

Volunteer Projects and Advanced Training

PART 1: Finding Volunteer Projects

To be certified as a West Virginia Master Naturalist requires 30 hours of approved volunteer work in addition to the training. Maintaining certification in subsequent years requires 16 additional hours of volunteer work and eight hours of advanced training each year.

The purpose of volunteer work is to provide a service to the community with regard to natural resources, and to help the volunteer gain knowledge and experience. Projects must either involve educating the public or enhancing the natural resources of our state.

All ideas for volunteer projects must be approved in advance by the Local MN Committee. If the Local Committee has difficulty deciding whether a project is appropriate, they should consult with the State Advisory Committee.

What doesn't count as volunteer hours? An activity that primarily benefits the volunteer (e.g., building bird feeders for your own back yard) will not count as volunteer hours. Projects on private lands must be open to the public. Only members scheduled to give a presentation may include preparation time as part of volunteer service hours. Travel time can be counted in excess of 30 minutes. Advocacy work cannot be counted as volunteer time.

Examples of some possible volunteer projects:

Education/Interpretation, Public Information, etc.

- Speaking to school classes and other groups
- Information/educational booths at meetings or events
- Environmental workshops for children
- Leading nature walks
- Children/youth outdoor classroom naturalist activities
- Development of audiovisual materials
- Creating brochures, fact sheets, etc.
- Web site development

Field/ Research/Surveys:

- Field survey for amphibians, dragonflies, mushrooms, rare plants, etc.
- Wetland sampling, classification, and mapping
- Plant collections (adding to and maintaining)
- Bird census (point count surveys)
- Monitoring populations of rare plants
- Ecological inventory of public lands
- Assisting raptor facilities with transportation of injured birds

Habitat & Interpretive Facilities Enhancement/Development

Wetland restoration

Trail building and maintenance

Erosion control

Building boardwalks, observation platforms, kiosks

Construction and placing of nest boxes

Organizing stream cleanups

Advising/assisting private landowners with habitat improvement

Coordination for WVMN program

Fund raising

Maintaining volunteer data

Editing/writing for newsletter

Clerical work (mail outs etc.)

Telephone coordination

Photography

Coordinating a local MN class

PART 2: Advanced Training

Advanced training totaling eight hours each year is required to maintain certification. Classes, workshops, etc. that qualify as advanced training could also serve students in the initial training course as electives. In either case, they must be approved in advance by the State Advisory Committee or the State Coordinator. Advanced training should not repeat the same basic information on a subject that has already been covered in the initial WVMN training. However, an advanced training opportunity that covers the subject more in-depth or from a different perspective would probably qualify.

The subject matter must treat some aspect of natural history or nature interpretation. Unless otherwise approved, watching an educational TV program, movie or video on a natural history subject does not count as advanced training except when viewed during the course of an approved lecture or workshop. Travel time to an advanced training event will not count toward hours.