions to site problems with District staff and other stewards.

Volunteers will occasionally interact with the public, and respond to questions and requests for information. Duties may vary at the discretion of the District staff. Direction and training is received from staff.

PRIMARY VOLUNTEER DUTIES TO BE PERFORMED

- Assists staff in completing mutually agreed-upon restoration goals & contributes to site management plan development under direction of Natural Resource Division. Works cooperatively with District staff and other volunteers.
- Effectively communicates information about restoration goals and land management practices to site visitors and volunteers.
- Attends and acquires pertinent information from District workshops, meetings or training sessions. Acknowledges all verbal and written updates from NR staff & Stewardship Program Coordinator.
- Accurately completes required District forms and returns them at least once a month.
- Records accurate volunteer hours monthly on Volgistics for the government accounting standards report.
- Surveys the site at least four times a year and report findings to the NR Volunteer Liaison. (walk the site, note overall impression, and any inappropriate land use activities (e.g. off-road biking), changes in neighboring land use, or unauthorized access routes into the preserve). Ideally, Stewards contribute a minimum of 40 hours annually.
- Reports personal physical injuries, new immediate threats to natural area communities and anything else of an urgent nature within 24 hours.
- Adheres to District's ordinances, safety guidelines, as well as regulations about confidentiality for sightings of endangered, threatened, or other rare plant and wildlife species.
- Adheres to ethical and ecologically-sound principles. All ecological management work must receive pre-approval and by the Stewardship Program Coordinator.
- Volunteer workdays are not required, but are encouraged. If stewards choose to hold workdays, he/she shall:
 - a. Provide workday information to NR Volunteer Liaison in March, June, September and December for the following quarter so that materials can be submitted for recruitment and publication in the District's quarterly *Conservationist* newsletter, on its website, or in printed workday schedule. There may be additional designated individual deadlines.

- b. Train workday volunteers by demonstrating efficient and safe ways to use hand tools (e.g., seed rakes, loppers, bow saws) needed for restoration activities.
- c. Collect waivers from workday participants, record hours and submit them to Volunteer Services Department for government accounting standards report.
- d. Supervise volunteers to ensure non-target species are protected and the assigned management task is performed in a safe and effective manner.
- e. Report any concerns, accidents or issues to Stewardship Program Coordinator.

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Required knowledge is provided at mandatory trainings and orientations regarding District rules, regulations, policies, and procedures; proper safety precautions. Additional skills needed are: ability to interact positively with the public and staff, effective communication skills, ability to interpret and apply written and verbal instructions, willingness to learn from staff and accept feedback.

- Interest in natural areas and ecological restoration.
- At least 21 years old and willing to make a minimum three-year commitment.
- Completes interview with Stewardship Program Coordinator; receives approval before apprenticeship begins.
- Completes a one-year apprenticeship with an experienced steward(s), accumulating 72 hours of training before assuming the responsibility of a stewardship site. In addition, the steward candidate will have taken courses in natural area management restoration, local plant/wildlife identification, etc. The Stewardship Program Coordinator may make an exception if the steward candidate has previous academic or professional experience, has participated in a similar volunteer program for at least one year, and/or has outstanding ecological knowledge and organizational skills.
- A steward candidate becomes an official steward upon approval by their mentor steward(s), the Stewardship Program Coordinator and/or NR Volunteer Liaison.
- After apprenticeship is complete, Steward must attend orientation with the Stewardship Program Coordinator to review forms, site information and other related materials.
- Within one year, acquire and maintain an Illinois Pesticide Applicator license.
- Stewards that choose to host workdays and supervise other volunteers must have exceptional communication, planning and managerial skills to ensure a safe and efficient workday.
- Stewards should confer with their physician to ensure that they are current with vaccinations (i.e. tetanus) and in good physical condition. Must be in good health and capable of strenuous physical labor in an outdoor environment.
- Completes District volunteer application packet, including waiver and consent for criminal background check.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by a volunteer to successfully perform the duties of the volunteer position.

While volunteering, the volunteer is regularly required to stand; walk; use hands to feel, finger or handle; reach with hands and arms; talk or hear. The volunteer is frequently required to climb, balance or stoop; sit, kneel, crouch or crawl and may frequently lift and/or move up to 25 pounds and occasionally move up to 50 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this position include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception and ability to adjust focus.

VOLUNTEER ENVIRONMENT

The volunteer environment characteristics described here are representative of those a volunteer encounters while performing the duties of the volunteer position.

While performing the duties of this volunteer position, the volunteer is regularly exposed to outside weather conditions, on rough or uneven terrain. The volunteer may encounter all kinds of weather including, hot, humid, cold, wet or windy conditions. The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate. The volunteer occasionally performs duties in dim or low light.

PROVISIONS

This is an unpaid volunteer position, which exists to assist staff and to provide supplemental support for the District's programs. This position is undertaken freely on the part of the volunteer with no payment or expectation of payment of salaries, wages, compensation or other types of benefits. The District may from time to time alter or terminate volunteer positions and programs. Volunteer status may be changed or discontinued by the District at any time and for any reason, including a volunteer's failure to comply with District ordinances, policies and direction governing conduct in the performance of volunteer duties in the field or on District premises.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Volunteer Services Program at the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County is to engage volunteers who are willing to donate their time, talents and resources to support the programs and staff in carrying out the mission, purpose, and guiding principles of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and the volunteer programs.

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF DUPAGE COUNTY MISSION

As mandated by the Illinois Downstate Forest Preserve Act, our mission is "to acquire and hold lands containing forests, prairies, wetlands, and associated plant communities or lands capable of being restored to such natural conditions for the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora, fauna and scenic beauty for the education, pleasure and recreation of its citizens."

PURPOSE

To acquire, preserve, protect and restore the natural resources in DuPage County while providing opportunities for people to connect with nature.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Stewardship, Sustainability, Community Engagement, Innovation, Empowerment, and Diversity & Inclusion.

Visit dupageforest.org to learn more.

For more information contact the Volunteer Services Department at (630) 933-7233 M-F 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.