



**AMERICAN RIVER
PARKWAY FOUNDATION**

**VOLUNTEER
HANDBOOK**

5700 Arden Way
Carmichael, CA 95608
916-486-2773 office
916-486-2779 fax
www.arpf.org

Welcome to the American River Parkway Foundation

Dear Volunteer,

You have joined an organization that shares in your desire to care for and protect our public lands and watershed areas. Our success in achieving the goals of enhancing, preserving, and protecting the parkway is due to the many volunteers who share their time and talents with us. It is our hope that your volunteer experience will be a rewarding and enjoyable opportunity.

The Volunteer Handbook provides answers to many of the questions you may have about the volunteer programs we offer. It covers policies and procedures, and our mutual responsibilities. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Volunteer Handbook, and for adhering to the American River Parkway Foundation's policies and procedures. If anything is unclear, please discuss the matter with the Manager of Volunteer Services.

The information included in the Volunteer Handbook may change. Every effort will be made to keep you informed of any changes.

The personal satisfaction gained from a job well done is one reason many people enjoy volunteering. Career development, community service, and enjoying the company of others are additional benefits your involvement may bring you. The ARPF is dedicated to doing its part to assure you a satisfying volunteer experience.

Sincerely,



Dianna Dal Aguilar
Executive Director



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Purpose of this Handbook

This Handbook has been prepared to inform you about the ARPF's history, philosophy, practices, and policies. Additionally, it will delineate the benefits we will provide to you as a valued volunteer.

No volunteer handbook can answer all the questions you might have about our program. It is in our person-to-person orientation that we can better get to know each other and express our views.

We hope this Handbook will allow you to feel comfortable with us. We depend on you — your success is our success. Please don't hesitate to ask questions. Your volunteer coordinator will gladly answer them. We believe you will enjoy your volunteer work and your fellow volunteers here. We also believe you will find the ARPF a good place to volunteer.

We ask that you read this Handbook carefully, and refer to it whenever questions arise. We also suggest that you take it home so your family can become familiar with the ARPF and our policies.

About the American River Parkway Foundation (ARPF)

Our mission is to foster environmental stewardship, facilitate volunteer opportunities and fund projects and programs on the American River Parkway that support the preservation, protection, enhancement and appreciation of the parkway's natural resources.

The American River Parkway Foundation was founded in 1983 as a private non-profit 501(c)(3) organization with a volunteer Board of Directors, an Executive Director and program staff. The Board members represent local businesses and government, recreational user and community interest groups as well as environmentalists.

Each year the Parkway Foundation coordinates the efforts of thousands of volunteers who contribute tens of thousands of work hours to maintaining and improving the Parkway. Volunteers work to restore habitat, improve public safety, reduce the threat of damaging fires and increase the public's stewardship of the Parkway.

To continue to meet our mission, the American River Parkway Foundation built a Volunteer Center located in William B. Pond Recreation Area on the Parkway. The 1800-sq ft building serves as headquarters for Foundation staff and a conference and training facility for affiliated Parkway user groups and volunteers.

ARPF's Volunteer Programs:

- Adopt-the-Parkway
- Trash Cleanup
- Invasive Plant Management
- Student Internships
- Adopt-a-Grove

A more detailed description of each of these programs can be found on our website at www.arpf.org or by contacting the Manager of Volunteer Services at 916-486-2773.

Additionally, each of the above volunteer programs has its own information packet which includes site specific information, job descriptions, and contract information, e. You will receive this packet when you begin your volunteer service. Should your duties and responsibilities change, your job description will be updated.

Volunteering with the ARPF

The United States Department of Labor defines “volunteer” as an individual who donates services, usually on a part-time basis, *for public service, religious or humanitarian objectives without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation.*

Volunteers can expect ARPF to:

- Value and appreciate their time, talent and expertise
- Treat all volunteers with respect and decency while nurturing their growth
- Provide a broad range of rich and enjoyable programs
- Inspire every individual to work together to respect and enjoy the land
- Protect their privacy and not release their contact information without their permission
- Maintain a positive work environment
- Communicate adequately through several different mediums
- Provide trainings and materials necessary for participating in programs
- Provide educational opportunities throughout the year

We expect Volunteers to:

- Keep safety as your top priority
- Consider volunteer work a professional commitment
- Represent ARPF and our agency partners in an appropriate and responsible manner at all times
- Be non-confrontational while performing ARPF duties
- Behave as a member of the ARPF volunteer team when working with other volunteers and ARPF staff
- Be prompt and reliable and follow through on all commitments
- Dress in an appropriate manner for your position and ensure you communicate all applicable needs to perform your project successfully and thoroughly to the Manager of Volunteer Services
- Participate in continuing education to enhance your skills
- Provide own transportation and gear unless otherwise stated
- Practice Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! Ethics

Orientation & Training

Site Orientation

Before you plan to go to your site for the first time, contact the Manager of Volunteer Services to set up a site visit with them and open the lines of communication. This will help to set the stage for your success in the program.

Steward Workshops

Quarterly, the ARPF will offer workshops to all Parkway Stewards and Steward Prospects. If a session is coming up, you will be invited to participate. We encourage all Stewards to attend these workshops. It's a great way to network with others and discuss and learn about various Parkway programs, issues and topics.

The Annual Volunteer Celebration

Each year in February the ARPF coordinates an annual event for all of its volunteer stewards. This event is an awards ceremony as well as a great way to network with other volunteers and staff. As a volunteer, you will receive an invitation to this event.

Other Training

We encourage you to obtain additional training on your own, like first aid and basic navigational skills. We will try to offer these sessions in our training programs and you can certainly take them at that time.

Policies

As a new or returning volunteer with the ARPF you will encounter new situations and will need to become familiar with new surroundings. Your fellow volunteers and ARPF staff want to help you get off to a good start. Feel free to ask them for help concerning anything you do not understand.

One of the first things you should do is carefully read this Handbook. It is designed to answer many of your questions about the practices and policies of the ARPF.

Equal Volunteering Opportunity

The ARPF provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the job, as well as dependability and reliability.

Privacy Protection

ARPF has adopted a policy of not giving out volunteer information to other sources without your permission. This consists mainly of e-mail addresses but also includes your address and phone numbers. ARPF is fortunate to be able to contact our volunteers through e-mail and we assure our volunteers that when you provide us with your contact information it is for our use only. When sending out via e-mail we use the bcc function.

Harassment/Sexual Harassment

ARPF is committed to providing a work environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment. It is illegal to harass others based on sex, sexual orientation, age, race, national origin, disability, medical condition or any other basis made unlawful by federal, state or local law or ordination or regulation. This policy applies to all persons involved in the operations of ARPF, including management, supervisors, co-workers, board members and volunteers, as well as by any person doing business with or for ARPF. Unlawful discrimination and harassment in any form, including verbal, physical and visual conduct, threats, demands and retaliation are prohibited.

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when it affects the individual's employment in any way. Sexual harassment is prohibited.

Conflict Resolution

If a situation develops at ARPF that is not resolved to your satisfaction, discuss it with the Manager of Volunteer Services. If you continue having difficulty with another volunteer, ARPF staff member, or with policies or decisions, take your concerns to the Executive Director and make an appointment to discuss the issue. All complaints and questions will receive thoughtful consideration and will be discussed with the individual who raises them.

Verbal Conduct

It is highly recommended that you also refrain from commenting in a negative way, about ARPF and our agency partners while on duty.

Inactive Status

Volunteers may either be in an Active or Inactive status.

Inactive status:

- No hours submitted for over 12 months
- Mail, e-mail, and phone call attempts result as undeliverable
- Volunteer has resigned voluntarily

A volunteer in Inactive Status will not receive mailings, nor be contacted by ARPF for volunteer opportunities. If you no longer receive volunteer information by e-mail and wish to continue being an ARPF volunteer, simply contact the Manager of Volunteer Services to change your status to Active.

An Adopt-the-Parkway Steward who does not submit hours for over 6 months will be placed on probationary status for 3 months upon which the Steward will perform supervised workgroups until the required hours are current. Failure to submit hours for 12 consecutive months will automatically terminate their Volunteer Agreement and release their Mile Sign for adoption.

Resignations

Annually volunteers may be asked to update their commitment to volunteer. The Manager of Volunteer Services will have you sign a Letter of Commitment and provide you with an updated Activity Description. This means you are still interested in remaining in a particular program and that we should keep you on the roster.

If you decide to leave your volunteer position, we ask that you please notify the Manager of Volunteer Services about your change in volunteer status in writing

Terminations

Volunteers who do not adhere to ARPF policies and procedures and who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignments are subject to dismissal. Depending on the situation, a volunteer may be given an opportunity to improve their performance. If performance has not improved within a reasonable amount of time, the volunteer may be terminated by ARPF.

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Gross misconduct or insubordination
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing volunteer activities
- Theft of property or misuse of agency funds, equipment or materials
- Illegal, violent or unsafe acts
- Unwillingness or inability to support and further the mission of ARPF and/or the objectives of the program.

Volunteer Safety

As an ARPF volunteer your safety is our most important concern. ARPF requires that Volunteers involved in ARPF programs, inform Manager of Volunteer Services when they are going out into the field. This is for the safety of the volunteer and to protect the volunteer's rights if they are injured while volunteering. It is ARPF policy that no activity will be started unless it can be completed in a safe, effective manner. Most of ARPF volunteer activities take place in the outdoors. Volunteers must keep in mind the following potential risks when outdoors:

Weather

Volunteers should:

- Dress appropriately for the activity including sturdy, closed-toed shoes
- Be aware of changing conditions and bring extra clothing and rain gear
- Carry a day pack with water and supplies such as a first aid kit, cell phone and food
- Avoid going out into the field if it is storming or lightening is present.

Volunteering in pairs

ARPF highly recommends our volunteers at least travel in pairs for their own safety.

Reminders

Before going out into the field to volunteer:

- Tell someone where you are going and what time you will be back
- Have a partner
- Carry essential equipment
- Be observant on the trail
- Stay calm if you get lost; stop, sit down, and think
- Learn to read and understand topographic maps of the area you are in
- Never act in a "law enforcement" capacity
- Carry important contact information with you.

In an Emergency:

Write down the necessary information such as:

- Condition and location of victim
- Description of the landscape and indicate on a map
- Weather

Notify the appropriate authorities. If you choose to assist in an emergency your decision is considered personal and at that point you are no longer representing ARPF or the agency. We urge you to consider the ethical, personal, legal and safety ramifications of your choice. Your own safety must come first, especially in emergency situations. Do not put your life or safety in jeopardy. Remember if you are injured while on duty, you will be unable to help others. Please exercise good, cautious judgment at all times.

Sacramento County Parks Ranger Dispatch 916-875-PARK

Public Relations

As a Volunteer, you are associated with ARPF from the perspective of the public. In all your dealings with the public present yourself in a manner that creates a positive image of you, the program and the parkway.

Identification

After you complete your orientation you will receive a t-shirt that has the program logo. We prefer you wear these (weather permitting) whenever possible when you visit your site if you want to be easily identifiable to the public. However, public education is not a required duty, if you are not comfortable with it or you do not want the public to approach you, you do not need to wear your program t-shirt.

Tips for creating a positive impression:

- ◆ **be visible**
- ◆ **be friendly and courteous** – enthusiasm and friendliness are contagious ... how you react to the public, strongly influences how they'll react to you
- ◆ **be helpful** - go that extra step– if you don't know the correct answer, don't guess.
- ◆ **refer the person** - to ARPF at 916-486-2773 or Ranger Dispatch at 916-875-PARK

1. Dealing with the Public

The site-specific information and training you receive will help prepare you for handling inquiries, complaints and educational programming. When you're on site, you should be prepared for the possibility that people will approach you. You are encouraged to share your knowledge of the site and its resources with the public through a variety of approaches that are comfortable to you. This could range from simply being on site to answer questions and provide information to delivering talks and nature walks, to developing brochures, signs and other materials. It's really up to you. As with any special project, seek approval from the Manager of Volunteer Services before initiating any formal educational programs or materials.

Public Advocacy

Please remember volunteers are not official spokespeople for ARPF. When addressing public meetings or in public advocacy situations, please identify yourself as a volunteer and clarify that your opinions are your own, not those of ARPF.

Confidentiality of Information

All volunteers working with ARPF are in privileged positions where you are sometimes privy to confidential information. This is a trusted relationship that benefits us all so it's important that you understand and respect this confidentiality, when asked to participate in public consultation processes. Please do not disclose confidential information without obtaining permission from your Site Leader or the Manager of Volunteer Services.

Authority

If you see people participating in destructive or illegal activities, it is important to remember that you do not have any enforcement authority. For your own personal safety, please do not approach these people. Your role is to observe the activity, record as much detail as possible and report it to your Site Leader or in their absence, to the Manager of Volunteer Services

Handling Complaints

Members of the public who have complaints may occasionally approach you. These are sometimes difficult to handle, particularly if people feel strongly about it. So if you are not comfortable handling these please refer them to ARPF staff or give them the contact information for the Sacramento County Parks Ranger Dispatch 916-875-PARK.

If you find yourself in a situation where staff is not available, and you want to respond to the complaint, please follow these steps:

- ◆ listen carefully to the individual. Be sure you understand the nature of their complaint (ask questions to clarify details if necessary)
- ◆ **do not take sides**
- ◆ write down the details of the complaint. Obtain the individual's name, address, and telephone number
- ◆ indicate that you understand the complaint. Inform the individual of your volunteer status and give assurance that you will notify the appropriate staff
- ◆ thank the individual for bringing the problem to your attention
- ◆ report the incident and pass on your written record of the complaint to the Manager of Volunteer Services as soon as possible.

2. Dealing with the Media

Occasionally local or provincial media, like reporters, may interview stewards. You are not obliged to talk to the media if you are uncomfortable in doing so or the topic is of a sensitive nature. The Manager of Volunteer Services may be aware of similar media inquiries and can discuss the up-to-date information and any concerns with you. Whenever possible, staff is expected to advise the Executive Director about these inquiries. This helps us keep track of all media relations.

If you are hosting a special event and want to invite local media coverage or arrange for a news release contact the Manager of Volunteer Services. They will either approve your intentions or make the necessary arrangements with the appropriate staff if you require assistance.

Tips for Dealing with the Media

Handling media inquiries requires care and consideration. When you do so, please remember to not release any confidential information and identify yourself as a volunteer of the American River Parkway Foundation. Here are a few simple tips:

- Find out and record who they are, who they represent and how to get in touch with them, and pass this information along to the Manager of Volunteer Services in a timely manner.

- Ask why the interview is being requested. Always know why the interview is being requested and what information the reporter is seeking
- Remember, you are the expert and cannot expect media or their audiences to know as much about your site. Do not deal with subjects you are not familiar with and move on quickly to subjects which you are qualified and more comfortable speaking about
- Stay within your jurisdiction. If a question outside your area of responsibility comes up, say so and refer the reporter to the appropriate source or spokesperson
- Don't repeat negative questions or suggestions. Don't let reporters put words in your mouth. If you don't say it, it can't be printed or broadcast. Try to answer using positive phrasing (eg. "please stay on the trails" as opposed to "do not go off the trails")
- Remember, nothing is off the record
- Don't guess at an answer. If you don't know, say so. Offer to find out and get back to the reporter.
- Don't say "No comment". If you can't answer a question, just say so and explain why. Avoid "don't quote me".
- Answer questions briefly and directly as possible. Avoid unnecessary and elaborate detail, particularly on radio or TV. Don't feel you must fill long pauses. When you've given the answer you want, you're done. Let them worry about 'dead air'
- Don't ask what the reporter will do with the information you provide. Many other factors and people are involved in determining if the story is published or broadcasted.
- Thank reporters for their interest. Keep a record of the names of reporters with whom you have had contact, the date you spoke with them, as well as their phone numbers and media they represent, and alert the Manager of Volunteer Services of stories published and broadcasted in your community that mention the site.

Other ARPF Policies include:

- Reporting injuries immediately to your Manager of Volunteer Services
- Notify Manager of Volunteer Services if you are unable to complete your volunteer commitment.
- Call or email ARPF before going out into the field to perform assigned duties.
- Comply with Federal Sexual Discrimination and Harassment laws
- Volunteers are not allowed to carry weapons on the Parkway
- Complete required paper work such as
 - Work report forms
 - Liability waivers
 - Incident reports (if applicable)

Communicating Together

Good communication is essential for a successful stewardship experience. Volunteers and staff alike share this responsibility. We encourage you to communicate on a regular basis with the ARPF. In addition to this, there are several formal means we communicate with you.

The Web Site – www.arpf.org

We encourage you to become familiar with our volunteer web site. You can learn more about our volunteer programs, find out what's new, or e-mail questions directly to the Manager of Volunteer Services. You can also fill out and submit your work reports on line.

Your Feedback Is Important

We welcome your comments and suggestions at any time. They help us improve our support services for you and field staff. Periodically we may contact you to participate in public consultation or a survey or other forms of evaluation.

Communications - E-news, Volunteer Opportunities Booklet and Newsletters

ARPF strives to communicate adequately with our volunteers through several mediums. E-news is published as necessary to announce opportunities with ARPF and the community. You must provide your e-mail address to receive this or log onto our web site to view. Email addresses are kept confidential. Newsletters are published bi-annually. ARPF lists important information on our website, www.arpf.org.

Evaluation

Volunteers may receive periodic evaluations to review their performance. The evaluations allow for a volunteer and manager to suggest changes, seek suggestions and enhance the relationship between the volunteer, staff and ARPF. The evaluation is a discussion period and site check, and both manager and volunteer should establish scheduling.

Incentives & Recognition

Volunteers play an essential role in the mission of the American River Parkway Foundation. They contribute to the education and conservation programs which enable ARPF to further its outreach and dedication to creating a sustainable environment. Many benefits of volunteering at ARPF are intangible: gaining knowledge about conservation efforts, learning new skills, and meeting people with similar interests.

ARPF volunteers will receive many incentives and opportunities, including:

- Volunteer e-news
- Invitation to volunteer recognition events
- Free or discounted education workshops and trainings to increase skill sets

Parkway Program Incentives:

Initial Signing for first-time stewards:

Upon initial signing of a contract—the new steward will receive the following:

- First aid kit (small size able to put into backpack)
- A coupon for a backpack
- Thank you letter
- Parkway map
- I.D. card (laminated) for wallet showing their **start date** as a steward
- ARPF volunteer t-shirt
- Name in the newsletter and website with short biography
- Water bottle or substitute
- Miscellaneous “goodies”

Steward First-Time Contract Completion-- with satisfactory fulfillment and reporting of minimum requirements:

If the steward does not re-sign he/she will receive an acknowledgment certificate placed in a certificate holder indicating his/her time as a steward for the parkway (to be rewarded at the yearly appreciation event). A thank you goes into the newsletter and website for a job well done.

If the steward does re-sign a contract he/she will receive a complimentary fleece jacket (to be rewarded at the yearly appreciation event). A notice of this goes into the newsletter and onto the website with, of course, a big “thank-you”.

Upon 5 Years of Service:

A \$50 gift card will go to any steward who shows a 5 year commitment to stewardship on the parkway. Name in newsletter and website

Upon 10 years of Service:

A plaque presented at annual BBQ
A \$100 gift certificate
Feature in newsletter and website

Steward of the Year:

Every year the Foundation chooses one steward who demonstrates ideal stewardship qualities and dedication.

Annual Steward Appreciation Event:

Every year the Foundation will have an event honoring the stewards. At this event the following will be announced:

The awards recipients (contract completions, re-signing stewards, 5 year, 10 year)
The Steward of the Year

Recognition:

We encourage you to nominate any fellow stewards you feel deserve special recognition or staff whom you feel have demonstrated outstanding volunteer leadership; there's an award that recognizes this as well. Nominations can be made prior to the Annual Volunteer Celebration in February. Contact the Manager of Volunteer Services for more information.

Volunteer Acknowledgment

The American River Parkway Foundation (ARPF) *Volunteer Handbook* describes important information about ARPF. I understand that I should consult with the Volunteer Center Office at (916) 486-2773 if I have questions regarding anything covered in the *Volunteer Handbook* or any other ARPF volunteer policies or incentives.

I have entered into a volunteer relationship with ARPF and acknowledge that I shall not nor shall I expect to receive any form of payment for volunteer talents and services I contribute to ARPF. I can terminate my volunteer service at any time and for any reason. ARPF also reserves the right to end my volunteer service whenever ARPF deems it to be in the best interest of ARPF.

Since the information and policies described in the ARPF *Volunteer Handbook* are necessarily subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions to the Handbook may occur. ARPF reserves the right to make changes in content or application as it deems appropriate, and these changes may be implemented even if they have not been communicated and may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies. Although I have received a printed copy of the current ARPF *Volunteer Handbook*, I understand that the Manager of Volunteer Services maintains a current electronic version of this information on the ARPF Internet site. I understand that as a volunteer for the American River Parkway Foundation there is a yearly commitment to volunteer service. While this commitment varies according to the type of work each volunteer participates in, the average commitment is 80 hours per year. In addition, I understand that any materials provided to me for the purpose of my volunteer service are to be returned to ARPF upon completion of service or due to termination of participation as an ARPF volunteer. The contents of this Handbook and the policies and procedures described in it are presented as a matter of information and general guidance only. The Handbook is intended to provide guidelines for supervisors and volunteers. While ARPF endorses the policies and procedures described herein, they are not a condition of volunteer service.

I acknowledge that this Handbook is neither a contract of volunteer service, employment nor a legal document. I have received the Handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this Handbook and any revisions made to it. I further acknowledge that I will not, during or subsequent to my volunteer service with ARPF, divulge to anyone (other than in the regular course of business of ARPF) any knowledge or information regarding any past, current, or possible future plans or programs of or research for ARPF. I understand that all materials and products which may be created by me in the course of my volunteer service for ARPF are the property of ARPF.

Volunteer Signature _____ Date _____

Volunteer Copy
Please sign and retain for your files.

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Volunteer Signature _____ Date _____

Please sign and remove from booklet and return to

American River Parkway Foundation
Volunteer Center
5700 Arden Way
Carmichael, CA 95608

or fax to
Manager of Volunteer Services
916-486-2779