



Ecological Stewardship Manual

Volunteer Group Leadership



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INTRODUCTION

Volunteer Resources- Overview

Our role is to serve as a central coordinating point for effective volunteer management. In this capacity we:

- Connect volunteers to the mission of the Preserves through volunteer opportunities
- Support FPCC staff and Volunteer Leaders in their efforts to effectively engage volunteers (coordinate training, supplies, recognition, scheduling, communication)

The Importance of Volunteer Group Leaders

Volunteer Group Leaders are the essential connection point between the mission of the Forest Preserve District and the public. Your value as a leader of volunteer groups is tremendous. You have the ability to facilitate an amazing amount of work, but more importantly you are in a position to motivate and inspire others. We recognize that a sustainable volunteer program requires well trained and well supported leaders.

Effective Volunteer Group Leaders

An effective volunteer group leader has the following characteristics:

- Organized- be prepared, have a plan
- Aware- notice your surroundings
- Adaptable- be willing and able to change your plans
- Engaged- be an integral part of the workday

Volunteer Group Leader Position Overview

- Volunteer Group Leaders plan, lead, and provide follow-up to volunteer workdays

- Volunteer workdays provide the opportunity for people to get involved in caring for their Forest Preserves.
- Responsibilities:
 - Supervise activities with a concern for the safety of the volunteers and the protection of the resource
 - Serve as an ambassador representing the FPCC and conduct self in a positive manner
 - Follow FPCC policies and procedures
- There are many types of Volunteer Group Leaders; they can be fellow volunteers, FPCC staff, or staff from other organizations. They may choose to specialize in certain tasks.
- This training is designed to acquaint you with the tools and skills needed to lead groups. However, experience via hands-on training and mentoring in the field will be another important component.

Fundamentals of Volunteer Group Leadership

- There is a huge difference between participating in a project and leading one
- You can make a tremendous impact as a leader- you could work by yourself for three hours or you could lead a group of ten people for three hours and increase your impact ten-fold.

Group Leadership training is essential, as the future of our volunteer program depends on your strong leadership.

SUCCESSFUL WORKDAY BASICS

The Outcomes of a Successful Volunteer Workday or Project

A successful project is one that meets the volunteers' needs and the organization's needs in the following areas:

- Work Product/ Goals- there was a positive environmental impact, the health of the site was improved
- People
 - Retention- volunteers want to come back
 - Rewarding- volunteers feel good about what they did and know why it was important
 - Connections- participants have a positive view of the organization and are connected to the mission
- Behavior change- we want people to care *about* nature so that they care *for* nature
- Safety- nobody gets hurt
- Report and Recap- reports are made and volunteer hours recorded

It is important to meet all of these outcomes to have a successful workday. For example, if the group got a lot of work done but at the end of the day did not understand the value and importance of the task, you would need to assess what the roadblock was to understanding that information. Try a new approach the next time you lead a workday.

WORKDAY FEASIBILITY AND ADMIN

Different Activities

There are many different activities that may be part of a volunteer project. Each activity requires different levels of instruction and supervision, and different supplies and setup. Some of the activities are:

- Controlling invasive species, such as pulling garlic mustard
- Brush cutting and burning
- Seed collecting and dispersing
- Mulching (trees or trails)
- Planting
- Litter cleanup

Regardless of the activity, the same basic principles apply to all volunteer projects.

As a leader of volunteer workdays, sometimes the basic setup of the project is done for you, other times you make the plans yourself. There are three main ways that a project originates:

1. The leader is conducting an already planned workday; examples include:
 - A staff person or volunteer conducting stewardship planned by Volunteer Resources
 - A Workday Leader conducting stewardship planned by the Site Steward
 - A volunteer leading a sub-group at a large workday with other Workday Leaders and a Site Steward present
2. The leader is responding to a request for a workday; examples include:
 - A group contacts you wanting to work at a site where you volunteer
 - Volunteer Resources connects you with a group looking for a workday
3. The leader is creating their own project; examples include:

- You see a task that needs to be done, so you organize a group
- You want to lead a project for an organization that you are a part of (Ex. church or employer)

Workday Feasibility Decisions

There are five interrelated parts to a workday.

1. Site (where you will be working)
2. Group (who will be volunteering)
3. Activity (what you will be doing)
4. Leaders (how will you get it done)
5. Date/time (when you will be doing it)

Use the following questions to determine if the workday is feasible. If the answer is “no” then simply change one or more of the five parts.

1. Site/Location

Question- Is the site available on the date? **Example-** *Is there is a Walk-a-thon on the same day?* **Solution-** *Pick a new date or a new site.*

Question- Is the activity appropriate for the site? **Example-** *You are planning on pulling garlic mustard, and there is none at the site.* **Solution-** *Change the site or change the activity.*

Question- Can the site handle the group size? **Example-** *You have a group of 100 people and the site only has 5 parking spaces.* **Solution-** *Either limit the size of the group or pick a new location.*

When answering these questions about the site, also consider the layout of the site, the visibility, the access and identify

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any potential hazards like water or bike paths. Does it work well for the group and is it safe?

2. Group

Question- Is the activity appropriate for the group? **Example-** *If the group contains young children, is the activity safe for them?* **Solution-** *Change the activity.*

Question- Do you have enough leaders for the group? **Example-** *If you are picking up litter with 50 teenagers and you are the only leader, either reduce the group size or find another leader to help.*

FPCC Guidelines:

*For activities that require tools and/or training- you need at least one qualified leader for every 25 adults or every 10 youth (under age 18)

*For activities with no tools or training- you need one qualified leader for every 50 adults or every 10 youth.

3. Activity

Question- Can the activity be done on the date? **Example-** *If a group want to pull garlic mustard, is it the right time of year to do the activity?* **Solution-** *If not, change the activity or change the date.*

Question- Do you have enough leaders for the activity? **Example-** *If you are cutting brush with adults, do you have at least one leader for every 25 volunteers?* **Solution-** *If not, get more leaders or choose a different activity.*

Question- Do you have enough supplies for the activity? **Example-** *Your group size is 50 but you only have tools for 20 people.* **Solution-** *get more supplies*

(request loaner supplies) or change the activity.

4. Leaders

Question- Are the leaders available on the date? **Example-** *Only one of your usual leaders can make the workday.*

Solution- *Find other leaders or change the date.*

Question- Are your leaders trained and prepared? **Example-** *If you have a group of teenagers, have your leaders worked with teens before?* **Solution-** *If not, find some leaders who have or get your leaders the appropriate training.*

5. Date/time- Most workdays should be around 2-3 hours with a scheduled break.

Question- Is the activity appropriate for the date and time requested? **Example:** *If a group would like to attend a workday after school or work, consider daylight – especially in the late fall and winter.*

Solution- *Change the time/date of the project; suggest a weekend day.*

Decisions and Approval of Work Plan

Stewardship Work A Site Steward is responsible for overseeing all volunteer work done at their site. Each site where volunteers are actively engaged in ecological restoration has a Management Schedule which is used as the guiding document informing restoration activities. Management Schedules are developed in collaboration between the Regional Ecologist and the Site Steward. These documents lay out restoration priorities, identify core areas needing management, state when and how restoration activities should occur and indicates who is responsible for each activity (volunteers, contractors, staff, or interns). Any changes or additions to the Management

Schedule must be approved by the Regional Ecologist.

All work done at a site must be approved through the Management Schedule and cleared by the Site Steward. That includes work done by other Stewards, Workday Leaders and Third Party agencies (such as Shedd, FoCR, FotFP, Audubon, Greencorps, etc.)

Other Projects Volunteer Resource Staff will work directly with the volunteers and District staff to design workdays and get appropriate approvals. This includes projects such as mulching, planting, litter cleanup, trail maintenance, etc.

Permitting Policy

Permits are an important communication tool to notify District staff and other interested parties of planned use for different sites. Some permits have a fee associated with them and others are simply issued to keep everyone informed of planned usage and to avoid conflicting use of the same space.

Permits (or their equivalent) are required for:

- All groups of 25 or more for any activity
- Individuals or groups less than 25 for a non-typical activity, using non-typical equipment, at non-typical location **or** at non-typical time

Examples of **typical activities** are biking, riding, hiking, picnicking, kite flying and horseback riding.

Examples of **non-typical activities** are litter cleanup, restoration work (cutting, pulling weeds, herbiciding), species monitoring,

spray paint markings, orienteering, sports team training, athletic events, charity walks/races, filming movies, tours and overnight camping.

Examples of **typical equipment** are banners, BBQ grills, bag toss, volleyball, tables, chairs, umbrellas, battery sound systems and soccer goal.

Examples of **non-typical equipment** are bouncy houses, generators, added port-a-lets, stages, tents and generator run sound systems.

Examples of **typical locations** are picnic groves, official trails, paved paths, lakes, ponds and flying fields.

Examples of **non-typical locations** are off trail areas and natural areas.

Example of **typical time** is from dawn to dusk (daylight hours).

Examples of **non-typical time** is pre-dawn or post-dusk (non-daylight hours).

Permits are issued one of two ways:

- An Individual permit will include name and contact info of permit holder, the activity, assigned permit number and expiration date. Internal reports are generated to list these permits. Can be for a specific day(s), annual or multi year.
- Permit proxy – Weekly Workday Reports for restoration work and most special projects are produced by Volunteer Resource staff on Thursdays. This report is in lieu of having a permit for each workday. It is distributed to all the necessary internal departments and external agencies as explained in next section.

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- If FPCC staff question you at the site, just let them know that it is a permitted activity and it should be on their Weekly Workday List.

Picnic Grove Reservation – You can request a picnic grove reservation through Volunteer Resources for your workday. Permits are free:

- Weekdays only after Memorial Day through before Labor Day (weekend use may be booked through Volunteer Resources but there is a fee associated with weekend use during the summer)
- Weekdays and weekends – After Labor Day through before Memorial Day

Weekly Workday List

Volunteer Resources uses the Weekly Workday List to notify government officials (alderman, commissioners, etc.), government agencies (EPA, Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability) and FPCC staff (Resource Management, Maintenance, Law Enforcement) that a workday is taking place. A sample of a Weekly Workday List is in the Appendix.

- Stewardship workdays get reported when a Site Steward or other authorized leader adds the opportunity to the Online Volunteer System
- Other workday projects get added when a volunteer group leader schedules a workday with a Volunteer Coordinator who will enter the opportunity and schedule slot on the Online Volunteer System

All workdays must have an Online Opportunity and a Schedule Slot. It is critical

that site leaders work with their Volunteer Coordinator to get their workdays listed. All workdays, public or private, must be scheduled.

Weekly Workday Process: On Tuesdays, Volunteer Resources issues a preliminary Weekly Workday Report. Site Stewards or their designated Admin person should review this report and respond immediately on any errors or omissions.

The final report is sent out late Thursday afternoon. Although revisions can be made, we only re-issue the report under extreme circumstances.

Tools and Supplies

Volunteer Resources provides tools and supplies to support workdays.

Established volunteer groups maintain their own inventory at an FPCC storage facility or at their own home. Other individuals or groups request loaner tools and supplies to use for a single workday. The Supply Catalog and ordering information is available at fpdcc.com/volunteer.

Tips for Tools and Supplies:

- Check your supplies in advance to make sure you have enough for your upcoming workday
- If you need supplies, fill out a **Supply Order Form** or **Loaner Order Form** (see Appendix)
- Supplies can be delivered to FPCC facilities across the county. These locations are listed on the **Facilities Directions and Hours** form (see website)
- The FPCC also has a mechanism to repair broken power equipment (chainsaws, brush cutters and blowers). See **Repair Request Form** (see website)

PEOPLE

FPCC Volunteer Principles in Volunteer Group Projects

- We do not look at volunteers as “free labor”; we recognize that a strong volunteer program requires an investment of FPCC resources and time
- We focus on providing a positive experience that is safe, supervised, structured, and supportive
- We recognize that positive experiences create an informed, active, and connected public, which is essential for the successful future of the FPCC

Volunteer Motivations- Individuals

It is important to understand why people volunteer. The most common reasons that people volunteer are to:

- Be challenged
- Improve the community or agency
- Gain new skills
- Make a difference for a cause they care about
- Socialize/meet new people
- Receive recognition
- Have fun
- Donate professional skills
- Gain professional contacts/stay connected
- Earn credit or service hours for school
- Improve mental/physical health

Think about why you volunteer. Remember, everyone has their own reasons for choosing to volunteer. You want to do your best to incorporate these into your workday. For example, knowing that many people volunteer to socialize, make sure that everyone has a chance to get to know each other. Providing name tags and doing group introductions are good examples of creating

a friendly atmosphere. Some volunteers may want to gain new skills, so be sure to include chances for learning such as plant or animal identification. Knowing that some volunteers want to be challenged, you could set goals at the beginning of your workday for the group to achieve.

Volunteer Motivations- Groups

Groups have their own needs as well. Many of these needs apply to multiple groups.

- Corporate groups typically look for projects with measurable impacts, for example how many pounds of trash collected. They also appreciate the effect of increased employee morale and may be looking for a project with high public visibility
- Religious organizations typically have a desire to serve a cause and are looking for roles for all ages
- Student groups typically are looking to earn service hours. They also appreciate projects that incorporate team building and that give the participants the opportunity to practice leadership skills (these also may apply to corporate groups)

Interpretive Moments

During the workday, be on the lookout for interesting plants and animals or look for opportunities to talk about topics you already have knowledge on: glaciation, native peoples, the role of fire on the landscape, etc. Interpretive moments can be either impromptu or planned. Take a break from work to discuss or bring the items to the break or wrap-up. Remember you do not need to know what something is to facilitate discussion about it.

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For example, a volunteer approaches you with a beetle on their glove and asks the most common question, “What’s this?” Since there are over 25,000 kinds of beetles in North America, there is a chance that you do not know the beetle’s name. Don’t worry, you can still have a meaningful conversation about the beetle without knowing its name. When working with youth, ask “How many legs does it have, what do you think it eats, does it have camouflage?” Even if you know the name of the beetle, it is usually better to keep that information in reserve until you engage in conversation.

Tip: Remember, your job as the Workday Leader is to circulate, supervise, float, monitor, ask questions, and answer questions.

Plan to Interact with the Public

When working in a public space, there is a good chance that you will encounter members of the public who are not part of your workday. No matter which organization you work or volunteer for, the public will most likely assume that you are associated with the Forest Preserves of Cook County if you are in a forest preserve.

Any interaction with the public should be looked at as a great opportunity for education.

- Many workdays involve the removal of invasive species. Typically, this involves pulling weeds (Garlic Mustard) and cutting brush (Buckthorn). At first glance, members of the public might not understand your restoration efforts. Explain that these species are non-native, they damage our natural areas and that their removal makes our woodlands and prairies healthier.

- Be able to describe in one sentence the goal of the workday, not the specific task. For example, if the task is litter cleanup, you could say “Volunteers are making this area healthier and safer for people and wildlife by removing litter from this preserve.”
- Know what to say/do if you do not know the answer. There is a good chance that you will be asked a question that you will not know the answer to. You should be able to provide contact information where someone can go for more info. A great place for all questions is through the contact page on the FPCC website: <http://fpdcc.com/contact/>

Sexual Harassment, Code of Ethics, Drug Free Policy and Concealed Carry

The Forest Preserve has policies on sexual harassment, ethics and a Drug Free Workplace. Cook County Forest Preserves are exempt from the January 2014 law allowing concealed carry weapons. (see Appendix). We expect that our volunteers abide by those same policies and we also are committed to assuring that our volunteers are protected by those policies. If you feel that you are subject to any offense listed in this section, please contact the Volunteer Resources Manager with your concerns immediately. All reports in this area will be kept confidential.

- To protect against allegations, it is best to follow the Two-Deep Rule. See Safety section.

Discrimination

The Forest Preserve has policies addressing discrimination (see Appendix) We expect our volunteers to abide by those same policies and we also are committed to assuring that our volunteers are protected by those

policies. If you feel that you are subject to any offense in this section, please contact the Volunteer Resources Manager with your concerns immediately. All reports in this area will be kept confidential.

Our volunteer group leaders should contribute to the decision on what groups or individuals they work with. We support your decisions as long as they don't discriminate. We will work with you on decisions based on operational aspects or past behavior issues.

Example: We support a decision to not work with youth groups. We will not support a decision to refuse to work with a certain youth group.

Example: We support a decision to not work with schools. We will not support a decision to refuse to work with a certain school or one from a certain area or zip code.

Example: We support a decision to not work with youth that are unaccompanied by an adult. We will not support a decision to work with your friends' kids but refuse to work with other youth.

However, if there are operational issues (like a group is always late, insufficient leaders, disrespectful behavior), please contact your Volunteer Coordinator.

SAFETY

Insurance

In the case of personal illness or injury, volunteers rely on their own personal insurance resources.

The County does not carry accident or injury (Workers' Compensation) insurance on volunteers and cannot assume responsibility for any accidents or injuries.

Federal Volunteer Protection Act (42 USCA Sec. 14501 et seq.)

This act generally provides that volunteers will not be personally liable for their acts or omissions if they are acting within the scope of their responsibility for the organization and the harm is "not caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed."

Waivers

Forest Preserves policy is that all volunteers need to sign a waiver before beginning their volunteer service. Copies of the following waivers are in the Appendix and at fpdcc.com/volunteer/workday-resources-forms/.

- Individual Waiver
- Workday Sign-In Sheet Waiver
- Group Leader Waiver
- Student Restoration Field Trip Agreement Waiver
- Donation of Professional Services Waiver

- **Volunteers under 18**
 - If accompanied by parent/guardian- the parent/guardian signs the **Individual Waiver or Workday Sign-In**

Sheet Waiver. Youth under 16 must be accompanied by an adult parent or legal guardian.

- If attending on their own, youth 16-17 years old must bring an **Individual Waiver** signed by a parent/guardian. This waiver can be valid for up to one year from signed date. The emergency contact information must be completed. If the volunteer does not have a signed waiver, do not let them participate in the workday (send them home).
- Schools and Youth Groups- the group leader should be sent the **Student Restoration Field Trip Agreement & Waiver** ahead of time. If Volunteer Resources has coordinated the group, they will do this. The youth group leader sends this to all parents/guardians and brings the completed forms for all the youth to the Workday Leader or Site Steward

- **Volunteers 18 and over**
 - Any adult who has signed up online has completed the waiver (they technically do not have to sign a waiver at the workday but may sign in for attendance purposes. This documentation is helpful when calculating volunteer hours)
 - A drop in volunteer needs to sign the **Individual Waiver or Workday Sign-In Sheet Waiver**

- **Group Volunteers**
 - The group leader signs the **Group Leader Waiver** on behalf of a group. All group members have signed either a waiver or consent form with the

organization or all are employees of and insured through the organization. Additionally, if any of the group is under 18, the group leader has obtained the parent/legal guardian signed **Individual Waiver**.

- **A Contractor Donating their Services-** discuss with Volunteer Resources and use the **Donation of Professional Services Waiver** This must be preapproved by the FPCC and a separate form is needed for each workday.

ID Cards

ID cards are automatically issued by Volunteer Resources to volunteers in certified positions (Ex. Site Steward, Workday Leader, Chainsawyer, Herbicide Applicator/Operator, Brush Pile Burn Boss). ID cards for other general volunteers can be requested through your Volunteer Coordinator. ID cards will be issued on an annual basis.

Vests

Volunteer Resources supplies vests by request via the Supply Order system. Vests are required for roadside and recommended for chainsaw work. The use of vests is discretionary, although they are a great way to help identify volunteers and volunteer leaders.

Parking Permits

Parking permits do not authorize illegal parking. They help to identify you as a volunteer if you are working during off hours, isolated areas, etc.

Working with Youth

There are special considerations for working with youth.

- **Each youth volunteer must be closely supervised at all times to ensure the youth is safe and that activities are performed in designated safe areas away from any potential hazards at all times**
- Provide adequate training for each youth volunteer
- Youth accompanied by adult – Adult that they come with should be supervising and managing any safety issues
- Unaccompanied Youth (16-17 years of age only)–Extra attention on managing their safety should be provided by a designated member(s) of the volunteer group and follow some of the guidelines below
 - Two-Deep Method: Where an adult volunteer shall never be in the presence of a single youth without another adult present. Best to have at least two adult volunteers when interacting with a single youth or send the youth home.
- Youth in groups – Guidelines
 - Give rules at the start of the workday
 - Establish yourself as the leader, be positive but firm
 - Discuss the roles with chaperones before the start of the workday. Your role is to explain and oversee the tasks of the workday. Their role is behavior management and to provide assistance to their group
- Safety glasses/goggles are required for volunteers under 18. Do not make

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assumptions and recognize that many youths may not have used a tool before and/or been in nature

Leader-Volunteer Ratios

In order to maintain a safe and organized workday, we require the following ratios:

For activities that require tools and/or training- you need at least one qualified leader for every 25 adults or every 10 youth (under age 18)
For activities with no tools or training- you need one qualified leader for every 50 adults or every 10 youth

Preparedness

Safety is everyone's job at the workday. Taking the proper precautions can prevent many accidents and injuries and prepare you in the event that they do happen. Familiarize yourself with the information below and have your First-Aid Kit and at least one fully charged cell phone available at the worksite.

Proper Notification

Suggestions of what to wear and bring should be included in the online posting for the Opportunities for your site. Volunteer Resources sends out a list to groups that they place with workdays. This document, titled "Be Prepared for Your Workday", is available on the Resources page of the volunteer website (fpdcc.com/volunteer/resources/)

Prevention of Specific Hazards

Sun – Even when the temperature is cool or the sky is slightly overcast, sun exposure can be a hazard. Suggest to everyone to apply sunscreen, wear a hat, and wear sunglasses. Although you aren't expected to supply sunscreen for people, it is good to have some available for those who forget theirs.

Cold and Hot Weather – You can mitigate the effects of cold weather by working in an area that is sheltered from the wind and making sure that the brush pile is burning before volunteers arrive. On hot days, you can work in shady areas and start the workday early in the morning so that the workday is done well before the hottest part of the day.

Dehydration – Staying hydrated is always important so water should always be brought out on workdays. Volunteer Resources has 2 gallon and 5 gallon Igloo Jugs and disposable and reusable cups available through the Supply Order System. All volunteers should be encouraged to BYO water bottles.

Insects – Using some sort of insect repellent is suggested from spring through fall. All volunteers are responsible for having their own, but it is nice to have a backup for those who forgot. If it contains DEET, you should double-check with parents before letting a youth use it. There is insect sting relief in the First-Aid Kit. Volunteer Resources also has mosquito head netting available via the Supply Order System.

Chiggers – Chiggers (tiny mites) are generally picked up from low grasses close to the ground. The best protection is to tuck pants inside your boots. If volunteers have shorts on or open toed shoes, you may want to suggest working away from shady areas of tall grasses.

Ticks – Ticks can be anywhere on plants so they can be found anywhere on the body. When the workday is done, encourage volunteers to check for ticks on any exposed skin or lightweight apparel. Ticks can take up to 7 hours to find a spot to burrow, so remind

volunteers to check for ticks everywhere and take a shower when they get home.

Allergies – It is helpful to know if anyone has outdoor or food allergies (particularly insect allergies), location of their Epi pen, etc. just in case. Making a point to ask about insect and food allergies in the safety talk can prepare you to deal with an emergency better later. An allergic reaction to an insect sting or other allergens even if an Epi pen or allergy medicine was used is a 911-call or trip to an ER. Symptoms can return after the medication wears off.

Fatigue/exertion – Take periodic breaks throughout the workday - more often on warm or hot days. Encourage/invite folks to take breaks as they feel they need to – this is not an endurance contest. Pay attention to changes in skin color, heavy breathing, amount of sweating (or no sweating), etc. of all the volunteers as these are good warning signals

Poison Ivy – If your work area includes poison ivy, part of your introductory safety talk should include ID characteristics and pointing out specimens to show volunteers. Remind them that it is the oil that causes the reaction so gloves can protect your hands but rubbing your gloves or sleeves on your face or arms or touching your pants or socks can spread the oil. Avoidance is the best prevention. Wash your clothing after the workday to remove the oil.

Tecnu is a product available is available at most drugstores. Combined with cold water, it removes the oil from your skin and is best used as soon as you know you have been exposed to the oil. Dish soap will also help remove the oil.

The Poison Ivy ID sheet is available from Volunteer Resources via the Supply Order System.

Water Hazards – In your safety talk, communicate a general awareness of where the water is; youth should only work there with an adult and even adults should work in pairs.

Traffic –An awareness of proximity to trails and concern about blind corners should be included if appropriate to the site in your safety talk. Use caution when working near any type of trail. Volunteer Resources has safety vests available for either permanent use or on a loan basis for occasional workdays if your site is adjacent to a trail. Order these through the Supply Order System.

Vines, stumps, slick areas, holes – Remove vines or stumps that are in between the work area and the brush pile or debris gathering area before the workday starts. Alert volunteers to slick spots and holes in the work area. For volunteers new to working in a wooded area, a simple suggestion to lift up your feet as you walk to prevent tripping is helpful. (Use the Woods Walk, not the City Shuffle!)

Widowmakers & Vines – During your safety talk, mention that there are often hazards above your head that can come down because of work done at ground level. A reminder to look above you, especially when cutting down taller trees is important.

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Injury/Illness during the Workday

If an injury or illness occurs during the workday, determine the severity, and take the appropriate action.

First-Aid Kits are available through Volunteer Resources. One should be present at all workdays – at the site, not out in the car. Basics for dealing with splinters, minor cuts, burns, as well as a First Aid guide and items to be used in more serious first aid are part of the kit. Supplies to replenish the kits are also available to order.

- Life-threatening or potentially life-threatening situation
 - Call 911 and follow any directions that are given
 - Know the street location and major cross streets near the Preserve entrance (it is not as easy as calling 911 for a home address)
 - Keep the person calm and quiet
 - Emergency care should be given ASAP if needed
 - Ask people to go to certain points at the main road, at the parking lot, at the trailhead, etc. to direct emergency responders to the site
- Minor injury: cut, scrape, sprain
 - Refer to the guide in the First-Aid Kit
 - Let the injured person know that first-aid supplies are

available if they would like to treat themselves

- Incidents involving Minors
 - In case of an injury/illness, medical emergency, or other incident, make every reasonable effort to contact the named emergency contact.
 - Do not allow the minor to leave the workday without first communicating with the emergency contact, no matter how minor the injury/illness may appear. Youth may downplay or not realize the extent of their injury.
 - Stay with the minor until a parent or legal guardian arrives at the site.
 - If you are unable to reach the emergency contact or stay with the minor until the parent or legal guardian arrives contact the Forest Preserve police for assistance.
 - If emergency care is required, contact the named emergency contact as soon as possible

CPR/First Aid

The FPCC offers CPR/First Aid/AED classes once a month on a weekday and four times a year on Saturdays. Registration is available at fpdcc.com/volunteer.

Incident Reporting Procedure

The Incident Report Form is the documentation for all incidents; it includes what happened, who was involved and what actions have been made. The District is dedicated to making it possible for every volunteer to have sufficient knowledge about the risks and hazards of the environments, activities, and tools used in order to make appropriate decisions about site and volunteer safety.

Volunteers shall use this form to report all workday related injuries, illnesses, or “near miss” events (which could have caused an injury or illness) – no matter how minor. This helps us to identify and correct hazards before they cause serious injuries.

After the emergency is addressed, but while all the details of the incident are fresh in

everyone’s mind, fill out the Incident Report Form. Copies are in every First-Aid kit, at fpdcc.com/volunteer, and can be re-ordered through the Volunteer Resources Supply Order System. (see Appendix for the *Incident Report Form*)

This form shall be completed as soon as possible and given to Volunteer Resources staff for further action. Even if the injured person does not want to fill one out, the Volunteer leader should fill it out for their own and our records. Parts of the report form include statements from witnesses. One copy of the report should be mailed or e-mailed to Volunteer Resources. Anything that requires an ER visit or 911 call must be reported to your Volunteer Resources coordinator as soon as possible.

REPORT AND RECAP

Attendance

A record of who attended your workday is an important tool for recruitment, recognition, and retention efforts in the future. The amount of information you collect (name, e-mail, home address, phone number) is up to the Workday Leader and/or Site Steward.

Recording Hours

- Stewardship workday hours are recorded in the Admin Site Opportunity by the Site Steward or a volunteer assigned to the Admin Role. These are the total number of hours worked by the entire group at the workday.
- Individual hours are recorded in individual profiles by the volunteer.
- Group hours are recorded in group profiles.

Online Volunteer System

Hours entered by the Workday Leader or Site Steward via the ADMIN Survey

Since volunteers are not required to sign up online for workdays and not everyone will record their hours, there is a mechanism for reporting the total hours at the workday. A site leader who has been placed into the Admin Opportunity is able to login to their profile and complete the ADMIN survey to record the total hours and number of volunteers at the workday. If you are not the one filling out the survey, be sure to

communicate the information about the workday to the person who will be filling out the survey. FPCC decisions will be based on this information.

Be sure to record all the hours from the workday. For example, if you and another volunteer arrived at 8am to set up, you had 21 volunteers from 9am-12pm and then you and two volunteers stayed until 3pm to herbicide and shut down the brush pile burn, the total hours would be 74. An ADMIN survey primer is in the Appendix.

Hours entered by Individuals or Groups

Each individual or group who signed up for the workday will be able to login to their online profile and fill out a survey to record their hours. This information will inform recognition programs and eligibilities for classes. See Appendix for an individual survey primer.

Record Keeping

Send signed waivers, herbicide logs, burn call sheets, and other documents to Volunteer Resources on a regular basis (every three months is sufficient). Documents can be dropped off at the Volunteer Resources Center or placed in the mailboxes located in the volunteer storage pods. Notify volunteer.fpd@cookcountyil.gov to arrange pick up. You may utilize the inter-office mail system at any of our facilities. Interoffice envelopes are available upon request.

THE WORKDAY- PLANNING

Volunteer Project Planning

Worksheet

The Volunteer Project Planning Worksheet is a great tool for you to plan the project. Planning collaboratively and sharing with all participants ensures that everyone is on the same page.

Things to do before your workday:

- Know the task, what you are doing and where you are doing it
- Get to know the site
- Required communication- Weekly Workday Schedule, burn notifications, notify appropriate staff, Site Steward or Volunteer Resources
- Set goals for the workday
- Determine number of supplies needed and order if necessary
- Determine the additional items – Ex. name tags, water jugs, snacks, clipboards, Scavenger Hunt or fun activity
- Send pre-activity information to the volunteers including map and directions (with the meeting location noted) and what to bring and wear (give example)
- Determine the leadership roles that need to be filled at the workday

Checklist

As you run workdays you will get familiar with the items that you need to bring for your workday. Preparing a checklist unique to your needs is an important planning tool. A sample checklist is in the Appendix.

Notification to FPCC and Volunteers

It is important to remind volunteers of the upcoming workday by e-mail or phone call.

Any changes in locations or times should be communicated. Lists of what to wear or bring are especially helpful to new volunteers or groups.

Online Opportunity and Schedule Slots

All Stewardship Workday sites have an Online Opportunity. This Opportunity can be public (viewable via the FPCC website) or closed (not visible on the FPCC website). When a workday is scheduled, a Schedule Slot needs to be created by Volunteer Resources. Even a closed Opportunity needs to have a Schedule Slot for each workday. Volunteers can view and sign up for public Schedule Slots.

Who Is Coming- Automatic Emails

Whenever a volunteer signs up for a Schedule Slot, they receive an automatic email that thanks them for signing up and gives them the information about the workday. The Opportunity contact person is copied on the email so that they know who is coming and can contact the volunteer if they wish.

Dividing the Group into Smaller Workgroups

One of the most effective things that you can do at the workday is to divide your group into smaller work groups. There are many benefits to doing this:

- You can pair new and less experienced volunteers with long-term volunteers
- Easier to manage- instead of having to manage 25 people, you can manage 5 groups of 5; the task of management is

VOLUNTEER GROUP LEADERSHIP

shared by the people in the group. In addition, the distribution of supplies is easier when you know how many of each item the group gets

- **Safety-** members of the group have a role and all are responsible for their own as well as the group's safety, leaders can also work with each group individually to talk about the task
- **Team Building-** small groups enable the members to practice leadership skills and to get to know each other better
- **Accountability-** the group can encourage all of its members to participate and be productive
- **Accomplishment-** a lot more can be accomplished by a small group than by an individual, and the group is able to celebrate their achievements together
- **Ownership-** a group can take ownership of a specific area or task

Examples:

- If the task is brush cutting, you could make groups of five volunteers. Two volunteers have loppers, two are the bow saw team (one saws and the other holds the tree), and one drags the cut brush to the pile. Again, the volunteers should periodically switch roles.
- If the task is litter cleanup, you could make groups of five volunteers. Within that small group, each volunteer could have a task: one has the scavenger hunt clipboard, one has the pik stick, two have trash bags, and one has the recycling bag. Volunteers should be given the option to try different roles.

Methods:

There are many different methods to dividing the group into smaller groups, such as letting the volunteers choose their own groups or

counting off by fives. Groups can be divided ahead of time or at the workday. Choose the method that works best for your group.

Workday Script

Plan what you are going to say ahead of time. This ensures that you do not forget anything important and helps you to do a better job in presenting the information.

When you are developing your workday script, consider your audience. If you work with a variety of volunteer groups, then you should develop a variety of workday scripts. For example, your introduction to a group of 12 volunteers who you have known for years, would be different from your introduction to a group of 25 teenagers.

Things to include in your script:

1. **Introduction-** a good introduction should cover the following:
 - a. **Thank** the group for being there and volunteering their time
 - b. Briefly talk about the **Mission** of your organization
 - c. Explain **how volunteers contribute** to the mission
 - d. Talk about **where** they are and other information about the site (Ex. bathrooms)
2. **Task Instruction-** when you are describing how to perform the task, make sure to do the following:
 - a. Explain **what** the group is doing
 - b. Explain **why** they are doing it
 - c. Explain **how** to do the task
 - d. Explain what equipment they need to do the task, if tools are being used, explain how to safely carry and use them
 - e. Avoid technical jargon and keep your message positive
 - f. Get creative with your task description- you can make activities

like litter cleanup and mulching
exciting if you find a way to connect to
your audience

- g. If there are different types of tasks,
describe each one and make
assignments if necessary

3. Safety

- a. Explain that everyone is a safety
leader; it is not just your job as the
leader to make sure that everyone is
working safely- it is the job of
everyone
- b. Talk about poison ivy and ticks if they
are present at the site, remind
everyone to stay hydrated
- c. Let volunteers know that they should
not work by themselves
- d. Determine which activities and
situations might be potentially
hazardous at the workday and know
what you will say about them
- e. Tip: if volunteers will be using tools,
talk about tool safety and use *before*
you hand out the tools

4. **Wrap-up/Reflection-** this is one of the
most important parts of the day. The
wrap-up helps to reinforce the goals of
the workday and helps you to improve as
a leader if you find out what went well
and what could be improved. In a good
wrap-up, you should do the following:
 - a. Remind the group what they did and
why, and talk about the impact it had
 - b. Ask what their favorite experiences
were
 - c. Explain how they can do more
 - d. Thank them again

Although this can be done at the end of the
day, reflection can happen throughout the
day.

Planning for a Break

A break in the workday gives you the
opportunity to do a number of things
including: refocusing the group, having a
snack, changing the task, highlighting some
interesting natural features, and showing off
natural objects that volunteers have found.
Decide the following things ahead of time:

- Will you bring food and water for the
group?
- What will you talk about during the break?
- Will you give a tour or lead an activity?
- Think about “pre-planned” Interpretive
Moments. By knowing the site, its history
and what flora and fauna are usually
around (Ex. deer tracks in the snow or
hawks soaring overhead).

Contingency Plans

You should plan for what to do if any of the
following happen:

- More participants than expected show up
- The group is late
- The weather is different than expected
- Certain areas are inaccessible due to water
or mud
- Volunteers arrive unprepared, i.e.
improperly dressed for the task

Final Planning Details

Take care of the following details a day or
two before the workday:

- Check the weather
(<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lot/>)
- Contact the group leader the day before to
confirm the workday and number of
volunteers
- Double check supplies
- Visit site if possible

VOLUNTEER GROUP LEADERSHIP

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Recruiting and retaining stewardship volunteers is an important component of workday planning. Organizational elements of a successful volunteer group include sharing of information, positive social interactions, sharing common interests, and meaningful work.

Building relationships with volunteers, both new and experienced, should be done both at the stewardship workday and with off-site engagement methods.

In person, leaders can provide encouragement and hands-on training, evaluate volunteers for possible leadership roles, and allow for opportunities for positive social interaction.

Site leaders should use resources such as social media, email, and meetings to communicate with volunteers and keep them interested in coming back. Social media can be an important tool to communicate with groups. It can be used to promote events and upcoming stewardship days and to share photos or site progress updates.

Volunteer Roles

In addition to certified positions, assigning tasks to volunteers will help the event run more smoothly and create meaningful volunteer opportunities. Other volunteer roles can include:

- **Greeter.** The greeter welcomes volunteers at the start of the event and collects waivers
- **Hospitality:** Volunteers responsible for providing snacks and drinks
- **Admin:** Volunteer enters the workday report into OVS
- **Social Media:** Volunteer manages restoration group's social media
- **New Volunteer Buddy:** Volunteer works in small groups with new

volunteers to provide task support and to encourage a welcoming environment

- **And more!!** Be creative and ask volunteers how they would like to be part of the team

THE WORKDAY- IMPLEMENTATION

Setting Up

- The most important thing to remember:
You are a leader, not a worker. Your job is to ensure that all participants are safe and supported.
- Remember the characteristics of an effective workday leader: Organized, Aware, Adaptable, Engaged
- Some activities or sites may require involved setup such as putting up directional signs, marking trees, or starting brush pile burns. Take care of these before volunteers arrive or have trained volunteers assist
- Be ready at least 15 minutes before the start of the workday and survey the area looking for any safety hazards
- Be sure to count your tools before you start the workday
- When the group arrives, find the group leader (if applicable) and introduce yourself
- As you are waiting for the workday to begin, this is a great time to get to know the volunteers. A good question to ask is “Have you been to the Preserves before?”
- Determine the area where you will do your introduction. Choose a place that is as free from distractions as possible. Common distractions include hot and/or bright sun, road noise, and other Preserve users
- Have volunteers fill out any required waivers
 - Be sure to have a clipboard or hard surface to write on

Canceling the Workday – the day of

Before the workday begins, determine if the workday is still possible. There are times when unsafe or potentially unsafe situations will cause you to cancel the workday. For example:

- Weather (high winds, extreme temps, lightning, thunderstorm or tornado warnings)
- Medical emergency
- Inadequate supervision
- Impaired volunteers
- Drinking water is not available
- If it is physically impossible to perform the scheduled task and no other options are available

If you do cancel the workday, remain on the site if possible to inform participants as they arrive and then make the proper notifications.

Starting Off Right

The first few minutes of your workday are the most important. This is the time where you set the tone for the entire workday and establish your role as the leader. A well-structured beginning makes your job easier and results in a safer and more rewarding workday; a poor beginning can have a negative impact on the entire workday and creates a less than ideal experience for the volunteers.

If you are working with a group, check in with the group leader, if there is one, and find out if the entire group is present. Ask them if they would like you to begin or wait a few minutes for more people to arrive

Introduction & Task Instruction- Group Sizes

Based on the size of the group, the amount of explanation and training needed for the task and the number of leaders decides how to split up the group for your introductory talks. Use the following guidelines when talking to groups:

- General introduction/welcome – this should be done with 100 people or fewer and should last less than five minutes
- If you are giving instructions on tool use or other specific instructions, break into smaller groups of 25 people or fewer with group leaders to provide the specific instructions, this should last less than 20 minutes
- In general, the larger the group, the less time you want to spend talking to them

Introduction & Task Instruction

The goal here is to let the group know that you are looking out for their needs. You are making them feel comfortable so that they will interact and ask questions. This is where a prepared Workday Script will be invaluable. Here are a few more hints when delivering your script:

- If you have a group of volunteers who do not all know each other, ask them to introduce themselves
- Name tags are a great way to create a comfortable environment
- The workday may require different tasks, describe each one and make assignments if necessary
- Give a site overview
 - Establish a “home base”, this is where you can keep refreshments and extra supplies
 - Establish the work area boundaries and a “personal business area” where

volunteers can go to take a break or use cell phones

- Point out any potentially hazardous areas
- Point out the location of bathrooms
- Tools and supplies- Determine how many tools to give out. If you have your group divided into smaller workgroups, you will already know what each workgroup needs. When you control the number of tools, you create a safer workday. Take an accurate count of how many tools are given out

Late Arrivals

If the entire group is late, shorten the working time, not the time spent on the introduction and the safety talk. If individuals are late, designate a person to greet and orient late arrivals if applicable

Break Time

In the workday planning, you have already determined what you will do during break time (snack and/or tour). This is also the chance to talk about the work that has been done, make adjustments like changing the work area, and review rules and safety. This is a good time to talk about future opportunities and incorporate interpretive moments.

If you are burning brush piles, a 15-20 minute break in the workday allows for the Brush Pile Burn Boss to assess site conditions and for the pile to burn down, easing pile management. It also allows time for the group to warm up and enjoy the fire.

Dealing with Emergencies

This is the time to address any changes from the plan and compensate for any unfilled workday leadership roles. In general:

- If there is an immediate emergency- pick someone (or yourself) to call 911, place someone to direct emergency vehicles at parking lot entrances and trailheads
- If you notice illegal or questionable activities- call FPCC police
- For other issues, contact your supervisor, Volunteer Coordinator or the appropriate District staff
- See *Appendix* for FPCC Contact List

Wrap-Up

During the workday planning, you have already determined what you will say during your wrap-up; make any adjustments if necessary. Be sure to include the four parts- reminding them what they did, asking them how their experience was, explain how they can do more and thank them again.

You also want to count the tools and have everyone search for any missing ones.

After the Workday- You did it!

- Make any necessary calls
- Evaluate the workday according to the goals that you determined ahead of time.
- What was successful? What needs to be changed?
- The four S's: was the workday safe, supported, supervised, and structured?
- Return or reorder any supplies
- Online reporting
- Send documents (waivers, burn call sheets, etc.) to Volunteer Resources
- Thank you emails

Troubleshooting Example Situations (Making Real-Time Decisions)

The following is a list of situations that may happen at your workday. These are not merely hypothetical situations, in fact, nearly all of these have happened at least once to

Forest Preserve staff or Volunteer Leader. Take a look at the list and think about what you would do in the situation.

- Site is free of garlic mustard on a garlic mustard workday
- Sheriff's work group (swap) is at the site you intended to work at
- You don't have all the tools/supplies that you thought you had
- 40 people show up instead of 25
- 5 extra people show up
- A 100 person family picnic with tents is happening where you were going to mulch trees
- The bus broke down and the group is 45 minutes late
- There is a dog off leash running around your intended work area
- People arrive to protest brush clearing
- A mentally ill person wandering by tries to join your workday
- Another preserve visitor is stealing the volunteer's belongings
- Someone cuts a finger
- Someone gets poked in the eye with some brush
- Dead grass around the brush pile starts to burn
- Two volunteers start to argue
- A volunteer teases or harasses another volunteer
- Volunteers don't speak English
- A volunteer is wearing sandals
- A volunteer is wearing shorts for a brush clearing workday
- You forgot to bring water and you were planning to burn brush
- Chaperones are sitting & talking at the picnic table
- Parking lot is closed due to a walkathon that you didn't know about
- Your site is flooded
- Gate to parking lot is locked

VOLUNTEER GROUP LEADERSHIP

- 8" of snow on the parking lot that hasn't been plowed yet
- Someone complains of chest pains
- Someone collapses & does not respond immediately
- Someone collapses but says they are ok
- 3 people arrive after the intro, safety & tool talk
- The entire group doesn't show up
- You discover that some of the group is smoking marijuana
- The entrance sign was knocked over in a car accident and there is no sign at the driveway
- The volunteers did not bring water or water bottles
- Several volunteers are just standing around talking & not engaged

Workday Checklist

When Volunteer Resources staff joins a workday, these are some of the things we look for. Not that all of these are required, we feel they contribute to a successful workday.

- Volunteers welcomed at the beginning
- "Volunteer this way" signs
- Waivers signed
- Group introductions
- Site history, ecological objectives, workday goals stated
- Gloves, safety glasses, water, snacks provided
- General workday safety talk
- Tool safety instruction & demo
- Target plant ID
- Roles assigned
- Sufficient tools for group
- Leader-to-volunteer ratio
- Workday break used effectively
- Pile secured before leaving site

- Workday wrap-up and thank you

Special Considerations with Chainsaws (required):

- All PPE present (Kevlar boots, chaps, helmet, gloves, eye protection)
- 6in DBH max for certified sawyer Feller 1
- 12in DBH max for certified advanced sawyer, Feller 2, trees approved by Ecology
- Only Chainsaw Safety Assistants and Fellers are permitted in the chainsaw worksite
- Volunteers are kept at a safe distance away from the chainsaw worksite

Special Considerations with Brushpile Burn workdays (required)

- AQI & weather checked
- BPB Boss on site
- BPB calls made
- BPB permits on site
- BPB in good location, no over-story hazards or adjacent fuel hazards
- Size and number of scars minimized
- Sufficient suppression tools include water backpacks, rakes, flappers
- Safety talk to volunteers: upwind side, synthetics & embers, avoid smoke
- Designated leader per pile monitoring brush addition, pace, size, and laid direction of brush
- Safety glasses/goggles are recommended for all volunteers
- Youth cutting or adding brush to a burn pile are required to wear safety glasses/goggles
- Process for adding large brush, then smaller brush, then no brush to end workday at desired time
- Hot coals signage posted

Special Considerations on herbicide workdays (required):

- Managed Area signs posted with REI time indicated
- Herbicide applied away from group
- Stumps cut short and treated
- Herbicide flags posted
- Herbicide applied by licensed volunteer

DIRECTIONS FOR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

Most of the techniques for specific activities will be mastered in the observation and mentoring part of the training, but there are some basic details that apply to different types of workdays. There are also complete workday scripts available for each of the following.

Litter Obliterators

- Be sure to explain why it matters- there is an immediate impact, it is easy to comprehend, anyone can participate, there is no training needed
- With a litter cleanup, the ultimate goal of a litter cleanup is to affect a behavior change. A clean Preserve makes visitors less likely to litter. When volunteers clean up litter from a Preserve, they change the behavior of all those visitors who come to a clean site
- Sometimes litter is hard to find at a site. Encourage volunteers to move slowly and look carefully. Often litter is found just at the edges open areas where lawn meets the trees
- Think of litter in terms of a squirrel, bird, frog or worm. “Little” litter is “big” litter to them. Every litter bit counts!

Garlic Mustard

- Explain why garlic mustard is a problem
- Teach volunteers how to identify it
- Tell what to do with it after it has been pulled

Brush Cutting

- Be sure to thoroughly explain why we are removing brush
- Teach volunteers how to identify the brush to be cut
- Show how to safely carry and use the loppers and bow saws
- Show how to safely fell large brush and trees
- Assign new and inexperienced volunteers to work with experienced volunteers
- Show how to build a brush pile (either for burning or chipping) and assign a Brush Pile Burn Boss to monitor the pile
- Monitor the use of power tools at the workday. You may choose to not use power tools at certain workdays or only use them before and/or after the group is there
- There may be several leadership roles that need to be filled including burn pile boss, small group leader, and herbicide applicator

THE 2-MINUTE DRILL

Use the acronym **SAPIR** to help you structure your first two minutes before your workday script. Complete each step before moving on to the next.

- **Situate**- The first thing you want to do is to get your group situated in your predetermined area so that they are ready to listen to what you have to say.
 - With the majority of groups, it is best to gather them in a circle and make sure that everyone is part of the circle
 - For groups with more than 75 people, it is usually best to stand on a picnic table and have the group gather around you
 - Take the time to situate your group properly; this shows that you are concerned for their experience and that you want everyone to be involved to be able to see and hear you
 - If you have a group of students, make sure that teachers and chaperones are part of your circle as well
- **Attention**- The next step is to ask the group for their attention.
 - Wait until you have everyone's attention before continuing, this shows that what you have to say is important
- **Praise**- The next step is to thank everyone for giving you their attention.
 - This sets a positive tone for the workday and shows that you are going to reward positive behavior
 - Often a "thank you" directed at someone will get the person next to them to pay attention
- **Introduce**- Up to this point, the group doesn't know your name but they already

know a lot about you and what your expectations are.

- Welcome everyone to the Preserve and say your name and what you do
 - Give a very brief overview of the day, for example "Today we will be helping to make this Preserve healthier and safer for people and wildlife."
 - Explain that before you talk about the details of the project, you want to go over a few rules first
- **Rules**- The next step is to give a few basic rules or what you expect from the group. Rules will vary by the age of the group
 - With high school students and younger, the rules could be some variation of listening/following directions, being safe, staying with their group, and respecting nature
 - For adults, the rules could be some variation of being safe and enjoying the outdoors/have fun/don't think about work
 - Explain why they should they follow the rules, typically so that all participants are safe and have a good experience
 - How do you decide what your rules will be? Just anticipate what problems you might have and make rules to prevent these problems

Taking the time to follow this process at the beginning will have a noticeable effect on your entire workday.