



Volunteering With Your Group

at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

1. Make Sure We Are the Right Community Partner for You

- **Assess your group's interests.** What issues does your group care about? Does our mission and purpose fit the group's interests?
 - Refuge purpose: *Serve as a refuge and breeding grounds for migratory birds and other wildlife.*
 - *Provide ways to connect people with nature.*
 - National Wildlife Refuge System mission: *administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans*
- **Check out the “Volunteer Opportunities”** on our Volunteer page http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Deer_Flat/what_we_do/getting_involved.html and the latest Refuge volunteer newsletter http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Deer_Flat/what_we_do/get_involved/Volunteering.html Brainstorm how your group's interests and skills could be best applied to these or similar volunteer projects. We would be happy to discuss possible projects with you.
- **Set reasonable goals.** A small project done well has more of a positive impact than a large project that remains only half finished.
- We hope you choose to volunteer with us, but **if our opportunities don't fit what your group is interested in**, then find a community organization already working on issues you care about. Check websites such as: www.UnitedWayTV.org, www.serve.gov, and www.volunteermatch.org. Check with other community organizations that utilize volunteers such as local schools, colleges, hospitals, and faith-based institutions.

2. Contacting Us

- Call 208-467-9278 and ask to speak with our Volunteer Coordinator.
- Tell us about your group and what you hope to get out of your volunteer experience.
- We are more than happy to set an appointment to talk in person here at the refuge.

Possible Questions to Ask

- How much time will it take to complete the proposed project? Will your group be able to finish it in one shot? Does your group need to do shifts?
- Can a wide variety of group members of all ages and abilities participate?
- Who are the primary and secondary points of contact at the Refuge? With your group?



- Exchange contact information
- What supplies or materials will the Refuge and the volunteer group need to provide to complete the project? Who will provide them?

Things to Consider

- How many volunteers can you confidently say will show up?
- Can each group member make a commitment to the project and the specific time window?
- Think about the number of participants, minimum age, skill level, and time availability. Will this fit the needs of both organizations?

3. Energize Your Group

The success of your project will be determined by your success at motivating and retaining your volunteers. Here are some helpful hints:

- We are happy to come to you to give a presentation to your group about the project and its importance to the Refuge. If that can't be arranged, you should be sure to tell the group the **WHY** of the project.
- Decide how you will communicate with your entire group for meetings and updates. Make sure you forward event information from the Refuge.
- Explain the project to possible volunteers well in advance of the project date. Send out emails to group members to create excitement about the project. Set up Social Media channels or hashtags for the event.
- Try to meet group members' needs for affiliation, achievement, and influence.

If you need more people for your group...

- Recruit for your project where there are large numbers of people on discussion boards, university campuses, and organizational meetings.
- Be serious about your commitment and follow through. The Refuge is counting on you.

Do you have enough people if a couple of volunteers don't show up? If yes, keep planning. If not, consider rescheduling or seeking another volunteer opportunity that better meets the needs and interests of your group members.

4. Promote Commitment

Getting your volunteers to **take action** before the event will increase their likelihood of showing up. Here are some ideas:

- **Require your volunteers to sign up** on our Volunteer Group Sign Up form.
- **Send a group calendar appointment.**
- **Ask volunteers to sign up to bring something specific** to contribute to the team event, such as snacks, water, information, etc.
- **Encourage group members to car pool to the volunteer activity.** Ask someone to coordinate carpooling. Decide on a central location to meet and caravan to the event.



- **Send reminders the week before and the day before.** Use these messages:
 - It will be fun.
 - Tell them you look forward to seeing them. Remind them you are expecting them from start time to end time.
 - Highlight certain members that have been helpful in the process.
 - Remind them the Refuge is “counting on us” and remind them why the service project is important.
 - Tell them exactly when and where to arrive, what to bring, and what to expect when they get there.
- **Add a question to the top of the email** so that participants will need to respond. For example, “Please respond to this email to confirm you are attending.”

5. Event Timeline

Review this with the Refuge and group leaders so everyone is on the same page.

Two Weeks Out

- Share more information about the event (this energizes your group)

One Week Out

- Remind volunteers (examples in “promote commitment” section above)
- ****Paperwork Due**** including our “Volunteer Group Sign Up” form, send to the Volunteer Coordinator

Two Days Out

- Finalize checklist for day of event with your as well as others’ responsibilities.

Day of Event

- Arrive early to meet with staff and greet your group. If folks have to leave, early ask them to check out with you.
- Gather everyone and thank them for participating; introduce your project and partners.
- Make sure all volunteers have been assigned a task.
- Check in with volunteers regularly.
 - Attend to the social needs of volunteers. Check in with them, introduce them to other volunteers, etc.
 - Monitor basic needs. Provide snacks, hydration, and breaks to rest and stretch.
- Take pictures to **share with your volunteers and us!** Post on your website or social media and/or on the Refuge Facebook page.



After the Project

- We like having a debrief at the end of the project with your group and our staff to discuss:
 - Your groups opinions on how we can improve.
 - Highlights and challenges of the day.
 - The impact of your project.
 - The next steps: does the project need to be finished at a later time? Are participants interested in volunteering again?
 - How people can stay involved, future needs, and future projects.

6. Report and Celebrate

Here are some ideas to report, celebrate, and recognize your successful project:

- **Report success** in a group newsletter, website or social media. Include numbers quantifying the work completed. List names of people involved and their roles.
- **Send thank you email to your group.** Include photos from the event.
- **Recognize participants.** Consider preparing certificates of appreciation for group members.
- **Invite people to share their photographs and stories.** (And share with us too!) Create a slide show for fun.
- **Start talking about another service project.** Think about what came out of the debrief session. Consider continuing the partnership with the Refuge and making it a regularly scheduled event every year or every few months.

("Volunteering With Your Group" was adapted from the "Toolkit for Organizing a Group Volunteer Event" by the Coalition on Volunteerism in Boise, Idaho and Service-Learning Students at Boise State University)



Appendix

Volunteer Resource Guides

Oregon Volunteers Resources: <http://www.oregonvolunteers.org/resources/>

The Community Tool Box from University of Kansas: <http://ctb.dept.ku.edu/en/toolkits>

Idealist: <http://www.idealist.org/info/Volunteer>

Hands One Network: <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/volunteer-leader-guidebook>

Energize Volunteer management Resource library: <http://www.energizeinc.com/art.html>

Team builders

LINE UP

Ask your group to line up. Works best with 8-10 in a line. If you've got a bigger group, split them up and challenge each line to complete the task first. Ask the group to form a new line in order of:

- Height, from smallest to tallest.
- Birthdays, from January through to December.
- Shoe size, from smallest to largest.
- Alphabetical first names (A-Z).
- Alphabetical mothers first names.
- Alphabetical grandmother's first names!
- Anything else you think up.

HUMAN KNOT

Divide your group into teams of 6-8. Each team forms a small circle. Ask them to extend their right hand across the circle and hold the left hand of the other team member opposite them. Then extend their left hand across the circle and hold the right hand of another group member. The task is to unravel the spider's web of interlocking arms without letting go of anyone's hands. Give them a three minute time limit to complete the task. Pressure!

BACKWARDS CLUMPS

Divide into pairs. Ask each pair to sit on the floor with their partner, backs together, feet out in front and arms linked. Their task is to stand up together. Once everyone has done this, two pairs join together and the group of four try to repeat the task. After they succeed, add another two and try again. Keep adding people until your whole group is trying to stand together. A sight to behold!

HUMAN CHAIR

Invite everyone to stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder. Each person then turns to the right to face the back of the person in front of them. Ask them to place their hands on the shoulder of the person in front. On the count of three they slowly begin to sit down on the lap of the person behind. As long as everyone is helping the person in front of him or her to sit, then everyone should be supporting the weight of everyone else. Of course, should someone slip, the game becomes 'human dominoes.' It might take a couple of attempts to complete the challenge.