



# MetroParks Volunteer Policy Manual

November 27, 2018



Elise Moeller  
Manager of Volunteer Resources  
513-867-5835 ext. 221  
[www.YourMetroParks.net](http://www.YourMetroParks.net)  
emoeller@YourMetroParks.net



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## **MetroParks of Butler County Mission Statement**

To provide a superior park system that maximizes the community's quality of life through conservation, education and recreation.

## **MetroParks Organizational Structure**

The Board of Park Commissioners establishes policy, determines budget and the priorities of the MetroParks of Butler County (MetroParks). The Executive Director is responsible for the execution of Board directives and daily operation of the MetroParks and for activities of all employees and other agents of the organization.

## **Volunteer Program Introduction**

MetroParks has 11 parks and nearly 3,000 acres of green space open daily. Natural and paved trails for hiking, biking, running or walking including numerous play areas, fishing spots, reservable facilities, shelters, camp sites, historic sites, a dog park, and a reservable Athletic Complex. Please visit our website at [www.YourMetroParks.net](http://www.YourMetroParks.net) for a complete listing.

MetroParks has many interesting and rewarding volunteer opportunities and looks forward to working with you. The Volunteer Program is an integral part of the park system and provides valuable resources to it. The Board of Park Commissioners (who serve as volunteers themselves) and the staff of MetroParks are pleased to have you join our team of dedicated volunteers. Please be sure to let us know if you have any special talents or new and interesting ideas for our program, we would love to hear them!

The purpose of the Volunteer Program is to grow and develop a rewarding partnership between volunteers and the staff of MetroParks in an effort to promote and expand the mission of MetroParks, to create community through people, parks and volunteerism.

These policies apply to those individuals or those members of groups serving without monetary compensation to benefit MetroParks and the community with a positive quality of life. This policy does not cover participants in any work training programs, court ordered community service or work release programs. Volunteer Forms can be found at [www.YourMetroParks.net](http://www.YourMetroParks.net)>Support Us>Volunteering>Volunteer Application(s) & Forms.

## **Benefits of Participation**

- Self-satisfaction of improving the community.
- Making friends who share the same interests and concerns.
- Satisfaction from helping to carry out MetroParks mission.
- Developing new skills and gaining valuable experience.
- Invitation to special volunteer events.
- Free access to a MetroPark facility will be given to individual volunteers as needed on the day or days of volunteer service.
- Non-Butler County Residents who volunteer at least 10 hours within a calendar year and log them in MetroParks volunteer software, may receive **one** annual motor vehicle permit by mail for the following calendar year.
- Ability to earn incentives (see under Rewards).
- Liability insurance while on site.



## **Role of the Manager of Volunteer Resources**

The function of the Manager of Volunteer Resources is to facilitate the effective use of volunteers throughout MetroParks. The Manager recruits volunteers, ensures that volunteers meet minimum qualifications, matches volunteers and groups with projects, maintains the volunteer database, tracks volunteer hours and coordinates recognition events for volunteers. The Manager of Volunteer Resources also acts as a liaison between staff and volunteers, as well as being a liaison with the community. Volunteers should always feel welcome contacting the Manager of Volunteer Resources with any questions, concerns or issues.

## **Application Process and Liability Waiver**

Individuals wishing to volunteer must complete a volunteer application. Groups desiring to do a project in a park must complete a Group Volunteer Application. These applications contain the Liability Waiver to which volunteers are agreeing. Applications are submitted to the Manager of Volunteer Resources, who will review, schedule interviews and forward to division staff who will supervise the individual or group. Onsite meetings will be required. One-time volunteer opportunities, such as a special event, do not require interviews. Volunteers must check in on the sign-in sheet upon arrival, which contains the Liability Waiver to which they are agreeing.

## **Types of Volunteer Opportunities**

Volunteer opportunities with MetroParks fall into two categories: one-time volunteer events or ongoing volunteer positions. One-time volunteer events include special events, group projects and days of service. Ongoing volunteer positions are those that involve a longer and recurring commitment of time, such as Trail Maintenance Stewards, Trail Ambassadors, Historical Site Docents or Welcome Center Greeters.

## **Volunteer Service Projects**

All volunteer service projects must be approved by MetroParks prior to the start of any project(s) and any commitment of resources. For approval, a Volunteer Project Application must be completed and turned in to Manager of Volunteer Resources.

## **Groups**

Groups from non-profit organizations, companies or families may also participate in volunteer projects as coordinated by the Manager of Volunteer Resources or staff designee. With youth groups, adult supervisors must be present to chaperone the group at all times (the number of chaperones depend on group size). With families containing youth volunteers under the age of 14, a parent or legal guardian must be present at all times and assume supervisory responsibility.

## **Youth Volunteers**

Youth Volunteers are defined as being between the ages of 14 and 17. In general, youth volunteers, if willing, are able to perform all tasks that apply to youth employment and Ohio minor labor laws. All Youth Volunteers must have a Parental Consent Form signed by a parent or legal guardian to volunteer without a parent or guardian present. The Parental Consent Form must be returned to the Manager of Volunteer Resources or designated staff member before they will be permitted to volunteer. Volunteers under the age of 14 may volunteer but must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or youth group leader at all times.

## **Background Checks**

Some volunteer assignments require prior successful completion of a reference check or background check. MetroParks reserves the right to make background checks on individuals (18 years of age or older) participating in the Volunteer Program. If MetroParks performs a check on the background of a volunteer, we will seek their prior permission and will share the results of the background check upon request from said volunteer.

## **Discrimination**

MetroParks prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, ancestry, age, disability or marital status.

## **MetroPark Employees as Volunteers**

MetroParks employees may volunteer their services and will be eligible for the same rewards as non-employee volunteers. Staff is prohibited from participating in duties that they are normally paid to perform within the scope of their employment.

## **Orientation/Training**

For one-time volunteer opportunities, volunteer shifts begin with demonstrations or training of the duties required. For ongoing volunteer positions, orientation and training is provided by the staff in the program area.

## **Volunteer Supervision**

MetroParks is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for volunteers. All volunteers will be supervised by a designated staff person within the program area that they are placed. This might be the Manager of Volunteer Resources, a Program Coordinator, Park Manager, operations staff member, or other lead staff person that coordinates assigned tasks, tools, and supplies used by the volunteer to accomplish their role. The staff person is responsible for the volunteer sign-in process, ensuring Parental Consent forms are collected from volunteers who are minors and ensuring the volunteers have adequate training and support to perform their function. Staff are also available to respond to problems or concerns that may arise. Other than Trail Maintenance Stewards, Trail Ambassadors, Historical Site Docents, Welcome Center Greeters or other pre-approved positions and/or circumstances, volunteers should not perform volunteer work without staff supervision.

## **Volunteer Expectations, Conduct and Appearance**

Since MetroParks volunteers represent MetroParks, the following guidelines have been established:

- Volunteers must not be impaired due to alcohol or drugs (including Prescribed or Non-Prescribed medications).
- All MetroParks facilities are smoke-free. If you smoke, please do so outside away from the entrance/exit of any building and extinguish and dispose of cigarettes properly.
- Volunteers should be friendly and helpful to park customer/owners and staff.
- Volunteers should only provide accurate information to visitors. If you cannot answer a question, refer them to a staff member, the Administrative Office or MetroParks website.
- Volunteers should dress appropriately for the job being performed. If you have been issued a MetroParks volunteer T-shirt, or other uniform, it should be worn while volunteering. You may be asked to wear a name tag during special events. When performing outdoor labor, volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes and appropriate protective clothing.
- Volunteers are encouraged to take breaks and stay hydrated when working outdoors.
- Volunteers must notify staff immediately if encountering an unsafe situation.



## **Safety Rules, Restricted Areas and Equipment**

Volunteers are expected to follow all MetroParks safety procedures and guidelines. Safety training will be provided by MetroParks in accordance with the needs of the job. For reasons of safety, security or legal requirements, some areas and/or equipment are off limits to volunteers. For this reason, volunteers must be assigned by a MetroParks staff member to enter the maintenance shop areas.

Volunteers wishing to operate power tools must be 18 years of age or older and must undergo safety training with operations staff.

Adult volunteers (at least 18 years of age) may operate (drive) non-licensed, motorized, self-propelled maintenance equipment with the permission and appropriate training from the Park Manager to whom the equipment is assigned. The Park Manager shall first perform an assessment that the volunteer to whom the equipment is assigned as the operator (driver) is responsible and qualified. No one shall operate (drive) any equipment without employing the approved personal safety equipment required by MetroParks policy, and without first receiving instruction as to its proper and safe operation. Volunteers under the age of 18 shall operate motorized equipment only to the extent that Ohio minor labor laws and MetroParks safety rules authorize such use by MetroParks employees. These regulations generally prohibit use of motorized equipment by minors.

Some volunteers may occasionally be assigned and authorized to drive MetroParks licensed motor vehicles. If so, they shall first undergo a vehicle familiarization training session and successfully complete a driver's license record check like that required of employees who are authorized to drive licensed motor vehicles. All operators shall familiarize themselves with and obey the safety and operating instructions provided by MetroParks staff.

## **Approved Tools and Equipment for Volunteer use**

General Requirements:

- No volunteer under the age of 18 are permitted to use power tools
- All volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes, eye protection, and earplugs (when using power tools).
- Those volunteers wishing to operate certain tools may be required to undergo training.
- Volunteers with professional gardening experience may provide a copy of their license certificate to forgo the training component.
- MetroParks does not provide power tools for volunteer use; volunteers may use their own power tools. However, they do so at their own will and risk. MetroParks is not responsible for tools breaking down.
- Prohibited Equipment: tractors, backhoes, skid steer loaders, riding mowers, chainsaws, fork lifts, wood choppers, boom & scissor lifts, and backpack, hand-held or truck-mounted pesticide application sprayer or spreader are prohibited without written permission from the Executive Director.

## **Injury/Incident Reporting**

Report any injury, accident or incident that occurs while volunteering to the on-site staff supervisor immediately. If the injury or accident is an emergency, call 911. If an on-site supervisor is not present, report it to the Manager of Volunteer Resources within 24 hours so that an Incident Report can be completed. If a volunteer is injured during the course and scope of their volunteer services, they will be covered under the MetroParks Workers' Compensation plan.



## **Insurance Coverage**

Volunteers are covered by MetroParks liability insurance while they are on site. Liability insurance covers volunteers and the MetroParks against claims of negligence during the time that they are on duty as volunteers. VOLUNTEERS MUST PROVIDE THEIR OWN MEDICAL INSURANCE SHOULD THEY BECOME INJURED WHILE VOLUNTEERING.

Volunteer assignments may be restricted due to the health or qualifications of the volunteer.

## **Cash Handling**

Volunteers may be authorized to handle cash or accept payment on behalf of MetroParks. They must first receive training and agree to adhere to MetroParks Cash Handling Policy. A signed acknowledgement of the policy must be received prior to handling any cash on behalf of MetroParks.

## **Expense Reimbursement**

No purchases should be made from the personal funds of a volunteer.

## **Assignment of Access**

Some volunteers may be assigned keys, door and/or alarm codes or other access to a MetroParks building. Prior to the issuance of either a key or code, the volunteer must complete a Background Check Authorization Form. A signed Volunteer Key Issue Log must be completed prior to key/code assignment. All key and/or code assignments must be approved by the Chief Ranger. Volunteers may not relinquish control of any key or code issued to them. Nor are they permitted to duplicate or share any key or code with another person, volunteer or other staff member without prior approval from the Chief Ranger. Lost keys MUST be immediately reported to the Chief Ranger.

## **Scheduling and Absences**

Generally, volunteer scheduling is handled through the Manager of Volunteer Resources or Park Manager. If a volunteer needs to change or cancel his/her scheduled work hours once established, he/she should contact the MetroParks staff member supervising the volunteer worksite as soon as possible.

## **Tracking of Volunteer Hours**

Tracking of volunteer time is extremely important since it helps document each volunteer's commitment of time to the community and enables MetroParks to demonstrate the value of the Volunteer Program. These documented volunteer hours are often an item included in grant applications, which assist MetroParks in stretching resources and accomplishing more. All volunteer hours are to be tracked and recorded by the volunteer via one of the following methods:

- A) VicNet ([www.YourMetroParks.net/support-us/volunteering/volunteer](http://www.YourMetroParks.net/support-us/volunteering/volunteer) login)
- B) Individual Monthly Volunteer Time Sheet
- C) Signing in at an event or program

Completed time sheets should be submitted to the Manager of Volunteer Resources or designated staff member. Each Volunteer may request a copy of their recorded volunteer hours from the Manager of Volunteer Resources.

## Recognition

MetroParks recognizes our volunteers annually with a Volunteer Appreciation Celebration. Volunteers are periodically given the spotlight in monthly newsletters, on MetroParks website and on social media to highlight accomplishments and underscore the immense value volunteers bring to our community.

## Rewards

Volunteers may earn valuable incentives based on their service hours. The service hours are recorded by submitting Monthly Volunteer Time Sheets, event and program volunteer sign in sheets or through the current volunteer data management system (i.e. VICNET/Volgistics). To redeem incentives based on recorded volunteer hours, volunteers should contact the Manager of Volunteer Resources and complete a Volunteer Rewards Application found on our website [YourMetroParks.net](http://YourMetroParks.net)>Support Us>Volunteering>Current Volunteers>Volunteer Rewards.

<b>Criteria # of Vol. Hours Recorded</b>	<b>Current Policy Reward</b>
20	Two-hour paddleboat rental, one hour stand up paddleboard rental, Shelter rental at favorite park (excluding VOA), gazebo rental at VOA M-Th, Fire pits at Rentschler <b>or</b> Volunteer Polo shirt (knit or performance)
35	Shelter rental (1 day) at favorite park excluding VOA gazebo Fri-Sun & Federal holidays, all day Rowboat with trolling motor rental, two-hour kayak rental (single or double) <b>or</b> Volunteer Hoodie
50	1 Overnight youth camping rental (group) or 1 weekend campsite (two nights), Group paddleboard (4 boards) or Group kayak (4 single or 2 double) rental <b>or</b> Volunteer ¼ zip sweatshirt
100	1 Free Annual Fishing Pass, Trophy Room or Great Miami Room at the Middletown River Center Mon-Thurs or Gazebo rental Sun-Thur, Augspurgen House rental at Chrisholm Sun-Thurs <b>or</b> Volunteer windbreaker
Member in good standing of Friends of MetroParks of Butler County	4 Free "Member Only" Programs annually 20% discount on Regular Price of MetroParks Programs (Public programs; Specialty Programs; Special Events, Day Camps), One Volunteer clothing item of choice. (min 50 hours)

- No discount will be available for School Field Trips or Educational Hourly Programs.
- Only members in good standing of identified volunteer group, Friends of MetroParks (FOMPBC) at the time their registration is made, their dependents (as defined by the IRS), and members of their immediate household (location of legal residence) are eligible to receive FOMPBC Group rates. Members will follow same requirements as staff for registration. (FOMPBC must register for programs advertised as requiring pre-registration. In order for the volunteer group rate to apply, volunteer registrations shall not be made until 5 days before the announced registration deadline. Registration must be made by phone or in person at the MetroParks Administration Building and volunteer rates claimed at that time, identifying FOMPBC membership. Proof of FOMPBC member status must be submitted with payment if requested. Use of volunteer rates shall be limited to no more than 5 reservation slots per program per member. MetroParks reserves the right to cancel any program where minimum registration levels are not reached, for health/safety reasons or for circumstances beyond the control of MetroParks, in which case standard refund and/or rescheduling policies apply. Unless otherwise announced, volunteer program rates do not apply to programs where MetroParks is not the sole sponsor.
- The Executive Director, or his/her designee, may waive facility rentals fees for approved special service projects.
- Other incentives may be offered to volunteer groups, on a case by case basis, as presented on a Volunteer Service Project Plan Proposal Form and with consideration/approval of the Executive Director or designee.
- When a volunteer passes away, upon verification, an immediate family member may make arrangement to redeem unused service hours within two years of their immediate family member's passing. After two years



service hours are no longer valid for redemption.

## **Resolution of Conflict Procedures**

To resolve any conflict while volunteering personal conferences requested by volunteers can be scheduled with the Manager of Volunteer Resources. If the Manager of Volunteer Resources and the volunteer have attempted to solve the problem and it remains unresolved, the problem then may be referred to the Human Resources Manager, Supervisor of Community & Park Connections, then the Executive Director and finally, if necessary, the Board of Park Commissioners.

## **Resignation**

To voluntarily end your volunteer commitment with MetroParks, please inform the Manager of Volunteer Resources as soon as possible.

## **Termination/Separation from the Volunteer Program**

The need to dismiss a volunteer is rare. But sometimes it is required for the safety and protection of volunteers, staff and citizens. Volunteers make specific commitments to MetroParks upon joining the Volunteer Program. Park visitors, other volunteers and staff members depend upon volunteers to perform the duties that they have agreed to undertake. In many cases a MetroParks volunteer may be the only contact a visitor has with MetroParks. Therefore, MetroParks volunteers are expected to present a positive image to the public. Although extenuating circumstances will be considered and allowances made where appropriate, a volunteer may be asked to resign or be terminated from the Volunteer Program for any of the following reasons:

- Theft, misuse, destruction or defacement of MetroParks property.
- Failure to follow safety procedures or to perform assigned or agreed upon duties, or follow directions given by staff supervisor.
- Failure to wear appropriate uniform or protective clothing for the task(s) assigned.
- Inappropriate behavior towards visitors, program participants, other volunteers or staff.
- Dishonesty.
- Illegal activities at the parks or away from the parks that would reflect poorly on the integrity of MetroParks.
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession of weapons or illegal drugs at a volunteer work site.
- Excessive tardiness or repeated absences.



## **Individual Volunteer Policy Manual Acknowledgment & Volunteer Position Acceptance**

I hereby acknowledge the receipt of the MetroParks Volunteer Policy Manual. I understand that the procedures contained within are to be used in the performance of my volunteering with MetroParks of Butler County and I agree to abide by the rules and regulations set forth herein. I understand that if I fail to abide by any of the policies, procedures, or guidelines set forth in this manual I may be subject to termination from the Volunteer program.

I certify that answers given in the online application are true and complete. I authorize MetroParks, its employees and/or its agents to investigate any or all statements contained in this application for employment as may be necessary in arriving at a volunteer position decision. I hereby understand and acknowledge that any volunteer relationship with this organization is of an "at will" nature, which means that the Volunteer may resign at any time and the MetroParks may discharge Volunteer at any time with cause as listed in the manual. In the event of acceptance into the Volunteer Program, I understand that false or misleading information given in my application or interview(s) may result in non-acceptance. I understand, also, that I am required to abide by all rules and regulations of MetroParks.

Volunteer's printed name\_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer's signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

**Please send your signed acknowledgement of the MetroParks Volunteer Policy Manual and Volunteer Position Acceptance to the attention of the Manager of Volunteer Resources at:**

MetroParks of Butler County  
2051 Timberman Road  
Hamilton, OH 45013  
Fax: 513-867-5954  
[volunteering@yourmetroparks.net](mailto:volunteering@yourmetroparks.net)