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Delaware Master Naturalist Volunteer Policies and Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

Delaware is a state of “small wonders” with lots to see, do, learn and enjoy! Becoming a Certified Delaware Master Naturalist volunteer is an exciting way to explore our beautiful state and to help preserve its environmental wealth. The idea of a Delaware Master Naturalist Program took shape in Fall of 2018. In Spring of 2019, under the collaborative direction of University of Delaware Cooperative Extension, Delaware Nature Society and guided by a State Steering Committee, the program’s framework was created. In spring, 2020, the pilot Master Naturalist volunteer training program was launched by Delaware Nature Society at the Ashland Nature Center.

Our Mission: The Delaware Master Naturalist Program engages citizens as ambassadors and stewards of Delaware’s natural resources and ecosystems through science-based education and volunteer opportunities.

Supporting definitions:

- ***Citizens*** are all people who become Master Naturalists as well as those influenced by their outreach efforts.
- ***Stewardship*** embodies awareness, sound knowledge, understanding, respect, responsibility, and ongoing personal commitment to conservation and preservation.
- ***Natural resources and ecosystems through science-based education*** focuses specifically on plants, wildlife, microorganisms, soil, water, air, climate, weather, geology, ecology and environmental issues in Delaware’s coastal plain, and piedmont eco-regions taught by qualified natural resources experts.
- ***Volunteer service*** commits Master Naturalists to interpret and share their passion and knowledge of ecological principles, of Delaware’s natural history and resources and native species – and to take leadership in conservation and resource preservation in their communities.
- ***Communities*** include the numerous neighborhoods, workplaces, volunteer locations, parks, places of worship, schools, committees, and other gathering places and activities where Master Naturalists volunteer their time.

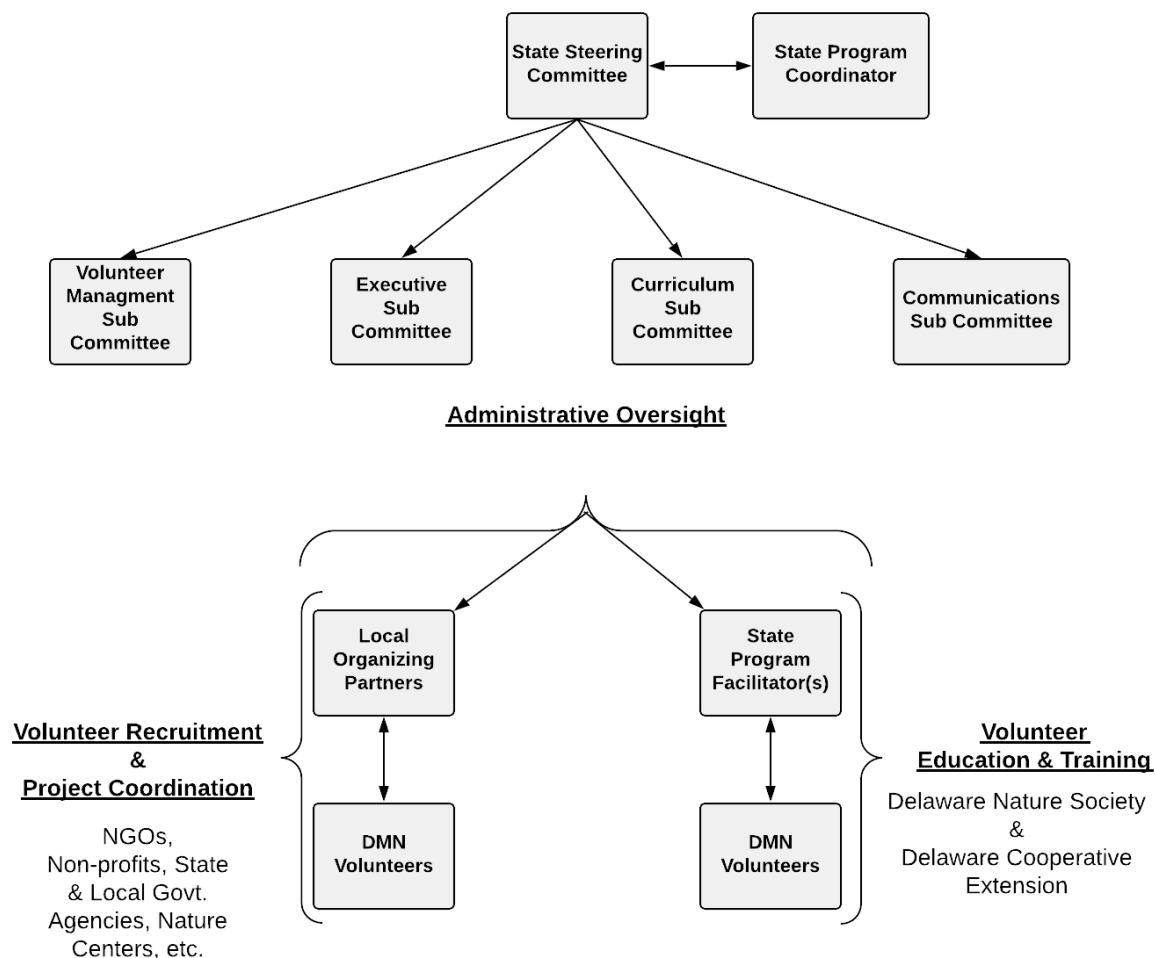
Our Goals:

- Promote awareness and appreciation of ecological resources in the State of Delaware
- Develop a network of trained volunteers to serve as catalysts for local environmental conservation through education, research and stewardship
- Provide a structured, science-based program to educate and certify citizens who maintain their lifelong learning quests as Delaware Master Naturalists
- Engage citizens in environmentally-focused volunteer service within their communities

Our Vision: A statewide corps of knowledgeable volunteers dedicated to natural resource management, research, and outreach in Delaware.

This manual is an overview of the Delaware Master Naturalist program and a guide to Delaware Master Naturalist Volunteers to help them fulfill their commitments to the program. Please be aware that a Delaware Master Naturalist volunteer will be volunteering for the Local Organizing Partner that they are affiliated with and not a University of Delaware Cooperative Extension (UDCE) volunteer, unless specifically recruited to work with UDCE. Please refer to the Local Organizing Partner for their volunteer policies in addition to this manual. If volunteering for University of Delaware Cooperative Extension as a Delaware Master Naturalist, please refer to the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Volunteer Handbook for policies and procedures in addition to this manual.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE



The Delaware Master Naturalist Program is defined as:

A science-based natural resource training program jointly sponsored statewide by University of Delaware Cooperative Extension (UDCE) and the Delaware Nature Society (DNS). Partnerships with state and local environmental organizations, agencies, and citizen groups, comprise the Local Organizing Partners, who support a network of Master Naturalist volunteers around the state by providing volunteer service opportunities, and recruiting volunteers for the Master Naturalist program. As Program Facilitators, UDCE and DNS coordinate and administer the volunteer training program using the Master Naturalist Facilitator's Manual.

The statewide program will:

- Train Master Naturalist volunteers
- Coordinate participant application, registration, payment and certification process

- Produce and distribute training manuals to volunteers
- Manage the statewide database of registered Master Naturalist volunteers/ Local Organizing Partners/ Volunteer Projects
- Maintain a database of Environmental Expert Educators as a program resource

Program Organization

- **State Master Naturalist Coordinator:** The coordinator is responsible for maintaining a database of certified Delaware Master Naturalist volunteers, Local Organizing Partners, subject matter expert trainers, volunteer service opportunities, and record of volunteer hours performed by Delaware Master Naturalists. The Master Naturalist Coordinator also assists in advertising volunteer opportunities with Local Organizing Partners to the Master Naturalist network using an email listserv, website, or other appropriate method of communication. The Master Naturalist Coordinator is also responsible for administering the Master Naturalist volunteer recognition program and serves on the State Steering Committee.
- **Program Facilitators:** Delaware Nature Society and University of Delaware Cooperative Extension are the program facilitators who will conduct the Master Naturalist volunteer training program. There will be opportunities for additional facilitators if the interest in the program requires it.
- **Local Organizing Partners:** Local Organizing Partners (LOPs) are organizations that register with the Delaware Master Naturalist program in order to receive volunteer service hours from Delaware Master Naturalists. The LOP is responsible for recruiting volunteers into the Master Naturalist program and coordinating volunteer service opportunities with the State Coordinator and Master Naturalist volunteers. LOPs are responsible for approving Master Naturalist volunteer-initiated project proposals involving their organization. A LOP can also advertise volunteer service opportunities with their organization through the State Master Naturalist Coordinator (LOP-initiated project proposals). As a Delaware Master Naturalist, it is necessary to be affiliated with a LOP but after the first year of service, the affiliation can be changed to another registered LOP. Collaborating with other LOPs is strongly encouraged.
- **State Steering Committee:** Ensures the successful execution of the Delaware Master Naturalist mission. The State Steering Committee is organized by a set of bylaws describing membership, duties, subcommittees, and terms. Members are active as chairpersons or members of sub-committees that provide guidance in developing program policy, creating training guidelines, establishing curriculum, developing resources, sponsoring conferences and advanced training, designing recognition programs, overseeing marketing, fundraising and promotional efforts, assisting Facilitators in identifying qualified instructors and in locating needed resources, developing LOPs to provide volunteer projects, and connecting volunteers with LOPs. This Committee includes at least one representative from each program facilitator,

sponsoring/partnering agency, and at least one certified Delaware Master Naturalist Volunteer.

- o Term of service on the Steering Committee is an appointment of one year. Service terms are renewable. The Steering Committee is composed of sub-committees. A Chairperson is appointed for each sub-committee. Steering Committee members are required to serve on at least one sub-committee. Steering Committee meetings will be held two times a year. Sub-committees will meet as needed. Committee members are encouraged to attend all scheduled meetings during their year(s) of service. The duties of the Steering Committee are subject to change based on program needs.

Statewide Sponsors/Partners:

- Organizations or agencies, granting foundations and corporations that are committed to assisting the program through financial and/or in-kind donations.
- A Sponsor may sign a “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) with University of Delaware Cooperative Extension signifying their relationship if they so choose. This document defines the commitment and contribution agreement for both parties.
- A Sponsor’s logo appears on Delaware Master Naturalist program printed materials. A Sponsor’s representative has the opportunity to sit on the Steering Committee.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS & REQUIREMENTS

Training

The opportunity to become a Delaware Master Naturalist is offered to interested persons with the end goal of providing volunteer service for the betterment of the environment. The program uses a comprehensive science-based curriculum developed by the Curriculum Subcommittee and approved by the State Steering Committee to train Master Naturalist volunteers in the natural history of Delaware.

This program is offered throughout Delaware at approved sites and administered by a Program Facilitator from the Delaware Master Naturalist Program using the approved Master Naturalist Facilitator Manual. Instructors may include University Faculty, University of Delaware Extension Specialists and Staff, Delaware Nature Society Staff, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control professionals, professional environmental educators, experienced Master Naturalist volunteers, and other experts with a demonstrated knowledge in the subject matter being taught as well as an ability to communicate that knowledge to a lay audience. Program Facilitators set up each program's sessions and supplement the resource manual materials with region-specific activities, speakers, and resources.

The volunteer training program is intended to provide a balanced, integrated, practical course in natural resource and ecosystem science. The following are the core topics to be introduced:

- Historical and Ecological Overview of Human Impacts on Delaware's Landscape and Watersheds
- Delaware Geology and Evolution
- Watershed Ecology
- Soil and Botany
- Field Sketching and Nature Photography
- Plant ID and Taxonomy
- Insects
- Reptiles and Amphibians
- Ornithology
- Citizen Science and Overview of the Scientific Method
- Weather and Climate Change
- Invasive Species and Habitat Management
- Environmental Justice
- Sustainable Landscapes

Participant Requirements

A Delaware Master Naturalist is a person trained to contribute to conservation, research, education and other stewardship programs as a volunteer. To participate in the Delaware Master Naturalist program, a candidate must be 18 years of age or older and be affiliated with a LOP in order to be accepted into the program. Persons admitted to the volunteer training program will be charged a fee which will be used to cover the costs of necessary supplies and materials and, in

part, to support State Program coordination. Individuals who live in states neighboring Delaware are welcome to participate in the Delaware Master Naturalist Program. Their volunteer service must be done in Delaware in order for the hours to count towards the program requirements. There may be opportunities for regional projects that cross state borders which should be evaluated by the State Program Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.

Levels of Master Naturalist

1. **Master Naturalist Trainee:** a program participant from the time he/she is accepted into the volunteer training program through completion of the sixty (60) hours of classroom training and required field trip(s).
2. **Master Naturalist Intern:** a program participant from the time he/she graduates from the volunteer training program up to the completion of forty (40) hours of volunteer service to their Local Organizing Partner. This Internship is to be completed within twelve (12) months of the end of classroom training. Anyone who fails to complete the volunteer service requirement does not become a certified Delaware Master Naturalist.
3. **Certified (Active) Master Naturalist:** A Master Naturalist Intern who has completed the initial forty (40) hour volunteer service requirement. To maintain certified status requires a minimum of forty (40) hours of volunteer service with approved LOPs and eight (8) hours of advanced training annually within one calendar year. These service hours are recorded by the Master Naturalist volunteer and reported to the State Master Naturalist Coordinator through the Volunteer Management System. A Certified Master Naturalist must have a current, signed "Volunteer Agreement Form" on file with the State Program Coordinator.
4. **Alumnus:** a formerly Certified Delaware Master Naturalist who no longer maintains his/her annual active volunteer service and/or advanced training requirements. Returning to active status after more than two (2) years as a Master Naturalist alumnus may require reevaluation and additional training at the discretion of the State Master Naturalist Coordinator.
5. **Inactive Status / Leave of Absence:** a formerly Certified Delaware Master Naturalist or Intern who is temporarily unable to fulfill Certified Delaware Master Naturalist requirements. Participants may remain on a leave of absence for up to two years at a time upon the approval of the Program Coordinator. A letter confirming the inactive status is placed in the volunteer's file. Return to active status after more than two (2) years as an inactive Delaware Master Naturalist may require reevaluation and additional training at the discretion of the State Master Naturalist Coordinator.
6. **Transfers** from out of state: must present proof of prior Master Naturalist training and certification. Transfers must provide two references from their previous Master Naturalist Program. They must purchase a Delaware Master Naturalist Volunteer Resource Kit. Transfers will be evaluated by the State Program Coordinator for their training needs and to ensure submission of all necessary forms for volunteer enrollment. Transfers must also successfully pass the volunteer training program final take-home exam.

Certification Requirements

1. **Complete the Core Curriculum & Demonstrate Knowledge**

- A minimum of 60 hours of training consisting of classroom lectures, labs, group projects, and field trips. At least 10 hours (25%) of the course will be spent in hands-on experience.
- A passing grade of 70% on an open-source, take-home final exam is required for certification.

2. Quizzes and Exam

- Instructors may incorporate quizzes into the training program as they see fit. All Trainees must pass an open source final exam with a score of 70% or better. This exam will test the Trainees' knowledge of broad natural resource principles. If a Trainee does not earn a passing grade of 70% or better, the Program Facilitator may provide an opportunity to improve their grade. Once the final has been graded and a Trainee passes, he/she then will receive an intern name badge that the Program Facilitator will provide.

3. Class Attendance & Make-up Procedures

- The Trainee is expected to attend every class session, including field trips. A missed session must be made up. There must be an agreement between the Program Facilitator and the trainee on what constitutes a make-up session.

4. Fulfill the Annual Volunteer Commitment

- Initial 40 hours of volunteer service under the supervision of a LOP. After the first year, volunteer service can be completed under the supervision of any approved LOP. Volunteer service opportunities are developed by LOPs, Master Naturalist volunteers, and the State Master Naturalist Coordinator.
- All Master Naturalist Volunteers are required to keep track of volunteer hours and submit them to the State Program Coordinator using the Volunteer Management System. Please refer to the Delaware Master Gardener Volunteer Management System User Guide for guidance.

5. Annual Recertification Advanced Training and Volunteer Service

- 40 hours of volunteer service annually, and
- 8 hours of advanced training annually, which may consist of lectures, educational field experiences, conferences, briefing sessions or course work approved by the State Program Coordinator.
- Volunteer Agreement Form must be completed annually.

ADVANCED TRAINING

Advanced training helps volunteers continually refresh and increase their knowledge and understanding of Delaware and its ecosystems. To maintain certification status, Master Naturalists must obtain eight (8) hours of advanced training annually after becoming certified. It is not required while serving as an Intern. The Certified Master Naturalist must report training hours to the State Master Naturalist Coordinator by the end of each calendar year. Advanced training provides volunteers an opportunity to focus their interests on specific topics that interest them while also promoting continued learning and development. Experienced Master Naturalists can use advanced training as an opportunity to develop tools with which they can work in more advanced volunteer efforts, possibly with additional responsibilities or leadership roles. Advanced training courses may be made available directly through University of Delaware Cooperative Extension or the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, or short courses and workshops may be provided by universities, community colleges, parks, natural resources organizations, and nature centers. It is recommended that all trainings are pre-approved by the State Master Naturalist Coordinator to ensure that credit will be awarded. Trainings may also be submitted for credit after the program has been attended but be aware that they may not be approved. Advanced training hours may not include travel time but may include meal and break times.

An advanced training should:

- Focus on an aspect of Delaware's natural or environmental cultural history,
- Be a formal training or class,
- Have an outdoor component,
- Be pre-approved by a Master Naturalist Program Facilitator or State Master Naturalist Coordinator if not adequately in compliance with the above specifications.

Unless otherwise approved, watching an educational TV program, movie or video on a natural resources subject does not count as advanced training except when viewed during the course of an approved lecture or workshop or recommended by the State Coordinator.

The Program Facilitator, Master Naturalist Coordinator, and Local Organizing Partners are encouraged to notify Master Naturalists of approved advanced training opportunities that exist locally and statewide. The Master Naturalist website will also be a source for locating advanced training opportunities.

When Approving Advanced Training, the State Master Naturalist Coordinator Will Consider How the Advanced Training Opportunity Will:

- Promote continued learning and development of Master Naturalist skills?
- Provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
- Provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in specific topics?
- Build on the core curriculum covered by the initial training?
- Provide natural resource information applicable to Delaware?

- Relate to some aspect of natural history or nature interpretation?

WHAT CONSTITUTES A MASTER NATURALIST VOLUNTEER SERVICE ACTIVITY

The activity must be consistent with the Delaware Master Naturalist mission. The purpose of volunteer work is to provide a service to the community with regard to natural resources, and to help the volunteer gain knowledge and experience. Projects must either involve enhancing the natural resources of the state or related education and outreach. All volunteer projects and service hours must be approved in advance by the LOP. If the LOP has difficulty deciding whether a project is appropriate, they will consult with the State Master Naturalist Coordinator. All volunteer hours should be recorded by the volunteer on a Volunteer Management System. If a volunteer wishes to work on volunteer service opportunities outside of their LOP, please work with the State Program Coordinator and the point of contact for the targeted LOP in order to confirm the service hours.

Examples of volunteer service:

Land Stewardship

- Wetland and habitat restoration
- Trail, boardwalk, observation platform, kiosk, etc. building and/or maintenance
- Erosion control
- Construction and placement of nest boxes
- Stream cleanup
- Invasive plant species removal

Citizen Science/Research/Surveys:

- Field assistance for species and natural community surveys and collection of other environmental data
- Early Detection/Rapid Response network for invasive species
- Wetland sampling, classification, and mapping
- Bird banding, census counts of other flora/fauna
- Plant collection and herbarium assistance
- Ecological inventory of public lands

Education and Outreach:

- Educators at natural areas answering questions and acting as a resource for visitors
- Program assistance at public events, informational/educational booths
- Demonstration site creation, interpretation, and maintenance
- Outreach activities for environmental organizations
- Public education lectures/talks to community groups, school groups
- Design, creation, or production of communication materials
- Production of brochures, fact sheets and other educational material
- Public field trips such as nature hikes
- Environmental workshops

- Pre-approved advocacy projects

Administrative duties performed to assist with the implementation and operation of the Delaware Master Naturalist program will be considered volunteer service hours.

The following activities do not constitute volunteer service hours:

- Service to a for-profit company
- Volunteer hours on your own property
- Recreational activities

DELAWARE MASTER NATURALIST- CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Code of Ethics

Each member, in striving to meet the mission, goals and objectives of the Delaware Master Naturalist Program, pledges to:

1. Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct.
2. Promote and support the statewide Delaware Master Naturalist Program.
3. Respect the state sponsors, their roles and expectations.
4. Disseminate information to promote understanding of, and appreciation for, the values of our natural resources.
5. Strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance as a Delaware Master Naturalist volunteer.
6. Promote competence as a Delaware Master Naturalist volunteer by supporting high standards of education, service and performance.
7. Encourage the use of sound biological information in education and outreach and in management decisions.
8. Support fair and uniform standards of service and treatment of those engaged in the Delaware Master Naturalist Program.
9. Know and follow established Delaware Master Naturalist Program protocols and policies.
10. Avoid use of the Delaware Master Naturalist title, logos, and trademarks for personal endeavors and/or profit.
11. Act as trustworthy and ethical stewards of the environment.
12. Never inappropriately disturb or harass wildlife. Never inappropriately remove anything from its natural state or area.

Standards of Conduct

Delaware Master Naturalist Program volunteers shall at all times:

1. Uphold the Commitment made to the Program and the required volunteer and advanced training hours required by the Delaware Master Naturalist Program.
2. Uphold the dignity and integrity of the Delaware Master Naturalist Program. Volunteers shall endeavor to avoid even the suspicion of dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or unprofessional demeanor.
3. Conduct themselves appropriately to context and setting at all times.
4. Be considerate and respect each other and each other's points of view.
5. Keep accurate records of volunteer service, training and research, and monthly (at a minimum) report these records to the State Master Naturalist Program Coordinator through the Volunteer Management System.
6. Avoid performing service when such service is judged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics or detrimental to the well-being of the Delaware Master Naturalist Program, its sponsors, and University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Service.
7. Provide maximum possible effort in the best interest of each client and/or volunteer project.
8. Be mindful of their responsibility to society and the Delaware Master Naturalist Program.

9. Studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of Delaware Master Naturalist Program authority, Certification, or Membership for personal satisfaction.
10. Cooperate fully with professionals and other Master Naturalist volunteers in the best interest of our natural resources.
11. Refrain from advertising in a self-laudatory manner, beyond statements intended to inform prospective clients or members of qualifications, or in a manner detrimental to the Delaware Master Naturalist Program and its volunteers.
12. Avoid all use of alcohol and controlled substances while on duty as a Delaware Master Naturalist volunteer. Reporting for service while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance will result in termination from volunteer service.

Using Master Naturalist Title

1. Identify as a Delaware Master Naturalist Volunteer when participating in events and always wear your name badge.
2. Only active, Certified Master Naturalists can use the title “Delaware Master Naturalist.”
3. Master Naturalists can present their title and qualifications as Master Naturalist Volunteers on job applications.
4. Master Naturalists are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public service work under the auspices of the program. Volunteers are advised not to advertise their place of business, either that they own or where they are employed. Because the program is a source of unbiased, research-based information, the following are considered inappropriate: appearing as a commercial activity, having association with or promoting commercial products, or giving implied University endorsement of any product or place of business.

Guidelines for Working with the Public

1. Do not endorse brand name products or recommend a particular company.
2. A Master Naturalist cannot lend his or her name and title to promote or advertise a private business (e.g. wearing a Master Naturalist name tag while working for a business as a paid employee.) An implied association with or endorsement of a commercial product or business is improper and grounds for dismissal from the program.

Accepting Money

1. A Master Naturalist may be asked to make presentations for special events, fairs, and festivals conducted by individual businesses. Businesses may offer honoraria to the Master Naturalist’s LOP or affiliate program for specific services. This type of activity is permitted if the following criteria are met:
 - a. Limited to a single event or well-defined series of special events,
 - b. Will further the educational goals of the program,
 - c. Does not overwhelm volunteer resources or reduce effectiveness of other activities,
 - d. Made available to other similar businesses to avoid the appearance of partiality,
 - e. The presence is advertised and promoted prior to the event,
 - f. The identity and affiliation of the Master Naturalist is clear and unmistakable, and
 - g. Master Naturalists will be given a separate designated area to educate customers to help maintain our reputation for impartiality and objectivity.

2. When asked to make presentations to groups, Master Naturalists may accept an honorarium which will be used to support Master Naturalist goals and activities and must be given to the LOP for program use. Under no circumstances should volunteers accept money or gifts for themselves for services provided while acting as a Master Naturalist.

Protocol for Writing/Editing Master Naturalist Materials

1. Ask for permission and give proper credit to information sources used in articles for Master Naturalist newsletters and other print media.
2. Articles developed for publication in local newspapers or electronic media, Master Naturalist newsletters, and/or other materials developed by volunteers must be reviewed and approved by the Program Facilitator or State Master Naturalist Coordinator prior to distribution or release.
3. All educational materials purchased with program funds or developed for training or projects, or used by Master Naturalists (e.g. slides, photography, PowerPoint presentations, tools, herbarium mounts, books, etc.) are the exclusive property of the Master Naturalist program.



Delaware Master Naturalist

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