

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Enhanced safety protocols for volunteers to prevent the spread of COVID-19

*The COVID-19 response continues to develop rapidly and change frequently. This document will be updated as needed and is current as of **April 13, 2021**.*

The following guidance provides recommendations and expectations for volunteers and staff so that they can reduce their exposure to COVID-19 and is intended to be used in addition to any typical safety requirements, including PPE requirements, for volunteer tasks. This guidance includes input from DNR staff, recommendations and requirements from the Governor's Office, and is predominately based on health and safety guidelines determined by the DNR COVID Response Team. There are many sources for health and safety guidance to aid in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Volunteers on DNR lands should reference this guidance in place of any other state or local COVID recommendations or requirements.

Who is this document for?

The information provided in this document is intended as guidance for volunteers who will be supporting DNR's operations either individually, or within groups led by DNR staff, or led by an approved partner organization with a current work agreement.

Duties performed by these volunteers include, but are not limited to:

- Trail maintenance, including brushing, tread repair, and drainage
- Opening and closing gates to state lands
- Campground Hosts
- Forest Watch
- Collecting rare plant and/or ecological data
- Performing weed control duties
- Performing plant or wildlife surveys

How many people can volunteer at one time?

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, and to also meet the need for volunteer service opportunities for DNR and the public, volunteer events have limits for Group Size and Event Size. The details of both are below.

Volunteer Group Size:

Starting April 13, 2021, the maximum allowable size of a volunteer group will be determined by the county an event is held in. Counties will be in either Phase 1, 2, or 3 of the [Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery](#) reopening plan.

Phase 1 and 2: If a volunteer event takes place in a county that is in Phase 1 or Phase 2 of the reopening plan, volunteer events are limited to 12 participants, plus the number of event leaders and/or DNR staff required for a safe and productive volunteer event.

Phase 3: If a county is in Phase 3 of the reopening plan, volunteer events are limited to 20 participants plus the number of event leaders and/or DNR staff required for a safe and productive volunteer event.

DNR staff may, at their discretion, limit the total number of volunteers to sizes smaller than the maximum group sizes stated above, or require that participants divide into smaller groups to perform tasks.

Volunteer Event Size:

In accordance with the larger gathering limits provided in DNR's Large Event Guidance, and allowances for brief gatherings of large groups of people in the guidance document [Racing non-motorized and motorized COVID-19 Requirements](#) provided by the Governor's office, **up to 50 volunteers** may gather at one time to begin a volunteer event. This larger event size is intended to allow efficient communication for needs such as completing a project overview or a safety briefing. The DNR staff and crew leaders needed to manage event logistics and safety do not count in the participant limit. As of April 13, 2021, this applies to regions in all Phases (1, 2, or 3) of the reopening plan.

For all volunteer events, the following requirements must be observed:

- All volunteers, event leaders, and DNR staff must wear facial coverings for the duration of any pre-event announcements, and all volunteer tasks. Facial coverings may be removed by a leader or staff member only while making announcements to the full group
- All participants, staff, and event leaders must maintain as much distance as possible (ideally at least 6 ft) between themselves and anyone not from their same household.
- Pre-event announcements and briefings should be limited to 10 minutes in duration
- Groups must break up into small groups of no more than the allowable group size for the county Phase they are volunteering in (12 volunteers in Phases 1 and 2; 20 volunteers in Phase 3) for the remainder of the event work, including during any lunch or rest breaks
- There will be no end-of-event gathering or social time when volunteer activity has been completed

Communication with DNR Staff

Volunteers and volunteer groups should be in contact either by phone or email with their regional DNR staff contact in advance of performing any volunteer activity. Correspondence should include:

- Date and time
- Location

- Type of work to be performed
- Size of volunteer event or group
- Confirmation that volunteers have appropriate PPE or will be provided appropriate PPE by the event organizer (PPE requirements below)

The DNR region will evaluate the volunteer activity proposed, and at its discretion will approve, deny, or request modifications to a proposed volunteer event or events.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

All limits to group or event size, and health and safety measures, including PPE requirements and the use of facial coverings outlined throughout this document apply to all volunteer event participants, event leaders, and DNR staff, regardless of their vaccination status.

Assumption of Risk

All volunteers should sign and submit to their DNR staff contact the DNR Assumption of Risk Registration Form that as of 05/05/2020 contains language specific to COVID-19 risk. This should be completed no later than at the beginning of a volunteer service or event. In the circumstance that a volunteer is completing work individually without a DNR staff person present, this must be submitted as soon as possible after gaining permission from appropriate DNR regional staff to complete volunteer activities. A completed and updated waiver is required for volunteer hours to count toward an earned Discover Pass.

General safety guidelines while volunteering with DNR

In addition to the safety measures expected of volunteers when performing a specific task, the following additional safety guidelines should be followed to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

Keep hands clean – wash hands with soap and water as often as possible. When soap and water are unavailable, volunteers and/or event leaders should carry hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol to clean hands before and after eating, before and after touching their mouth, nose, or eyes, and after using the bathroom.

Maintain safe distance – Maintain a distance of 6 feet at all times from other volunteers who are not part of your household, as well as from the public and recreationalists that may enter a work or study site. Volunteers should post signs near work sites to announce their presence to the public, and volunteers should move safely away from a work site to allow others ample room to pass safely.

Limit tool or equipment sharing – Volunteers should do their best to limit the sharing of tools or other equipment while volunteering on DNR land as possible. Volunteers should always wear gloves while handling tools and equipment to reduce opportunities for spread. If volunteers are

using DNR tools and equipment, they should sanitize and disinfect all tools at the conclusion of their volunteer activities.

Carry appropriate PPE – in addition to general PPE for outdoor work such as leather gloves, hard hat, and closed-toe shoes, volunteers are expected to keep COVID-specific PPE, including a facial covering and eye protection. Volunteers are also encouraged to carry hand sanitizer with them if possible.

Do not volunteer when you feel sick – regardless of symptoms, volunteers and staff should not perform any duties if they feel ill, and should conclude volunteer work as soon as possible should they start to feel sick while volunteering. Please do a self-assessment using the questions below before deciding to volunteer with DNR:

Do you have any of the following:

- A fever (100.4°F or higher), or a sense of having a fever?
- A new cough that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
- New shortness of breath that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
- A new sore throat that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
- New muscle aches (myalgia) that you cannot attribute to another health condition, or that may have been caused by a specific activity (such as physical exercise)?
- Have you had close contact within the last 14-days, with someone who is currently sick with confirmed COVID-19? (Note: Close contact is defined as within 6 feet for more than 10 minutes per CDC Guidelines)

If you can answer yes to any question, please stay home and volunteer another day.

Required and recommended PPE to prevent the spread of COVID-19

As of June 30, 2020, all DNR employees and volunteers are required to wear a facial covering at all times unless they are working completely alone, even if they are able to maintain 6ft of distance. This is in accordance with the [Washington Department of Labor and Industries](#) guidance on facial coverings.

Volunteers are required to follow state and local laws regarding facial coverings. As of June 26, 2020 and until rescinded, Washington State Secretary of Health Order 20-03 requires facial coverings in both indoor and outdoor public spaces, with the exception of those noted as exempt in the Order.

Volunteers are expected to be able to maintain at least 6ft of distance from users and visitors to DNR lands, as well as other volunteers who do not live in the same household. In the event that social distancing cannot be maintained for the majority of a volunteer experience, volunteers should inform their DNR staff contact so appropriate action can be taken.

Discover Passes and Tracking Volunteer Hours

DNR staff and/or the group leaders for volunteer activities on DNR lands must keep attendance logs for all volunteer activity for a minimum of 30 days.

In referencing Discover Pass vouchers for volunteers, the DNR Volunteer Manual states: “These vouchers may be given to interested volunteers when they participate on preapproved, eligible volunteer projects (see Eligibility Criteria). Volunteer vouchers may only be issued to people who are volunteering on eligible projects and who are NOT receiving any other form of compensation. (e.g. members of partner organizations that are being compensated by DNR for hosting the work party, and who are leading a work party as part of their jobs, should NOT be issuing these vouchers to themselves.)” Eligible projects included are:

- Trail maintenance and development tasks such as building, brushing, tread repair, drainage structures, rocking, sign installation
- Facility/Site maintenance tasks such as maintenance and repair of shelters, tables, signs, ADA structures, corrals, fencing
- Forest watch patrols for public education, outreach, and monitoring.
- Campground Hosts approved by DNR are eligible for a free Discover Pass. Duties may include light maintenance and monitoring of campsites.

Given the exceptional circumstances, until stated otherwise, volunteer hours that are earned outside of “pre-approved eligible projects” can be accrued toward a Discover Pass voucher at staff discretion, provided the volunteer service can be counted toward one of the eligible project types listed above.

Further, DNR staff should provide day passes for volunteers who do not have a Discover Pass. Volunteers in need of an administrative pass to perform volunteer projects should contact DNR staff in advance.