



Project Proposal Guidelines

Background. Wilderness Volunteers is a nonprofit organization founded in 1997 to organize volunteer service projects in partnership with public land agencies, including the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Each year, we organize approximately 40 projects across the United States, bringing roughly 450 volunteers into the field and contributing more than 15,000 hours of donated labor.

Our volunteers are screened for suitability for each project, and our volunteer leaders maintain Wilderness First Aid training. Crews arrive self-contained, bringing their own camping equipment, commissary gear, and food. Above all, we emphasize a strong culture of safety on every project.

We seek meaningful projects that are likely to go undone without volunteer assistance. Our volunteers travel from across the country because they want to contribute their time and skills to worthwhile conservation work. They leave projects with a sense of pride and accomplishment from completing meaningful work and making a tangible difference.

Agency partners are often impressed by the amount of work a Wilderness Volunteers crew can accomplish during a project week. We therefore recommend identifying backup tasks or additional project work in advance in case the primary task is completed ahead of schedule. This is particularly important when working with new agency partners who may be unfamiliar with the capacity and productivity of a Wilderness Volunteers crew.

Planning and logistics. When developing a project proposal, please keep the following considerations in mind:

- **Project length:** Our projects are seven days long, with the majority beginning on Sunday and ending the following Saturday.
- **Work schedule:** We generally plan to work four days during the week—typically Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, from approximately 8:00 a.m. to 4:00–4:30 p.m. Schedules may be adjusted based on project logistics and agency needs.
- **Rest and recreation:** We typically designate at least one day, often Wednesday, as a day off for volunteers to rest and recreate. Work and rest days are flexible and can be adjusted as needed.
- **Tools and equipment:** The partnering agency is responsible for providing the tools necessary to complete the proposed project.
- **Backcountry support:** For backcountry projects, we ask that logistical support such as pack stock, OHVs, boats, or other necessary transportation be secured whenever possible. We do have a small number of projects that operate without this type of support.
- **Agency supervision:** Agency supervision is preferred whenever possible. At a minimum, we ask that the partnering agency provide clear project direction, establish expectations, and conduct a safety overview at the beginning of the project.
- **Chainsaws:** Wilderness Volunteers cannot accept project proposals that require volunteers to use chainsaws.

Funding. Wilderness Volunteers is committed to keeping project fees as low and accessible as possible. To help us uphold this commitment and sustain our mission of conserving and protecting America's public lands, we welcome any financial or in-kind support your agency may be able to provide or help facilitate. Examples of potential support include:

- Food stipends
- Cost-share agreements
- Recommendations for grant opportunities
- Partnerships with Friends groups or other agency support organizations
- Connections with local businesses or community partners
- Other forms of financial or logistical support

If your agency is not in a position to provide monetary support, we still strongly encourage you to submit a proposal. We recognize the financial constraints many federal agencies are currently experiencing, and lack of funding will not automatically disqualify a project from consideration. Projects may also receive supplemental funding through business sponsorships, grants, and other external sources. We greatly appreciate any support your agency can provide and value the partnership that makes these projects possible.

Project Proposal Instructions. Please complete the project proposal form to the best of your ability, and projects do not need to take place within designated wilderness areas. We understand that some details may not yet be known at the time of submission. However, providing as much practical information as possible is important to helping us match the right volunteers and leaders with the right project. For example, you may submit a proposal for a trail work backpacking project that requires volunteers to hike five miles with 1,500 feet of elevation gain, along with daily hiking commutes of four miles round-trip. The exact project location may still be determined, but providing a general geographic area is helpful. If you have multiple projects in need of completion, you may:

- Submit a separate proposal for each project; or
- Include multiple projects on a single proposal, clearly identifying them as #1, #2, #3, etc.

For blank spaces (i.e. __) use X.

Project proposal deadlines. All 2027 project proposals are due by Tuesday, November 10, 2026.

Proposal submission timelines. Once a project proposal is submitted, the Wilderness Volunteers staff will review it and follow up regarding any questions, concerns, or needed clarifications. The Program Director will then work to identify and secure two project leaders for the proposed project. Once two leaders have been secured, the project will be added to the 2027 Wilderness Volunteers schedule and made available for volunteer registration in mid-December.

Agencies will be notified of the outcome of their project proposal by Friday, January 29, 2027, if not sooner.

Thank you for your interest in partnering with Wilderness Volunteers. We look forward to working together to identify meaningful projects that benefit public lands.



Project Proposal Form

Project Proposal Name:

Name of Sponsoring Agency:

Agency Contact's Name:

Phone: office: cell:

Email:

Address / City / State / Zip:

Your days off:

Project Description:

Are there funding or cost-sharing opportunities available for Wilderness Volunteers aligned with this project proposal? *Example: project food stipend, cost-share agreement, grant opportunities, friends of groups, etc. If so, explain.*

Are there any volunteer screening requirements necessary to safely accomplish this project? *Examples include: Volunteers will need to be able to hike 5 miles daily during the project. Volunteers will need to be comfortable bushwhacking. Volunteers will need to be sure-footed and have good balance. Volunteers will need to be able to lift 20 lbs. periodically during the project.*

Agency staff supervising project: ☐ Camp w/vols ☐ Leave daily ☐ Third-party ☐ None

Range of best dates. *Please be mindful of annual events (cultural or otherwise), severe weather patterns, and insect seasons (ticks/chiggers/etc). The wider the date range, the better chance we have to make your proposal happen.*

Will the agency be able to provide safe, fully functional tools to complete this project? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Support provided (for backpacking or back country projects. This can include pack animal, OHV, boat, etc.): ☐ By Agency ☐ By third party ☐ None available ☐ Not Applicable

Has environmental compliance (NEPA) been completed for this project? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What is the group size limit for this project proposal? *Group size limitations will impact the viability of a project for consideration. Most non-Wilderness projects have a group size of 12, including project leaders.*

Formula >>> 2 project leaders + _____ volunteers = _____ **Wilderness Volunteer folks total**

How many agency personnel do you expect to be present during project work time?

Communications: *Can you provide emergency radio, satellite emergency device, etc...?*

Transportation to the trailhead: *Are there special transportation circumstances involved in getting our volunteer crew from the meeting point to the trailhead/job site/base camp? Example: volunteers for this project will need a high-clearance 4WD vehicle to transport themselves to the trailhead.*

Camping Logistics:

☐ Tent/car camping in a designated campground ☐ Tent/car camping at a dispersed site near cars

☐ Backpack camping ☐ Structured housing (bunkhouse/dormitory) ☐ Other

If you selected other, please describe:

Name of campground or basecamp for the week:

Probable water source and the distance from camp:

Trailhead Name:

Miles from TH to basecamp & elevation +/-:

Miles & elevation +/- from basecamp to general work area:

Is there parking at the trailhead? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Some projects (especially backpacking) have participants meet the night before to assure an early start in the morning. Is there a suitable place for folks to camp that night (if so please detail)?

Suggested activities to do on the day off:

Provide 5-10 quality photos to help us promote the project to our volunteers on our website, social media, newsletters, etc. You can embed your images to this proposal form or include them as attachments in your proposal submission email.

Comments:

Please submit this project proposal to our Program Director, Aidalia Swertfeger. Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

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