

Volunteer Steward



HANDBOOK

2005



Alberta
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Welcome!

Congratulations on becoming a Volunteer Steward for Alberta Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas Division!

As a Volunteer Steward, you'll have the opportunity to contribute to the management and preservation of Alberta's natural landscapes and ecosystems, learn new skills, and meet and work with others who share similar interests.

This handbook is yours to keep. It is intended to provide you with basic information on the Volunteer Steward Program as well as introduce you to the parks and protected areas network and how stewardship helps to preserve Alberta's unique natural heritage. It will help you understand your steward roles, duties and relationships with government staff, other volunteers, and the general public. This handbook will supplement the orientation and training you receive from staff.

Thank you for volunteering. Your contribution to the preservation of Alberta's landscapes is of benefit to all Albertans. The talents, effort and enthusiasm you bring are vital in helping us meet our goals. I hope you enjoy your stewardship experience! My staff and I look forward to working with you.

I wish you the best of luck.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'June Markwart'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

June Markwart
Visitor Services Branch
Parks and Protected Areas Division

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YOUR CONTACT LIST

1. INTRODUCTION

This handbook is provided to all new Volunteer Stewards to help you understand the program and your responsibilities. You will also receive an information kit that contains detailed information on the program and your site and its resources. These two documents are designed to complement one another in providing a comprehensive orientation. In addition to this staff will meet with you to review this handbook and orient you to your site.

2. PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION

Parks and Protected Areas Division of Alberta Community Development manages a network of parks and protected areas on behalf of the government and all Albertans, to preserve our natural heritage and provide opportunities for heritage appreciation, outdoor recreation and heritage tourism. This public trust is a legacy for which we all share responsibility. We are committed to providing meaningful volunteer opportunities.

By joining this stewardship program you became one of our partners in preservation and part of one of the most successful volunteer initiatives in our department. You have become part of a team dedicated to the preservation and management of Alberta's natural heritage. This team consists of Volunteer Stewards and staff from two government departments; Alberta Community Development and Sustainable Resource Development. As a steward you will complement the services we provide and work together with staff and other volunteers. Hundreds of volunteers share this commitment with you across the province.

3. HOW YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE PARKS PROGRAM GOALS

The stewardship program is focused primarily on our preservation goal, however, it also contributes to the other three goals in a variety of ways. Each steward contributes to these goals simply by completing the minimum duties described in this handbook. For example, your visits and inspection reports provide vital information about activities and issues that affect your site(s). This information is used by the field coordinator to make decisions about the management of these sites.

Many stewards also enhance opportunities for visitors to explore, understand and appreciate the natural world by developing trails and interpretive signs, brochures or trail guides. Sharing what you learn about your site's natural history with people you encounter enhances their experience and helps build public support for the entire network.

PARKS PROGRAM GOALS

- ♦ **preservation** – to preserve in perpetuity a network of parks and protected areas representing the diverse natural and cultural heritage of Alberta.
- ♦ **heritage appreciation** – to provide opportunities to explore, understand and appreciate Alberta's natural heritage and to enhance public awareness of our relationship with, and dependence upon, the natural world.
- ♦ **outdoor recreation** – to provide opportunities for nature-based outdoor recreation, and to provide related facilities and services.
- ♦ **heritage tourism** – to encourage residents and visitors to discover and enjoy the natural heritage of the province through a variety of nature-based tourism opportunities, facilities and accommodation services.

4. ACHIEVING OUR GOALS THROUGH VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP

The following describes what the government is trying to achieve through this program:



Vision:

A **vision statement** is a description of what we are trying to achieve through the Volunteer Steward program over time:

“Citizens actively involved throughout Alberta’s provincial parks and protected areas to help ensure the preservation, protection and enjoyment of our rich natural and cultural heritage, for all time.”

Mission Statement:

The **mission statement** defines how Volunteer Stewards achieve this vision.

“Volunteer Stewards help preserve, protect and promote the natural and cultural heritage and recreational values of Alberta’s parks and protected areas network. They accomplish this through monitoring, education and research as well as providing operational and management support.”

Goal Statement:

To increase opportunities for volunteers to enhance knowledge about our sites’ resources and use.

Program Objectives: (These describe how government is going to achieve this goal statement over the next five years)

1. To provide public stewardship opportunities that create a network of support for the parks and protected areas program, and establish a direct dialogue with the public we serve.
2. To help preserve the natural and cultural resources found within the parks and protected areas network for all time.
3. To educate the public about the natural and cultural heritage values and appropriate recreational opportunities of the site and its management.
4. To encourage ongoing, open communications between volunteers, staff, adjacent landowners, and others directly involved with the site.
5. To expand the program by increasing the numbers of volunteers, creating new stewardship opportunities, and increasing the number of sites and ranges of classes where stewards participate.
6. To improve the operational efficiency of volunteer management support services.
7. To increase support for the program by broadening the range of resources to include things like corporate sector support, sponsorship, etc.
8. To monitor volunteer and staff satisfaction to continually improve the program.

5. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Since the program's humble beginnings the number of volunteers has grown as has the number and type of sites available for stewardship. For the last 3 years the average number of participants is

Milestones in the Program

- ♦ Managed by the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, the Volunteer Steward program began in 1987 on natural areas and ecological reserves.
- ♦ In 1989 the logo was developed, establishing a program identity.
- ♦ In 1989/90 56 new stewards signed up, a record that has yet to be exceeded.
- ♦ In 1990 the first volunteer conference was held.
- ♦ In 1993 natural areas and ecological reserves and the steward program itself moved to Parks and Protected Areas Service in Environmental Protection.
- ♦ In 1994 roving stewards were initiated.
- ♦ On the 10th anniversary, 1997, Ty Lund, the Minister of Environmental Protection presented the stewards with a beautiful buffalo print, which is now the Steward Service Excellence award.
- ♦ In 2001, Parks and Protected Areas was transferred to Alberta Community Development.
- ♦ In 2003, 34 individuals and 17 organized groups passed their 15 year anniversary in the program.

over 275 individuals and 60 groups annually.

There currently are stewardship opportunities in virtually all classes of protected lands including provincial parks, provincial recreation areas, wilderness areas, wildland provincial parks, ecological reserves and heritage rangelands in addition to natural areas. For more information refer to your site manual.

The program has evolved significantly over the years to become a model for other stewardship programs in Alberta and across Canada. You are now a part of this success.



6. DEPARTMENT ROLES AND SUPPORT

The Volunteer Steward Program is an Alberta government program managed by the Department of Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas Division. It is jointly managed with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development - Public Lands and Forests Division. Visitor Services Branch of Parks and Protected Areas Division in Edmonton, coordinates the management and administration of the program and is responsible for developing policies and procedures for this and other volunteer programs within the network.

Visitor Services Branch Staff and Roles

The Volunteer Steward Coordinator and other volunteer program staff are responsible for the overall coordination of the Volunteer Steward Program, which includes:

- ♦ promoting the program
- ♦ reviewing and processing applications
- ♦ acting as a liaison between departments, the steward, local field coordinator and other staff
- ♦ notifying stewards of changes that affect them i.e. staff changes

- ◆ assisting with resolving issues or conflicts that may arise between you and your field coordinator
- ◆ providing training for volunteers and staff
- ◆ providing support materials like publications, this handbook, the site information kit, the web site and newsletter
- ◆ arranging for design and layout for natural areas site brochures
- ◆ receiving and processing inspection reports
- ◆ coordinating data entry of research and biological information
- ◆ maintaining a volunteer database and other records and files
- ◆ evaluating and awarding recognition items
- ◆ conducting needs assessments and evaluating the success of the program
- ◆ managing volunteer related issues including preparation of briefings and other correspondence.

Your Visitor Services Branch contact is the: Volunteer Steward Coordinator, her contact information is on the Contact Form at the back of this handbook.

Your Local Field Coordinator/Site Operations

Since Volunteer Stewards could be placed in any park or protected area, your local field coordinator could work for either of the following; Public Lands and Forest Division or Parks and Protected Areas Division - depending on who has jurisdiction in that site. These local field coordinators deal with the day-to-day site management issues and are your primary contact with the government once you have been assigned to a site. They implement the policies and procedures developed jointly among the various divisions involved and are responsible for the following:

- ◆ leading your on-site orientation and assisting other training
- ◆ supervising Volunteer Stewards on site
- ◆ responding to enforcement and other site management issues
- ◆ arranging for staff assistance with tree cutting, weed removal, garbage clean up or installation of signs
- ◆ reviewing and approving your ideas for special projects, media involvement and educational programming.
- ◆ informing the stewards of any operational matters that may affect them or their activities on site.

Refer to the covering letter of your kit to find out the name and contact information for your field coordinator. Be sure to add it to your list of important contacts found at the back of this handbook.

Area Managers

Field coordinators report to an Area Manager. You should obtain this contact information from your field coordinator and include it on the Contact Form at the back of this handbook. Area Managers are responsible for overseeing implementation of all services in the sites they are responsible for. You should contact them if you cannot reach your field coordinator

regarding an urgent matter or to enlist their assistance in resolving any conflicts that may arise.

No matter which department, division or staff member you deal with, our mutual goal is to make your volunteer experience positive. You can help by establishing open communication with your field coordinator and the Volunteer Steward Coordinator. They are the people you will be dealing with while performing your steward duties.

Any time you have concerns, questions, or suggestions, contact your field coordinator or the Volunteer Steward Coordinator. If a problem develops between you and your field coordinator, and you are unable to resolve the issue directly, please contact the Area Manager or Volunteer Steward Coordinator for assistance.

7. YOUR STEWARDSHIP DUTIES

Being a Volunteer Steward provides an opportunity for you to become more involved in the management of a park or protected area and to take an active part in its preservation. It's also an opportunity for you to share your love of nature with others. When you become a Volunteer Steward we ask you to make a minimum two-year commitment and agree to take on a number of tasks as outlined below.

But first, there are two ways you can become involved in volunteer stewardship; as a roving steward taking on specific projects at various sites around the province, or undertaking all the aspects of an assigned site or sites.

For Roving Stewards:

Roving stewards aren't assigned to a specific site, but move from site to site and/or take on special projects of long or short duration. They usually have a specific skill or interest in a particular type of project. This may include simply doing an inspection, or committing more time to participate in a project that requires specialized skills. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THIS TYPE OF VOLUNTEER WORK, CONTACT THE VOLUNTEER STEWARD COORDINATOR TO DISCUSS OPPORTUNITIES. If you want to know who is available, as a roving steward, to help with your site or projects, contact the Volunteer Steward Coordinator for a referral.



For Stewards Assigned To Sites:

Site Visits

If you are assigned to a specific site or sites, we require, at a minimum, you visit and report on your site at least twice a year.

During your visit you:

- ◆ observe the general condition of the site, the plants or animals you see and any signs of human activity
- ◆ record what you observed on an inspection report form, take photographs if possible and record your volunteer hours
- ◆ and then submit it to the Volunteer Steward Coordinator.
- ◆ or work on a special project (see Creative Stewardship, below)

Your Inspection Report

The inspection reports are invaluable sources of information for field coordinators and managers. Through filing these reports you become actively involved in the preservation of your assigned site and in providing information for decision-making and management planning. You also help us gather biological information that is compiled into the inventory maintained on your site through the Alberta Natural Heritage Information Center.

The information on your report is entered into our database and a copy is sent to the field coordinator. He/she will respond to any site management issues identified by you.

This task is also important because your reports are one of the indicators of your continued involvement in the program. So please file a report even if you feel you have nothing new to report and don't forget to fill in the number of hours you have volunteered. Instructions on how to complete an inspection report are in your kit.

Creative Stewardship ... taking it beyond the basics

In addition to these minimal compulsory duties, many Volunteer Stewards take on, with the approval of the field coordinator, additional projects within their assigned sites. The scope of projects depends upon each individual site's needs and your experience, talents and interest. Stewards frequently complete activities such as the following:

- ◆ site clean ups and work bees
- ◆ reclamation projects
- ◆ installation and maintenance of signs along the protected area boundary
- ◆ trail development and parking areas
- ◆ public education and promotion
- ◆ biophysical inventories and other research projects
- ◆ fund raising.

As long as they are consistent with management objectives for the site and have been approved, the possibilities are endless! To obtain approval for your ideas contact your field coordinator.

At the discretion of the field coordinator, completion of these duties may be a higher priority than inspection reports, which can then be waived. In their place stewards will be asked to submit copies of a written summary of the work completed on the Special Projects Report form. These forms are included in your information kits. Occasionally, newsletters are accepted as your written record of activities, obtain permission from the field coordinator or Volunteer Steward Coordinator to do this.



8. YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY

Accident prevention, the most important component of safety, is a combination of safe conditions and common sense. When you are performing your duties, your safety should be your number one concern. You may be working in fairly isolated places so it's essential that you be prepared to deal with any emergency situations. We recommend you:

- ◆ notify someone of where you are going and when you expect to be back
- ◆ bring along a friend or colleague
- ◆ carry a cellular phone (There are many locations in Alberta where a telephone signal cannot be accessed. Your field coordinator may be able to tell you if a cellular phone works at your site)
- ◆ know where the nearest emergency assistance is located
- ◆ be familiar with basic first aid
- ◆ if you are going into remote locations, we also recommend you acquire training in map and compass reading
- ◆ if you discover a hazardous situation, contact your field coordinator or other available staff so that the potential hazard can be removed
- ◆ under no circumstances attempt to do anything that you feel endangers your personal safety (see "Tips for Dealing with Public Contact" to ensure your interaction with the public keeps your personal safety in mind).

If you are involved in an accident or are injured, you must inform your field coordinator as soon as you can. This is a requirement for volunteers under Occupational Health and Safety and is in your best interest to do so. You will be asked to complete some forms regarding the incident. For further suggestions on how to be prepared, refer to the information kit.

9. YOUR PUBLIC IMAGE

As a Volunteer Steward, you are associated with the department from the perspective of the public, particularly when you wear your identification. In all your dealings with the public present yourself in a manner that creates a positive image of you, the program and the department.

Identification

You are issued a nametag and identification card when you are assigned to your stewardship duties. You should have this identification card at all times when you are on site, so you can identify yourself to the public if you need to. After you file your first inspection report you will also receive a t-shirt or a field vest that has the program logo. Please wear these (weather permitting) and your nametag every time you visit your site if you want to be easily identifiable to the public. Other identification items may be provided depending on your public exposure and the unique requirements of your volunteer duties.

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 identification, but please carry your identification card.

Tips for creating a positive impression:

- ♦ **be visible** – wear your nametag and identification
- ♦ **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. Take down the question along with the name, address and phone number of the person and tell them you will call them when you have an answer or will forward it to the appropriate person – and then be sure you do that as soon as possible or ...
- ♦ **refer the person** - to either your field coordinator or the Volunteer Steward Coordinator.



10. TIPS FOR DEALING WITH PUBLIC CONTACT

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 field coordinator before initiating any formal educational programs or materials.

Public Advocacy

Please remember volunteers are not official spokespeople for the department. 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 the government. This is necessary because the public and even municipal authorities perceive you as closely affiliated with government and can be confused by your relationship with us.

Confidentiality of Information

All volunteers working with the department are in privileged positions where you are sometimes privy to confidential information about site operation, management or even new department policies or procedures. 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 field coordinator or the Volunteer Steward Coordinator.

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 field coordinator or in their absence, to the Volunteer Steward Coordinator.

In emergencies the appropriate authorities like the local parks and protected areas Conservation Officer, the local fish and wildlife Conservation Officer, the fire department, forestry or RCMP can be contacted directly. These authorities are empowered to deal with these problems through legislation and have the specialized training to do so. When this action is necessary, notify your field coordinator to advise them about the situation and the actions you took. If problems are persistent and you want to make arrangements for some ongoing enforcement assistance, contact your field coordinator. It is their responsibility to make arrangements for dealing with persistent problems.

Collect the contact information on these authorities and record it on the form provided at the back of this handbook. Keep it with you to be prepared when these situations arise. Any problem situations you do encounter should be noted in your field inspection reports to provide written documentation about them.

For more information on what activities are permitted in your site, refer to your information kit. Become familiar with all legislation governing the classification of your site.

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 department staff or give them the contact information for the Parks and Protected Areas Division public information center, (toll free

at 1-866-427-3582). If you find yourself in a situation where staff are 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 by defending or degrading the government, staff, site or contractors
- ◆ 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 your field coordinator or the Volunteer Steward Coordinator as soon as possible.

11. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Occasionally local or provincial media, like reporters, may contact 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. Under these circumstances refer the media to the department's Communications Division at (780) 427-6530. They are responsible for responding to media enquires on behalf of the ministry and preparing news releases and public service announcements.

The Minister of Community Development and the Communications Director and/or designated Public Affairs Officers are the official media spokespeople for the ministry. The official media spokespeople respond to media inquiries on topics related to department or government policy, issues of a sensitive nature, department funding and/or business planning, future direction of the department or government, and changes in department services or programs.

Please advise your field coordinator or the Volunteer Steward Coordinator when the media has approached you. Staff may be aware of similar media inquiries about this issue and can discuss the up to date information and any concerns with you. Whenever possible, staff are expected to advise Communications Division about these enquires. This helps us keep track of all media relations for the Minister.

If you are hosting a special event and want to invite local media coverage or arrange for a news release contact your field coordinator, or in their absence, the Volunteer Steward Coordinator. 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 enquiries requires care and consideration. When you do so, please remember to not release any confidential information and identify yourself as a volunteer, not a representative of the government. 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 field coordinator or the Volunteer Steward Coordinator in a timely manner (The media work with very tight timelines).
- ◆ 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. You 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 field coordinator or Volunteer Steward Coordinator of stories published and broadcasted in your community that mention the site.

12. ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

All volunteers receive basic orientation and/or training upon commencement of their duties.

Your Steward Information Kit

As a Volunteer Steward assigned to a site (s), you have received an information kit with detailed information about your site (s). The kit includes information on Legislation, and the Parks and Protected Areas program, site descriptions, aerial photographs, maps, plant or animal inventories and other information that has been collected by previous stewards or staff. In your list you will also find detailed information on how to carry out a site inspection and your other steward duties.

Roving stewards receive a basic kit with information about the Parks and Protected Areas program, the steward program and some reference materials (inspection report forms, conversion sheets, map overlays). If your duties require site information it will be forwarded to you to complete your kit and will include contact information for the field coordinator. Depending upon your duties some kits for roving stewards also includes a special project form that the steward fills out every time he/she takes part in a project.

Site Orientation

Before you plan to go to your site for the first time, contact your field coordinator 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.

Formal Orientation Sessions

Periodically, Visitor Services Branch of Parks and Protected Areas Division will offer orientation sessions to new stewards at locations around the province. If a session is coming up, you will be invited to participate. We encourage all new stewards to attend one of these orientation sessions. It's a great way to network with others and get to know the department staff you will be working with as well as orient you to your duties.

The Annual Volunteer Conference

Each year, Parks and Protected Areas Division coordinates an annual conference for all its volunteers including stewards. In addition to training opportunities that help you develop your skills and knowledge, there are a host of interesting field trips, a recognition dinner and other social events. This conference is a great way to network with other volunteers and staff as well as learn about other opportunities for volunteering in the parks and protected areas network. As a department volunteer, you will receive an invitation to this event. We encourage your attendance. Contact the Volunteer Steward Coordinator if you want more information on the upcoming conference or orientation session.

Other Training

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

13. COMMUNICATING TOGETHER

Good communications is essential for a successful stewardship experience. Volunteers and staff alike share this responsibility. We encourage you to communicate on a regular basis with your field coordinator and the Volunteer Steward Coordinator and expect them to do so as well. In addition to this, there are several formal means we communicate with you.

The Web Site - Volunteering in Alberta's Outdoors

We encourage you to become familiar with our volunteer web site. You can learn more about our volunteer programs, view current and past volunteer newsletters, find out what's new or e-mail questions directly to the Volunteer Steward Coordinator from our web site at: www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/volunteer. You can also fill out and submit your inspection reports on line and even nominate people for the various volunteer achievement awards.

The Volunteer Newsletter

As a parks and protected areas volunteer, you will receive copies of our volunteer newsletter "Partners in Preservation". It is published semi-annually and editors welcome submissions

from all volunteers and staff. Please see the inside cover of the newsletter for details on submissions.

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. You are also asked for feedback if and when you leave the program.

14. RECOGNITION

We are proud of the dedication and commitment that our volunteers demonstrate towards their sites, special projects and our goal of preserving Alberta's natural heritage. It's a privilege for staff to work alongside you in the achievements of your goals. Although we can never do enough to recognize these contributions, the ministry does encourage staff to show their appreciation and has a formal recognition program.

Each and every volunteer is recognized in some way. This may take a variety of forms, from a simple expression of thanks or a letter, to the awarding of special items like first aid kits, t-shirts, mugs, hats or jackets. Every steward who submits inspection reports, or special projects record form, regularly is recognized for their time and dedication. Please ensure you mark the hours you volunteered on these forms, so we can track this and ensure you receive the acknowledgement you deserve.

Volunteer Stewards are also eligible for a number of special awards that are presented at the annual volunteer conference. These are based on criteria such as years of service, outstanding accomplishments or a demonstration of service excellence in the spirit of stewardship and include specific awards for:

- ◆ Outstanding Individual Steward
- ◆ Outstanding Group Steward
- ◆ Steward Service Excellence - for an individual or group that has shown long-term commitment and consistent spirit of stewardship

Stewards are also eligible for the Parks and Protected Areas Division's most prestigious award, the Green Shield Award. It is presented to an individual or organization whose volunteer efforts have made significant contributions to the conservation or preservation of our province's land, water, ecosystems and the plants and animals that live there.

We encourage you to nominate any fellow stewards you feel deserve special recognition or nominate 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 conference. Contact the Volunteer Steward Coordinator or check the volunteer web site www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/volunteer for more information.

15. RESIGNATIONS FROM THE STEWARD PROGRAM

You can resign from the Volunteer Steward Program at any time. To do so, contact your field coordinator or Volunteer Steward Coordinator and return all information kits. These kits are expensive to produce and will be reassigned to other stewards. If you desire, we will continue to include you on the mailing list so you can keep informed on what's happening.

To maintain your standing as an active Volunteer Steward you must submit the inspection reports, or a written summary of your special project, as a demonstration of your continued participation.

If you have not submitted any information for up to two years, it is interpreted as your resignation from the program and your agreement is terminated. If at some point in the future, you are interested in returning to the program, you can do so by reapplying.



16. YOUR VOLUNTEER RECORDS

Files and Records

Your file starts with a copy of your application, appointment and the Volunteer Agreement.

The Volunteer Agreement

For Individual Stewards

When you were appointed as a Volunteer Steward, you also signed a Volunteer Agreement. This is a non-binding promissory agreement between the Department of Community Development and you. It ensures that you are covered under the government insurance policy and outlines your responsibilities and some special conditions that apply to your role as a Volunteer Steward.

The insurance is a benefit to you and provides third party liability and personal coverage consisting of the government's Comprehensive General Liability, Accidental Death and Dismemberment, and Weekly Accident Indemnity when performing your volunteer duties.

Your signed Volunteer Agreement becomes effective as soon as we receive it. For your records, a copy of the agreement will be sent back to you and your field coordinator with the department representative's signature added. Instructions for filling out the form are included in the package you received.

Volunteer Agreements with Organized Non-Profit Groups

Many organized non-profit groups are appointed as Volunteer Stewards for a designated site(s). As a member of an organized group, individuals are not required to complete the Volunteer Agreement. In these instances, the agreement is between Alberta Community Development and the organized group.

A formal agreement for organized groups will be developed sometime in the near future. In the meantime, a letter confirming the organization's appointment as Volunteer Steward serves as our agreement with the group.

Organized groups are expected to have their own insurance coverage for their members.

INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS

For your information here is a summary of the coverage provided by the Government of Alberta. It applies to all volunteers who have signed the Volunteer Agreement.

General Liability

Limit of Liability - \$36,000,000

Pays damages arising out of third party bodily injury, personal injury or property damage, provided you are legally responsible to pay, and such damages are not intentional. Coverage includes your defense and any interest payments assessed. You must not, under any circumstances, admit liability, and any incidents must be reported immediately to your supervisor.

Benefits

Coverage is provided as follows:

- ◆ Accidental Death and Dismemberment: the principal sum of \$50,000 is payable as an accidental death benefit and in case of accidental dismemberment, a schedule of payments based on a percentage of this sum is available to indemnify the insured person.
- ◆ Weekly Accident Indemnity: the principal sum of \$50,000 is available to indemnify the insured person who suffers an injury as a result of an accident while performing duties on behalf of the Crown.

Benefits are payable as follows:

- ◆ gainfully employed insured persons who are totally disabled and unable to perform duties pertaining to their occupation: \$500 per week not exceeding 75% of gross weekly earnings - maximum 100 weeks.
- ◆ unemployed persons: \$50 per week - maximum 100 weeks.
- ◆ Accidental Medical Expense Benefit: sum payable \$25,000 for services of a physician, hospital x-rays, and medicine - maximum 52 weeks.

Aggregate limit of indemnity: any one accident \$1,000,000 applicable to air risk only.

Use of Government Vehicles (including OHV's)

Although extremely rare, it may be necessary for Volunteer Stewards to use a government vehicle, to perform some special task. The Government Automobile

Insurance Program extends to cover volunteers who have the approval of the Assistant Deputy Minister of Parks and Protected Areas Division to use a government vehicle. If this is required, your field coordinator will fill out this form on your behalf and obtain the necessary approvals. The form then becomes a part of your volunteer file.

If this is required you may be asked to provide a driver's abstract. Any service fee associated with provision of this abstract can be reimbursed through the Personal Expense Claim form.

The field coordinator will advise you about the department's current policies and procedures for safe operation of government vehicles.

Non- Public Servant Expense Forms

Occasionally, you may be eligible for reimbursement of expenses you incur in the performance of your duties or special projects. For example, the government has occasionally provided travel or meals. Your field coordinator or the Volunteer Steward Coordinator must approve these expenses. They will provide the completed form for your signature. Reimbursement is in accordance with government rates and procedures.

17. GETTING STARTED

Now that you're familiar with the program, our expectations and the support available, you are ready to get started. Refer to the "Getting Started" information in your kit.

Welcome! We look forward to working with you in the years ahead.



YOUR CONTACT LIST

Emergency Contact Phone Numbers For Your Use

Park Conservation Officer: _____

Police: _____

Fire: _____

Fish & Wildlife: _____

Report A Poacher: _____

Ambulance or Nearest Hospital: _____

Field Contacts:

Field Coordinator's Name: _____

Phone: _____

Field Coordinator's Address:

Field Coordinator's E-mail Address: _____

Area Manager's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Visitor Services Branch Contact:

Sandra Myers, Volunteer Steward Coordinator

2nd Floor, Oxbridge Place

9820 106th Street

Edmonton, AB

T5K 2J6

email: sandra.myers@gov.ab.ca

call toll-free 1-866-427-3582

or use the government toll-free number 310-0000 then dial (780) 427-3582

volunteer web site: www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/volunteer

Parks Information Centre: 1-866-427-3582

Other Contact Information

Name:

[illegible]

Phone Number or Location:

[illegible]

