

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

# **Volunteer Manual**

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE • 4200 SMITH SCHOOL ROAD • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744

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# Welcome Volunteers to a WILD Experience

Welcome to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department volunteer experience! TPWD operates and maintains a system of public lands, including state parks, historic sites, fish hatcheries and wildlife management areas. These resources include over 1.4 million acres of parks and recreation areas, wildlife management areas, natural areas and historic/cultural areas. In all, the department manages 93 state parks/historic sites (of which 90 are open to the public) and 51 wildlife management areas. There are an abundance of opportunities for you to get involved with this important work. Annually, more than 23,000 people donate more than one million hours of service to TPWD.

What is part of being a volunteer?

We need you! Volunteers help us in almost everything we do, from monitoring bird populations to leading school groups on a refuge; from clearing trails to stocking fish; from working in an office to repairing equipment. Volunteers play a vital role in supporting the TPWD mission of management and conservation of our state's natural resources and providing outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, biking, birdwatching, etc. We invite you to join us as a volunteer in an assignment that suits your talents, time, and physical capabilities. Volunteering with TPWD provides the opportunity to leave a legacy for future generations.

What is not part of being a volunteer?

Volunteering for Texas Parks and Wildlife in no way creates an employment relationship. TPWD volunteers are not entitled to a salary, retirement, or any other benefits provided to State of Texas employees. Volunteers are not covered by worker's compensation.

TPWD reserves the right to place, decline to place, reassign or remove any volunteer. Volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or designated guardian at all times.

## I. What is Texas Parks and Wildlife?

### History

Texas Parks and Wildlife provides outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities by managing and protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat and acquiring and managing parklands and historic areas. It has inherited the functions of many state entities created to protect Texas' natural resources.

In 1895 the legislature created the Fish and Oyster Commission to regulate fishing. The Game Department was added to the commission in 1907. The State Parks Board

was created as a separate entity in 1923. In the 1930s, projects of the federal Civilian Conservation Corps added substantially to the state's parklands. In 1951, the term "oyster" was dropped from the wildlife agency's name, and in 1963, the Parks Board and the Game and Fish Commission merged to form the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The legislature placed authority for managing fish and wildlife resources in all Texas counties with the Parks and Wildlife Department when it passed the Wildlife Conservation Act in 1983. TPWD is headquartered in Austin and has 140 offices around the state. The agency employs more than 3,000 permanent employees and up to 300 summer interns yearly from every field of study. Intern programs vary but are typically 12 weeks long and run from May until August.

The department is made up of eleven (11) divisions:

- Administrative Resources
- Coastal Fisheries
- Communications
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Infrastructure
- Inland Fisheries
- Law Enforcement – Game wardens and deputy game wardens primarily enforce the provisions of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Code but are fully empowered peace officers with statewide jurisdiction and may make arrests for any offense.
- Legal
- State Parks  
Wildlife

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## **TPWD Mission**

To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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## **II. Volunteer Expectations**

While performing assignments for Texas Parks and Wildlife, all volunteers are expected to:

- Follow TPWD policies, procedures and guidelines; consult with your volunteer coordinator for applicable information;
- Seek and accept guidance and support needed to complete assignments;
- Work as a team with direction from TPWD staff and respect staff roles;

- Accurately record volunteer hours;
- Be dependable in completing assignments;
- Be courteous to the public, fellow volunteers, team leaders and TPWD staff;
- Wear clothing appropriate for the location and task, including proper volunteer identification as established by the division.
- Do not access or use information, facilities, equipment or TPWD property without specific authorization from your volunteer coordinator;
- Attend applicable training sessions and required meetings;
- Provide adequate notice if you are not available to volunteer as scheduled;
- Care for TPWD resources and be a steward for those resources;
- Follow all safety regulations and procedures
- Immediately report any accidents, emergencies or problems with a volunteer assignment to their volunteer coordinator.

Volunteer coordinators may issue additional work rules if the situation requires.

### **III. Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy**

The Department will not tolerate sexual harassment of any employee or volunteer by another volunteer, employee, supervisor, or other person with whom the individual may have contact as part of his or her duties.

Sexual Harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature if:

- Submission to such conduct is an implicit or explicit term or condition of an individual's service to TPWD;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for decisions affecting such individual; or
- The conduct has the purpose or the effect of unreasonably interfering with work performance, or the conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive workplace.

Additionally, the Department will not tolerate harassment or discrimination due to an employee or volunteer's race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or disability, or involving retaliation for complaining about or opposing such harassment or discrimination.

#### **Complaint Procedure**

For complaints regarding harassment or discrimination of any kind, please contact the Human Resources division at 512-389-8411, or 1-800-792-1112 and ask for Employee Relations.

### **IV. Ethics and Standards of Trust**

All volunteers are expected to:

- Accurately and honestly complete all records maintained in the course of volunteer service; falsification of records or other state documents is prohibited.
- Accurately report or record volunteer activities as required.
- Act in a trustworthy manner. Theft from other volunteers, employees, private individuals, or the state will be grounds for immediate dismissal from volunteer service.
- Maintain ethical standards. Acceptance or solicitation of any compensation, gifts, favors, or promises from any person or organization subject to Department regulatory authority or which could influence or be reasonably perceived as having an influence on the performance of duties or otherwise impact Department operations is strictly prohibited.
- Use the authority of a volunteer position as a matter of public service. Using the authority of a volunteer position for personal gain is strictly prohibited.

#### **IV. Site Orientation and Training**

An orientation is an overview of the program and department. Training for a task or assignment is specific. Pre-assignment training will address immediate needs.

Training should prepare the volunteer for the responsibilities and expectations of the position. Ask questions. Your volunteer coordinator is there to ensure your time is used effectively and efficiently in order to achieve the greatest benefit for the program or site.

##### **Orientation**

All volunteers will be given specific instruction of what will be expected of them before their first volunteer assignment.

Orientation sessions are a great way to formally welcome you as a new volunteer and to get you acquainted with the program and our department.

##### **Training**

Your team leader or supervisor may provide the following types of information:

- Overall view of TPWD and the program for which you are volunteering;
- Types of volunteer placements;
- List of events, activities planned for the season;
- List of staff and volunteers;
- Record keeping forms;
- Parking information;
- List of staff and other volunteers;
- Whom to notify in case of illness or other emergency;
- Where volunteers will sign in and out when reporting to work;
- Any record keeping forms such as logs for volunteer hours, etc;
- Location for storing personal items such as jackets, purses, backpacks, etc;

- Program or site newsletter, any other brochures, etc.;
- Calendar of Events;
- I.D. for the specific program;
- Schedules; and
- Location of restrooms, offices, snack bar, etc;

## **Machinery and Equipment**

Volunteers who have training or experience may be assigned to operate TPWD machinery or equipment. Volunteers under the age of 18 are not allowed to operate motorized equipment or machinery. Volunteers will not be allowed to operate TPWD motor vehicles, except as described below.

## **The Limited or Short-term Volunteer**

Not all volunteer positions require formal training and orientation. For those individuals providing specific and limited service, you may simply be required to arrive at the location an hour early on the first day for an “introduction” to the program. Less formal training could apply to one-time projects, such as one-day outreach events.

## **V. Insurance and Liability**

Volunteers engaged in approved volunteer activities or traveling to these activities in a personal vehicle are covered by volunteer accident and liability policies. These policies provide excess coverage for expenses not covered by the volunteer’s own insurance. There is no insurance coverage for a volunteer injury or liability resulting from a volunteer operating a state vehicle or boat.

Volunteer insurance claims are coordinated through TPWD legal staff. Please notify your volunteer coordinator immediately if you are injured or involved in an accident while performing volunteer duties for TPWD.

Volunteers (or their parents or guardians, if the volunteers are minors) are required to sign a TPWD liability waiver.

## **Vehicles and Boats**

Volunteers performing services for TPWD are not permitted to drive department vehicles or boats unless the volunteer can provide written verification of personal liability insurance specifically covering the operation and use of state or government owned vehicles and/or boats. Without such coverage, volunteers may be personally liable for injuries or property damage resulting from their operation of a state vehicle or boat.

Volunteers may use their personal vehicles and boats while performing volunteer services for TPWD and request mileage and fuel reimbursement. However, reimbursement must be pre-approved by site’s/program’s management and will be dependent on the particular site’s/program’s budget.



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TPWD receives federal assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal agencies and is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and state anti-discrimination laws which prohibit discrimination the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any TPWD program, activity or facility, or need more information, please contact Civil Rights Coordinator for Public Access, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: MBSP-4020, Arlington, VA 22203. PWD BK K0700-152A (04/11)