Volunteer Stewardship Adventures

The Woods Project, Houston TX – 2014 Volunteer Trip in the Badger-Two Medicine
PROJECT PARTNER GUIDE

Why Volunteer with MWA?

MWA delivers a unique service experience for youth and adult groups of all backgrounds and experience levels. Our stewardship projects engage volunteers in meaningful, hands-on conservation service to Montana’s public lands. These projects are your catalyst for:

- A fun, challenging experience
- Encouraging team work
- Investing in the value of service
- Learning outdoor & conservation skills
- Fostering group communication
- Exploring new landscapes
- Exercise & time spent outdoors
- Nurturing self-efficacy
- Creating shared memories
- Giving back

A Working Partnership

By partnering with MWA, you’ll receive professional project facilitation and on-demand support leading up to the service trip. We’ll ask for your group’s cooperation in the planning process and, most importantly, your dedication in the field. With thoughtful preparation, strong leadership and hard work, these projects will be a transformative experience for your group. On the next page is outline of each organization’s responsibilities for a trip:
Roles & Responsibilities

**MWA**

Project work and camp planning with respective land management agency

Professional field supervision - trained in trail work/backcountry living and certified Wilderness First Responder

Provides tools, kitchen gear, safety equipment, emergency communications

Purchases food and meals plans

Loaner gear (tents, sleeping bags, etc.) available upon request

Shares post-project accomplishments/photos

**Partner Organization**

Full-time contact person within organization

Motivated and informed Field Leader to attend project, supervise and set example for the group

Positive, hardworking volunteers who are eager to serve (minimum 5 people)

Patience and flexibility in the event of project changes (variables, such as wildfire, can force last minute changes)

Timely submission of all paperwork

Arrive packed with all the right gear
Reserve Your Group’s Trip

MWA sets its calendar for the upcoming summer by December. In order to have your group participate on a project, you’ll need to have arranged the trip with Stewardship Coordinator Sonny Mazzullo by early December of the preceding year. Here’s how to reserve your group’s spot:

1. Contact Sonny at smazzullo@wildmontana.org or 406.334.7378.
2. Coordinate an appropriate trip date and project location by no later than December of the preceding year.
3. MWA requires a **refundable $250 deposit** to hold your place on the calendar. A check can be made out to “MWA” and mailed to Montana Wilderness Association, 80 South Warren Street, Helena MT 59601.
4. Keep an eye out for your Project Webpage that will contain all the logistical info for your service trip. Sonny will share this page in March.
5. Begin recruiting participants within your organization and share the contact information of your group’s Field Leader with MWA.
6. All project participants must submit their volunteer registrations to MWA Staff no later than three weeks prior to project start date.

Refundable Deposit

The $250 refundable deposit protects MWA in the event that a partner organization doesn’t hold up its end of the agreement. Your deposit will be refunded automatically unless one or more of the following occurs:

- Partner group cancels a project – a cancelled project jeopardizes our relationships with land management agencies and creates a difficult situation requiring MWA to recruit new volunteers with limited time.
- Failure to recruit minimum five volunteers – projects typically require this number to justify the expense of mobilizing staff and organization resources.
- Last minute volunteer cancellations – if we meal plan and food shop for eight, but only five volunteers show up, the money spent on the cancelled volunteers’ groceries cannot be reimbursed.
- Group and/or group leader shows up drastically underprepared such that it inhibits crew performance and safety.
- MWA needs to cancel the project due to reckless behavior and a failure to adhere to safety rules – safety is always our top priority.

Thanks for your understanding and willingness to comply with this policy. We never hope to keep anyone’s deposit as most organizations we work with are just as dependent on every dollar as we are.
Pre-Project Paperwork

1. **VOLUNTEER REGISTRATIONS** – Online forms to be completed by ALL project participants. This form collects vital information such as allergies, medical conditions, emergency contacts and dietary restrictions. Your project’s volunteer registration from will be shared in March.

2. **PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE** – All volunteers younger than 18 years old must return a signed copy of our project-specific Volunteer Agreement that contains both the volunteer’s signature and that of a legal guardian. Agreement will be shared with Project Partner staff no later than three weeks before the start of a project. Signed forms can be scanned and emailed to smazzullo@wildmontana.org or sent via snail mail to 565 Spokane Avenue, Whitefish MT 59937.

Field Leader Responsibilities & Group Expectations

As anyone who has joined us on a project can attest, these trips take a lot of careful planning to execute. In addition, there are a lot of risks inherent to working in an outdoor environment with sharp hand tools. It is imperative that everyone who joins us for a project is well prepared and takes safety seriously. Here’s what we ask to make sure everyone stays safe, healthy and has a good time:

- Volunteers and Field Leaders put in a lot of work on the trail. The work day is 8 hours, rain or shine.
- Field Leaders closely review Project Page to ensure they know all the logistics (meeting place/time, project work) and can share this info with crew.
- Field Leaders ensure all volunteers have reviewed the gear list and pack sufficiently. Items commonly forgotten include mess kits, rain gear, warm layers and water bottles.
- Any volunteer who needs to borrow backpacks, tents or sleeping bags must notify MWA staff no later than three weeks before project start date.
- All volunteers must be actively engaged in camp chores, helping to do dishes, cook dinner and properly store food.
- Field Leader is responsible for ensuring all volunteers stay on task and are helping with camp chores.
- All participants must follow Leave Not Trace practices.
- Field Leader must serve as an example to the group by being informed, respectful and motivated.
Share Your Story

After our project is a wrap, MWA staff will share project photos and accomplishments with your organization within one or two weeks. We’ll follow up to find out how you enjoyed your experience and see if there is anything we can do better next year.

We always enjoy hearing how these projects impact our volunteers. Please encourage your group to document their time in the field and share their stories with MWA. We’d be thrilled to brag about how great your organization is and all we were able to accomplish together!